Boosting Capacity to Drive Equitable Systems Change

2021 Evaluation Report for the
Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Forum

EQUAL MEASURE

FINDING
PROMISE

FUELING
CHANGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2021 Opportunity Youth Forum (OYF) network represents a diverse set of 39 communities — nearly double its size since its founding a decade ago — which brings together cross-sector partners in local collaboratives to improve education and employment outcomes for opportunity youth.[1] Six new sites, representing urban, rural, and tribal communities, joined the network in 2021.[2] While partners involved in the OYF network share a common vision, the communities in which they operate, the collaboratives leading this work, and the backbone organizations coordinating these efforts vary greatly.

About the Opportunity Youth Forum

The Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions (FCS) launched the OYF in 2012, on the recommendations from President Obama's White House Council on Community Solutions. Since then, FCS has mobilized a national movement, convening and supporting a network of communities dedicated to improving systems so all young people can connect or re-connect to an education or career pathway.

FIGURE 1
OYF Collaboratives in 2021
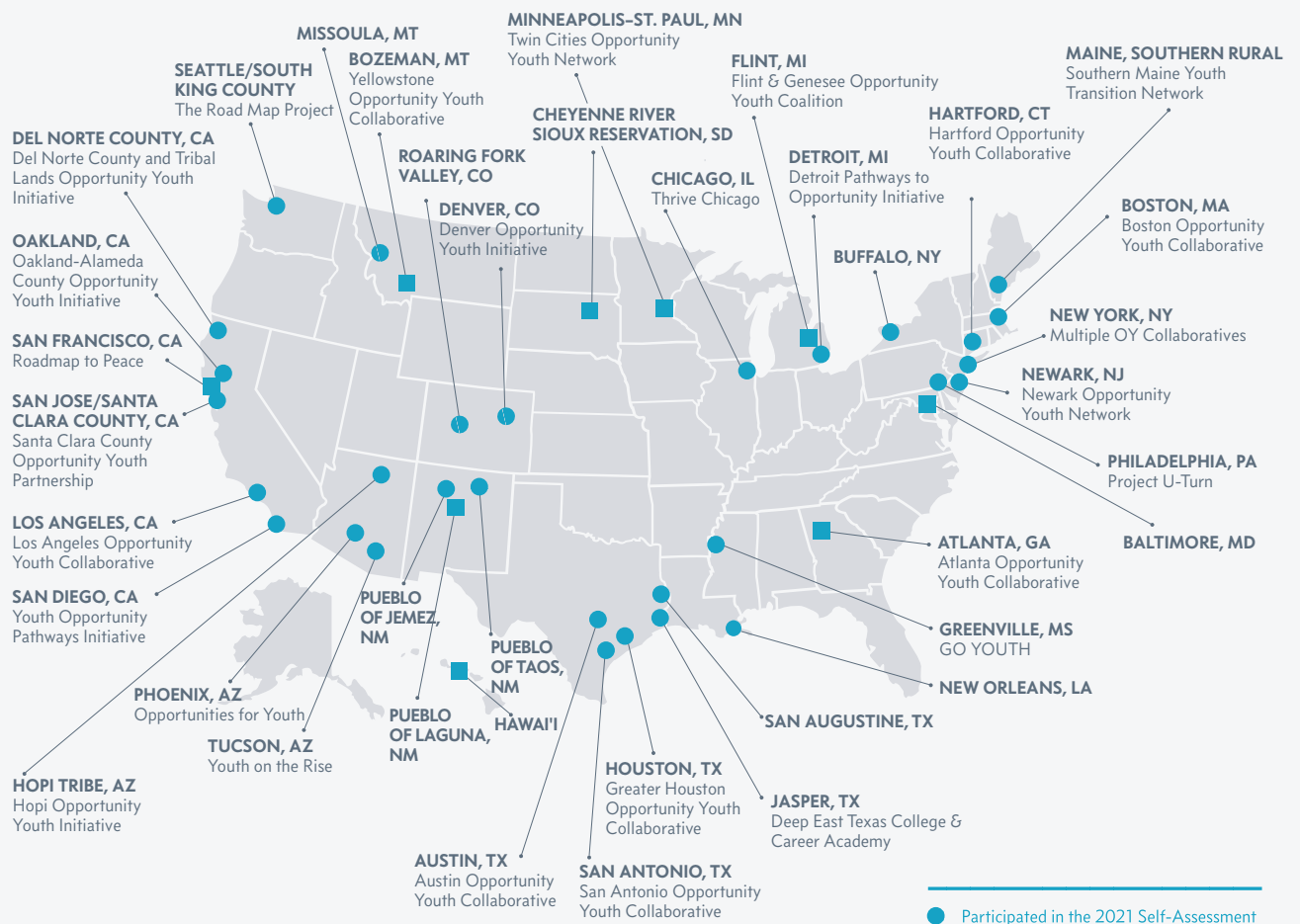
Organizing for Systems Change

Since the OYF network's inception, an underlying assumption of using the collective impact model to connect opportunity youth to education and career pathways is the belief that disconnected and inadequate systems significantly contribute to youth disconnection. To successfully engage and re-engage young people, systems of individuals, programs, organizations, policies, and resources must change. By investing in the development, learning, and support of cross-sector collaboratives to change these systems, youth outcomes — connection to education and workforce pathways — will improve.

The OYF evaluation measured two interrelated elements central to the OYF theory of change.
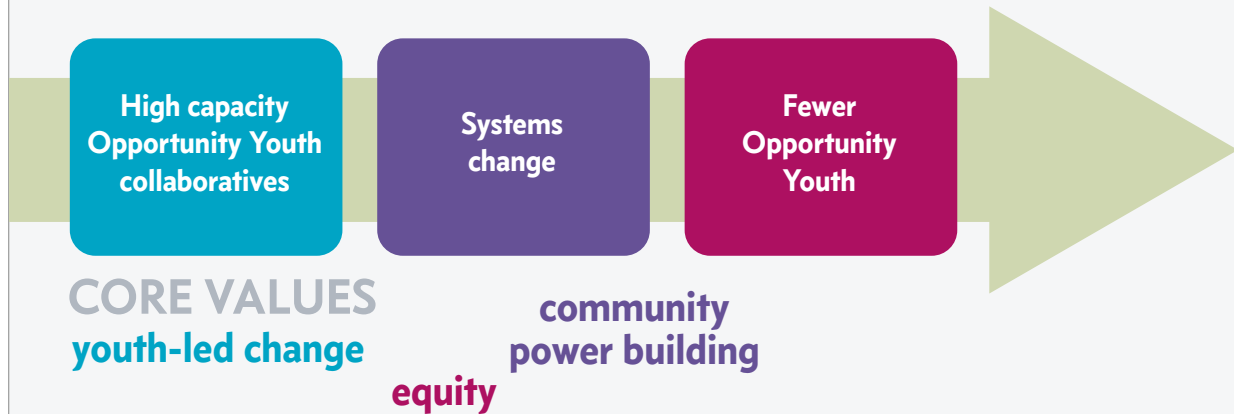
1. Collaborative Capacity:

The infrastructure and processes necessary for the collaborative to carry out its opportunity youth agenda.

2. Systems Change:

"Shifts to the conditions that hold a problem in place"[3] — in this case, disconnected pathways and inequitable conditions that prevent young people from achieving education and employment outcomes.

In addition, the OYF theory of change is undergirded by a set of core values — equity, youth-led change, and community power building — embedded in the strategies and efforts to change local systems that affect opportunity youth.

FIGURE 2
Simplified Theory of Change

CORE VALUES
youth-led change
equity
community power building

Network Trends

The 2021 collaborative self-assessment captures information on collaborative capacity, systems change, and core values, and comparisons with the previous year show strong signs of progress. Across the OYF network, **collaborative capacity, systems change, and core values all increased from 2020 to 2021.**

Collaborative capacity increased by over five percentage points (at the strong evidence threshold). In addition, each of the four types of capacity — particularly *data and learning* and *raising awareness and strategic communication* — also increased from 2020 to 2021.

Systems change increased by almost four percentage points (strong evidence). Each of the seven types of systems changes also increased from 2020 to 2021, but especially *data use* and *public policy change*. *Funding change* has also consistently increased since 2019.

Strong evidence of **core values** increased slightly from 2020 to 2021. Two of the three core values — *equity* and *community power* — were stable, while *youth-led change* increased by four percentage points. Among the three, a*ttention to equity and equitable practices* was the most strongly evident core value in 2021.

Moving Together: Capacity and Systems Change

The relationship between collaborative capacity and systems change in 2021 was consistent with prior years, where collaboratives with greater capacity are statistically more likely to see greater evidence of systems changes necessary for opportunity youth to succeed.[4] These findings reinforce the need to invest in and build the "collaborative muscle" necessary for creating systems that promote success for opportunity youth.

FIGURE 3
Greater collaborative capacity is associated with greater evidence of systems change

Values reflect the % of indicators reported as strong evidence by each collaborative.

● = *Collaborative*

SYSTEMS CHANGE (y-axis, 0% to 100%)
COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY (x-axis, 0% to 100%)
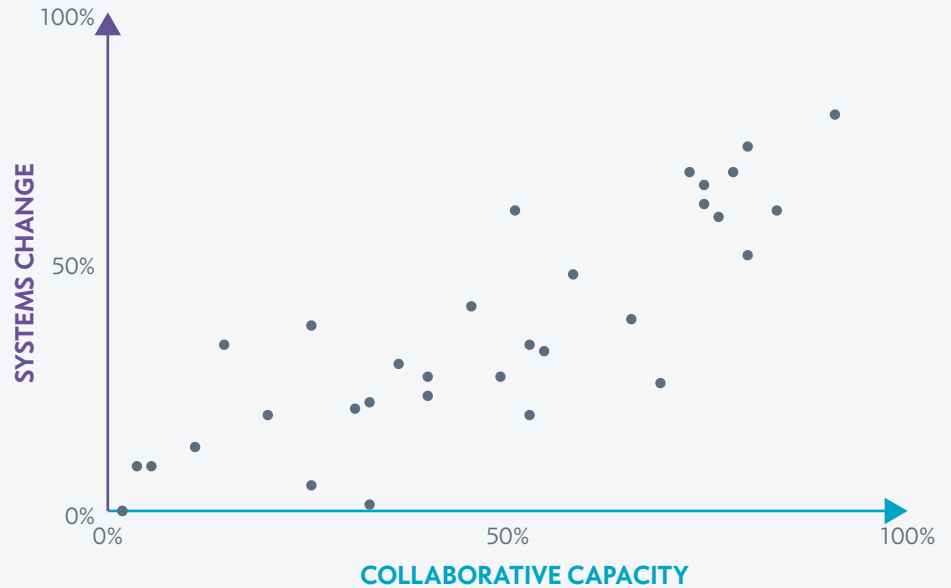
A Deeper Look into the OYF Network's Systems Change Strategies

The OYF report delves deeper into the complexity of systems change work across four areas: **data use, public policy, funding changes, and equity**. Based on data from the 2021 collaborative self-assessment and site lead interviews, these systems changes emerged as areas exhibiting growth or as key FCS priorities as OYF moves into its next decade of work.

Data Use

FCS has made significant investments in building the capacities of OYF collaboratives to collect and use data to improve systems and outcomes for opportunity youth, and these efforts are paying off. In 2021, *data and learning* **was the highest rated collaborative capacity and collaboratives have seen substantial growth in data capacity and data use for systems change**, increasing nine and 15 percentage points from 2019 to 2021, respectively. In particular, the network has demonstrated growth in *using common data definitions* and in *sharing data* within and across systems. Shared understandings and common definitions of key terms and markers of progress among stakeholders and partners within and across local systems allows for data to be aggregated. This makes data much more useful for understanding progress and making strategic decisions at the systems level.

"…being in a data collaborative and seeing not only youth-serving organizations, but even our public school system being very transparent about [their data], the challenges and successes that they're having engaging young people throughout the school year, has really, I think, shifted the culture…"

Public Policy

Public policies influence the flow of resources within systems, set rules and accountability structures for system actors, and incentivize and prioritize behaviors for system stakeholders. OYF collaboratives work to enact new or modify existing public policies to address barriers encountered by opportunity youth. **In 2021, the network's scores represent promising signs of growth** — increasing five percentage points from 2020 levels. Collaboratives elevated several policy "wins" — including expanding access to youth jobs programs, increasing wages for youth, and advocating for youth-focused research. Collaboratives leveraged several strategies to influence policy including raising public awareness to youth-related issues. Collaboratives sought to build relationships and share data with public officials and inform the public of their goals through publications and reports. Several collaboratives engaged young people in their advocacy work, taking them to meet with public officials and including young people's voice in testimony supporting bills. Collaboratives have begun to recognize the value of specialized expertise to advance their policy goals. Some collaboratives bolstered their policy efforts by hiring staff with policy and advocacy training.

> *"Unless we change the rules and the regulations that govern [systems], we'll always be swimming upstream…"*

Funding changes

Public and private funding represent intentional decisions and priorities of system leaders and reflect presiding public narratives, policy preferences, and historic precedents. Collaboratives work to shift funding practices and distribution of resources to create more opportunities for opportunity youth and fund transformative systems change. **In 2021, the network continued its steady annual growth in funding** — increasing six percentage points from 2019 levels. Collaboratives shared examples of types of funding shifts they supported in 2021, including shifting public dollars from the justice system to local youth programs, supporting school district funding for drop-out prevention programming, and allocating funds to youth wages. Collaboratives elevated several barriers to shifting funding practices, including misalignment of goals and strategies between collaboratives and funders, funders' limited interest in funding backbone activities like convening, and challenges to expanding established funder relationships beyond what is presently funded. Collaboratives leveraged various strategies to overcome these barriers, including shifting narratives around opportunity youth to influence funding and building organizational capacity to navigate complex public funding streams.

> *"What we've been trying to do is actually getting an inside voice into our city government to determine how that funding is going to be distributed over the years."*

Equity

Equity, along with youth-led change and community power, is a stated core value of the OYF work — embedded in how collaboratives build their internal capacity and work to change systems to better serve opportunity youth. **Equity shows up in collaboratives in a variety of ways.** In 2021, over three-quarters of collaboratives reported that planning for OY work included *explicit acknowledgement of racial equity and/or community-specific disparities*, and this increased from 2020 to 2021. Most collaboratives report *diverse memberships* reflective of local communities and use *disaggregated data* to develop targeted strategies. As FCS transitions to a north star of **Belonging, Meaning, Wellbeing, and Purpose** (BMWP), there is evidence that many collaboratives in the network are already incorporating equitable youth practices around meaning-making and healing from trauma.

> *"…equity is what frames all of the work that we do."*

INTRODUCTION

The Opportunity Youth Forum's Decade of Discovery

The Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions (FCS) launched what is now called the Opportunity Youth Forum (OYF) in 2012, on the recommendations from President Obama's White House Council on Community Solutions. Since then, FCS has mobilized a national movement: convening and supporting a network of communities dedicated to improving systems so all young people can connect to an education or career pathway.

Since its founding a decade ago, the OYF network has nearly doubled, to 39 communities across 22 states — each *"seeking to scale multiple reconnection pathways that achieve better outcomes in education and employment for opportunity youth."*[5] The network's approach is based on the understanding that systems today — including those supporting K-12 and postsecondary education, workforce, housing, child welfare, and justice systems — are fundamentally broken. They are not designed for today's young people — particularly young people of color and young people experiencing poverty — to access opportunities and thrive. Instead, these systems, influenced by outdated, uninformed, and racist public policies, public narratives, resource allocations, and organizational practices, create barriers for young people to reach their full potential. For the last decade, the OYF network has committed to changing and upending systems, shifting the conditions and institutions that have historically failed many young people.

In addition to supporting collaboratives and their systems change agendas, FCS has committed to elevating learning for the network and the field. FCS has partnered with Equal Measure since the launch of the network. To support the network's learning, Equal Measure has conducted an annual assessment, focusing on collaboratives' values, capacities, and engagement in systems change. Each assessment offers an opportunity to uplift new learning, ideas, and feedback that informs the direction and prioritization of initiatives for the network.

THIRTY-NINE OYF COMMUNITIES AS OF 2021

- Atlanta, GA*
- Austin, TX
- Baltimore, MD*
- Boston, MA
- Bozeman, MT*
- Buffalo, NY
- Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, SD*
- Chicago, IL
- Del Norte County, CA
- Denver, CO
- Detroit, MI
- Flint, MI*
- Greenville, MS
- Hartford, CT
- Hawai'i*
- Hopi Tribe, AZ
- Houston, TX
- Jasper, TX
- Los Angeles, CA
- Maine, Southern Rural
- Minneapolis – St. Paul, MN*
- Missoula, MT
- New Orleans, LA
- New York, NY (4 collaboratives)
- Newark, NJ
- Oakland, CA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Phoenix, AZ
- Pueblo of Jemez, NM
- Pueblo of Laguna, NM*
- Pueblo of Taos, NM
- Roaring Fork Valley, CO
- San Antonio, TX
- San Augustine, TX
- San Diego, CA
- San Francisco, CA*
- San Jose/Santa Clara County, CA
- Seattle/South King County, WA
- Tucson, AZ

Did not participate in the 2021 assessment

The last decade of the OYF has elevated critical insights about community- and backbone-led systems change work. These insights, shaped by the annual assessments along with reflections and feedback from both FCS and OYF collaboratives, include lessons on building capacity to advance systems change, tailoring data for different audiences, and including young people as leaders of work happening on their behalf.[6]

After a decade of convening communities around the country, OYF continues to push itself and the field by questioning long-held assumptions, challenging established ways of working, and adapting to new research about the barriers that young people face and the opportunities for them to thrive. Through inquiry and reflection, FCS has identified **Belonging, Meaning, Wellbeing, and Purpose** (BMWP) as a new priority for its evolving network. Based on decades of youth development research, and with exciting new evidence about the potential for impact, particularly for youth of color, the approach is meant to further center the identities, experiences, aspirations, and passions of young people in the programs and pathways that serve them.

This shift offers new opportunities to build on FCS' and the network's existing evidence base. What new learning will emerge as OYF enters its next decade?

About the Report

In the evaluation report, we detail network-wide findings drawn from data collection among 30 of 39 communities participating in the OYF network in 2021. Quantitative data was collected through a self-assessment administered to OYF network collaboratives in February 2022. We collected qualitative information for this report through the same self-assessment, as well as through interviews with leaders from the collaboratives.

We provide a holistic summary of the current state of and changes in the network's collaborative capacity, systems change efforts, and articulation of OYF values. We also provide a deeper dive into four focus areas: data use, public policy change, funding changes, and equity.

The report is structured as follows:

- The Network at a Glance

- OYF Theory of Change and State of the Network

- Four "Deep Dives": Data Use, Public Policy, Funding Change, and Equity

- Appendix (including data tables and charts)

Opportunity Youth in the OYF Network

Nationally, the number of teens and young adults disconnected from work and school fell from 14.7 percent in 2010 to 10.7 percent in 2019. However, youth disconnection rates reversed direction and increased dramatically during the pandemic years that followed. In 2020 the youth disconnection rate was estimated at 12.6 percent, although this is likely understated due to challenges in gathering accurate data.[7] While many collaboratives report the number has improved over the course of 2021, the percentage of disconnected teens and young adults has likely not yet dropped back to pre-pandemic levels.[8]

Of the 5.9 million 16- to 24-year-olds living in OYF network communities in 2019 (pre-pandemic), 11 percent, or about 657,000 young people, were disconnected from work and school. The rates of disconnection were even higher among some racial and ethnic subgroups, with 27 percent of American Indian youth, 17 percent of Black youth, and 13 percent of Hispanic youth disconnected from school and work, compared to 8 percent of white youth.[9]

The OYF Common Measures provide further understanding of the opportunity youth landscape by examining disconnection from each segment of the education-to-work pipeline. Based on these rates across the OYF communities in 2019, among all 16- to 24-year-olds, we see the following rates:

- High school disconnection: 12%

- Postsecondary disconnection: 21%

- Workforce disconnection of those who've completed postsecondary: 11%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF OPPORTUNITY YOUTH IN OYF COMMUNITIES, 2019 (PRE-PANDEMIC)

GENDER

Male	52.4%
Female	47.6%

AGE

16-19 years old	26.1%
20-24 years old	73.9%

RACE/ETHNICITY

Hispanic, any race	41.5%
Black or African American	25.5%
White	22.8%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.7%
Two or more races	3.0%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.1%
Another race	0.4%

INCOME LEVEL

200% of poverty line or less	55.3%

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Less than high school	24.1%
High school diploma or GED	50.6%
Some college	16.2%
College degree	9.1%

NATIVITY

Born in another country	13.9%

CHILDREN

Opportunity youth with children	4.5%

Source: American Community Survey data, 2019

Characteristics of OYF Network Communities, Collaboratives, and Backbone Organizations

The 2021 OYF network represents a diverse set of 39 communities bringing cross-sector partners together to improve education and employment outcomes for opportunity youth.[10] The OYF network continues to grow with six new sites representing urban, rural, and tribal sites[11] joining the network in 2021.[12] While partners involved in the OYF network share a common vision, the communities in which they operate, the collaboratives leading this work, and the backbone organizations coordinating these efforts vary greatly.

FIGURE 1
OYF Collaboratives in 2021
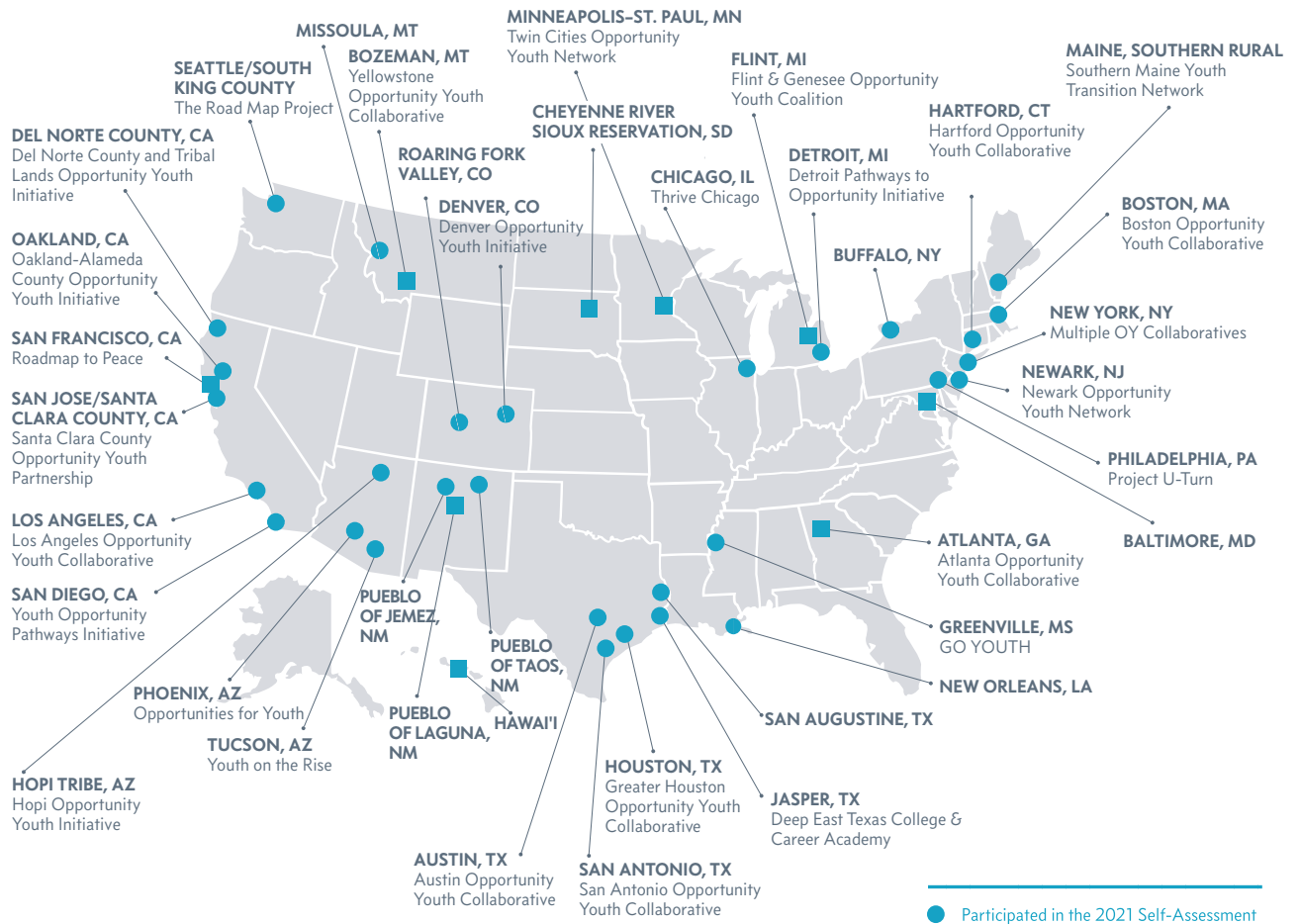
COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Communities served by OYF network collaboratives span the United States across urban and rural regions. The location of these collaboratives helps create a strong, diverse cohort of learning opportunities and provides an important context to the work. While their goals are the same, communities must tailor their strategies to the local context.

Collaboratives identified meaningful geographic areas to focus their OY efforts, which ranged from single cities to broader multi-county regions.

Forty-six percent (15 collaboratives) described their geographic scope as a multi-county region or metro area, while 36 percent (12 collaboratives) worked in a single city or county. In 2021, four collaboratives included or entirely served tribal lands or reservations, reflecting a growing cohort of tribal communities. Figure 1 (map) shows the wide variety of regions across the United States served by collaboratives.
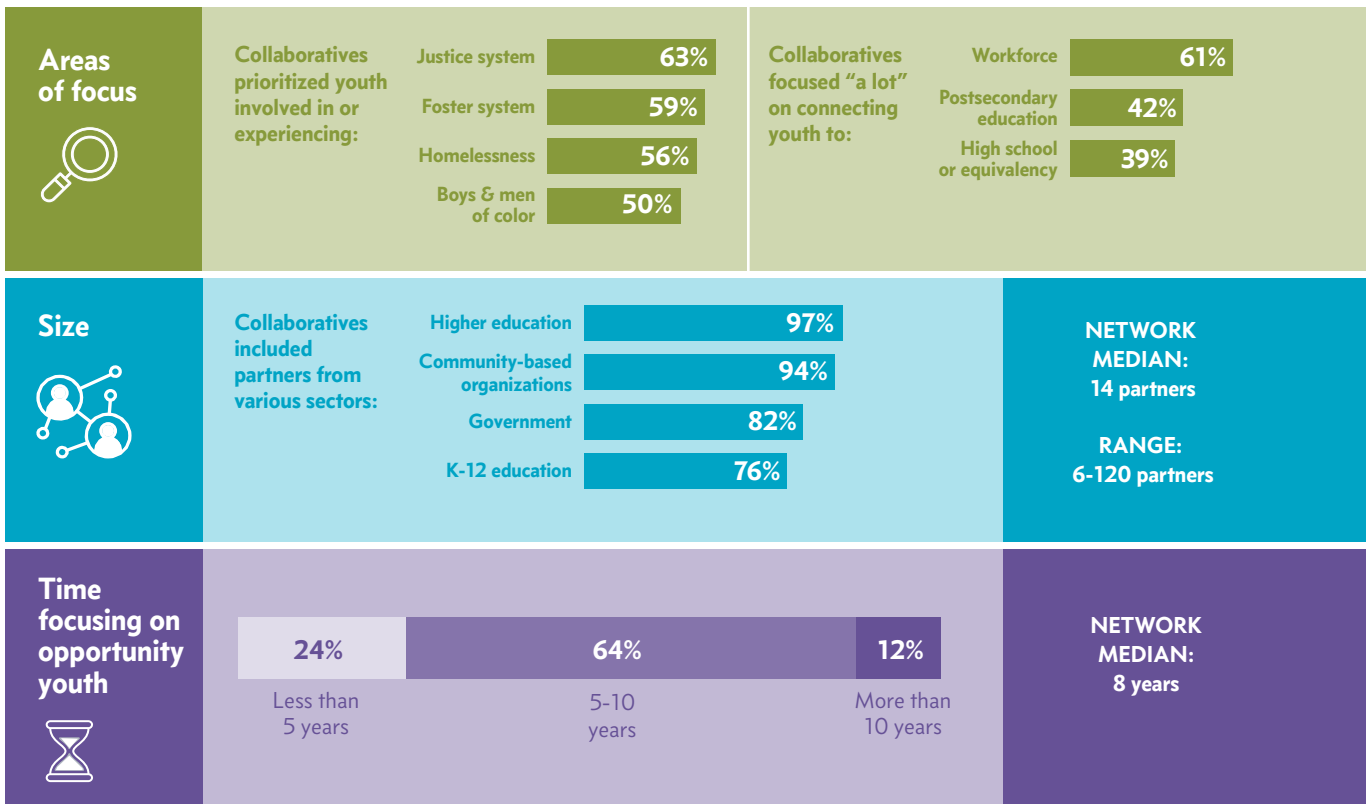
While the OYF network remained mostly urban, about a quarter of collaboratives served exclusively small towns or rural areas, including tribal communities.

Twelve communities described themselves as serving only urban areas, and an additional 12 communities included urban areas as part of the regions they served. However, nine collaboratives (27%) served only rural or small towns, and another five included rural or small-town areas as part of their geographies. This increasingly even representation of population density in the network reflects a growing cohort of rural sites, including tribal communities.

COLLABORATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

In the OYF network, cross-sector collaboratives work to connect youth to education and employment opportunities. The variation across these communities is reflected in the range of collaborative ages, sizes, and areas of focus (Figure 2).

> FIGURE 2 **Collaborative Characteristics Snapshot**

Areas of focus

Collaboratives prioritized youth involved in or experiencing:

Justice system	63%
Foster system	59%
Homelessness	56%
Boys & men of color	50%

Collaboratives focused "a lot" on connecting youth to:

Workforce	61%
Postsecondary education	42%
High school or equivalency	39%

Size

Collaboratives included partners from various sectors:

Higher education	97%
Community-based organizations	94%
Government	82%
K-12 education	76%

NETWORK MEDIAN: 14 partners

RANGE: 6-120 partners

Time focusing on opportunity youth

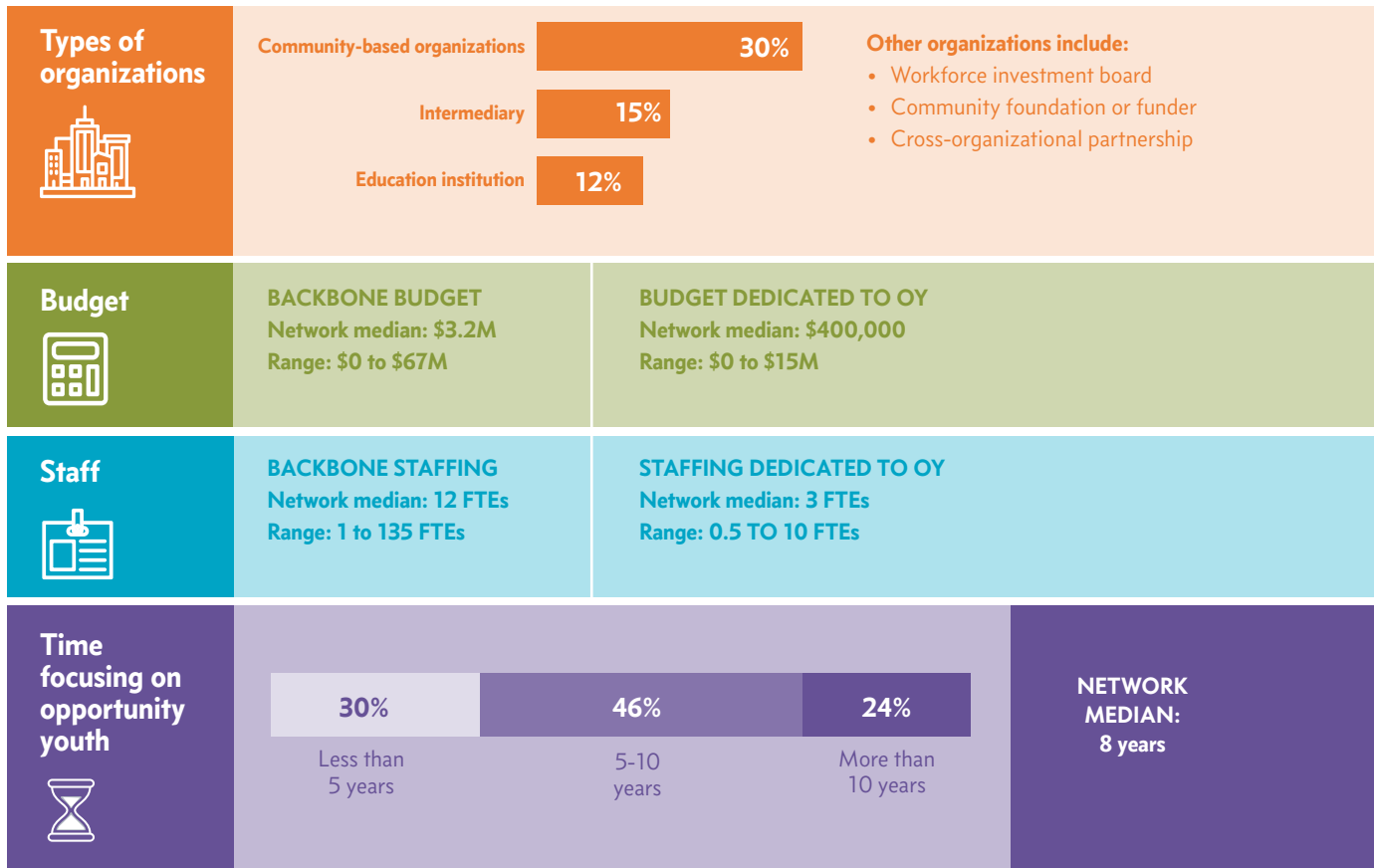| 24%	64%	12%
Less than 5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years

NETWORK MEDIAN: 8 years

BACKBONE CHARACTERISTICS

The backbone organization — the lead organization coordinating the collaborative — is a critical component of the collective impact model, providing a structure and team to coordinate the work of the collaborative (Figure 3). More than three in four (82%) backbone organizations' opportunity youth work in 2021 happened as part of a broader initiative (such as part of cradle-to-career initiatives or workforce-focused initiatives), while less than one in five focused only on opportunity youth (18%). Across the network, backbone organizations varied in type, resources, and experience focusing on opportunity youth (Figure 3).[13]

FIGURE 3 **Backbone Characteristics Snapshot**

Types of organizations

Community-based organizations **30%**
Intermediary **15%**
Education institution **12%**

Other organizations include:
- Workforce investment board
- Community foundation or funder
- Cross-organizational partnership

Budget

BACKBONE BUDGET
Network median: $3.2M
Range: $0 to $67M

BUDGET DEDICATED TO OY
Network median: $400,000
Range: $0 to $15M

Staff

BACKBONE STAFFING
Network median: 12 FTEs
Range: 1 to 135 FTEs

STAFFING DEDICATED TO OY
Network median: 3 FTEs
Range: 0.5 TO 10 FTEs

Time focusing on opportunity youth

30% Less than 5 years
46% 5-10 years
24% More than 10 years

NETWORK MEDIAN: 8 years

ORGANIZING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

Since the OYF network's inception, an underlying assumption of using the collective impact model to connect opportunity youth to education and career pathways is the belief that disconnected and inadequate systems are at the source of youth disconnection. To successfully engage and re-engage young people, systems of individuals, programs, organizations, policies, and resources must change. And by investing in the development, learning, and support of cross-sector collaboratives to change these systems, youth outcomes — connection to education and workforce pathways — will improve.

The OYF evaluation focused on, and measured, two interrelated elements central to the OYF theory of change.

1. Collaborative Capacity:

The infrastructure and processes necessary for the collaborative to carry out its opportunity youth agenda.

2. Systems Change:

"Shifts to the conditions that hold a problem in place"[14] — in this case, disconnected pathways and inequitable conditions that prevent young people from achieving education and employment outcomes.

In addition, the OYF theory of change is undergirded by a set of core values — equity, youth-led change, and community power building — that are embedded in the strategies and efforts to change local systems that affect opportunity youth.
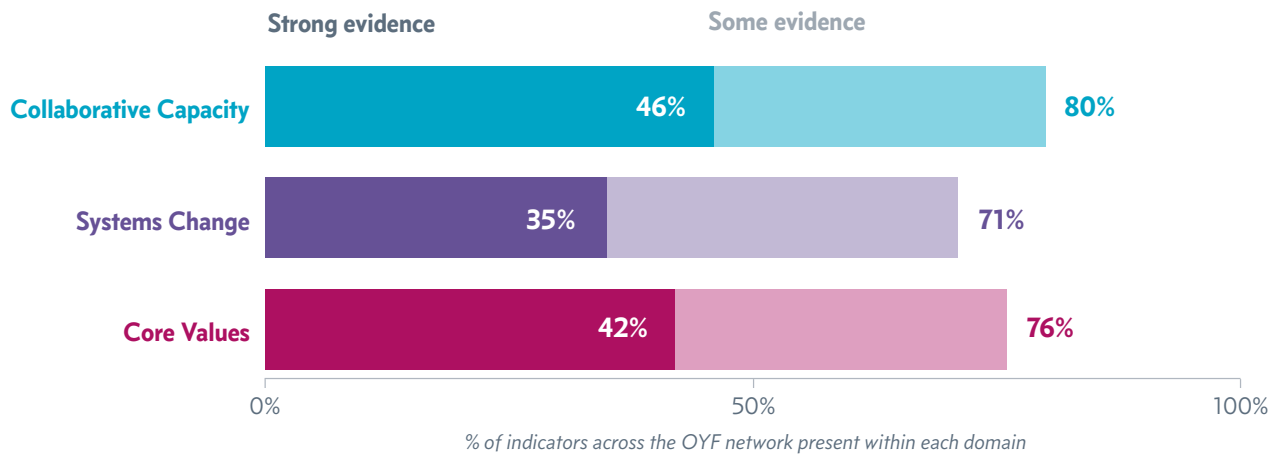
FIGURE 4
Simplified Theory of Change

High capacity Opportunity Youth collaboratives → Systems change → Fewer Opportunity Youth

CORE VALUES
youth-led change
equity
community power building

Snapshot of Theory of Change Elements in 2021

Capacity, Systems Change, and Core Values in the OYF Network in 2021

Strong evidence   Some evidence

Collaborative Capacity	46%	80%
Systems Change	35%	71%
Core Values	42%	76%

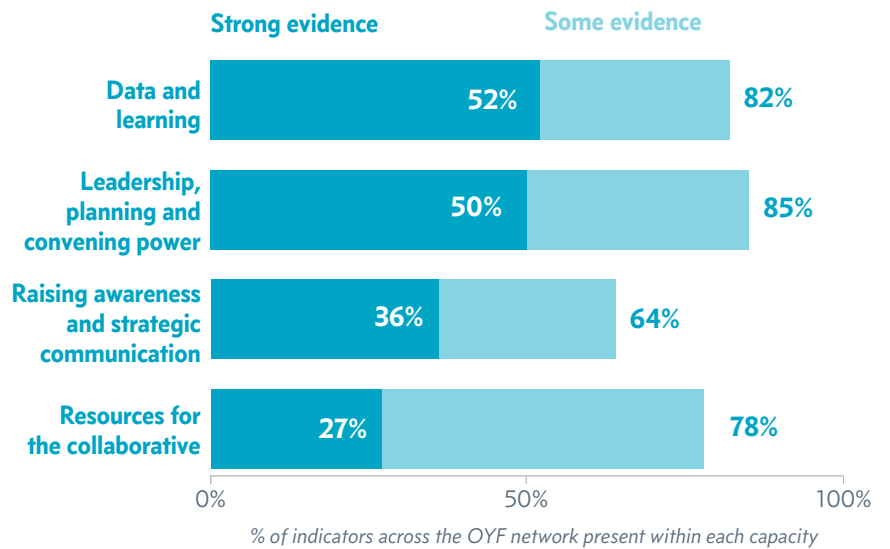*% of indicators across the OYF network present within each domain*

Collaborative Capacity Across the OYF Network in 2021

Overall, collaboratives rated almost half (46%) of the capacity indicators as strongly evident in 2021; with 80 percent of capacity indicators at least somewhat evident in their collaboratives (Figure 5). This is an increase from 2020 — capacity increased by five percentage points (strong evidence) for the network (see Appendix B for trends over time).

Collaborative capacity was stronger among established urban collaboratives and those with better resourced backbones.[15] Each of the four types of capacity (Figure 6) also increased from 2020 to 2021. *Data and learning* — collecting and using data to advance the collaborative's vision — was the most strongly present capacity (52% of indicators strongly present), followed closely by *leadership and convening power* (50% of indicators strongly present). As in the previous two years, the capacities of *raising awareness and strategic communications*, and *resources for the collaborative* were not as strong (36% and 27% strongly evident, respectively), but still grew from 2020.

Collaborative Capacities in the OYF Network in 2021

Strong evidence   Some evidence

Data and learning	52%	82%
Leadership, planning and convening power	50%	85%
Raising awareness and strategic communication	36%	64%
Resources for the collaborative	27%	78%

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each capacity
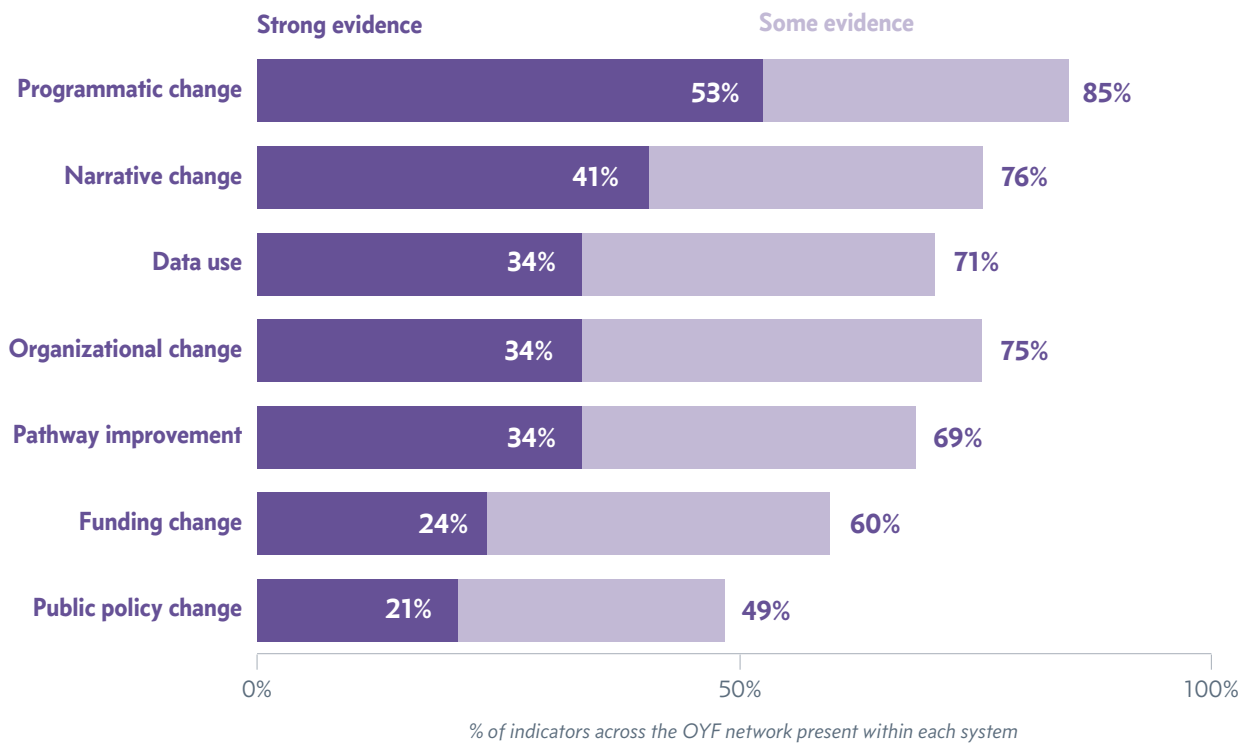
Systems Change Across the OYF Network in 2021

Overall, collaboratives rated over a third (35%) of the systems change indicators as strongly present in their collaboratives and communities in 2021, with over two-thirds (71%) of the systems changes at least somewhat evident (Figure 5). This represents growth from 2020 — an increase of three to five percentage points.

Systems change was more evident in established urban collaboratives, and in those with more experienced and better resourced backbone organizations.[16] Each of the seven types of systems changes also increased from 2020 to 2021 (See Appendix B for trends over time). *Programmatic change* and *OY narrative change* remained the systems changes with the strongest evidence in the network (Figure 7). *Data for systems change, organizational change*, and *pathway improvements* clustered in the middle with about a third (34%) of indictors strongly evident in the network. *Funding change* and *policy change* remain the most challenging to influence, with about a quarter of indicators strongly evident.

FIGURE 7
Systems Changes in the OYF Network in 2021

	Strong evidence	Some evidence
Programmatic change	53%	85%
Narrative change	41%	76%
Data use	34%	71%
Organizational change	34%	75%
Pathway improvement	34%	69%
Funding change	24%	60%
Public policy change	21%	49%

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each system
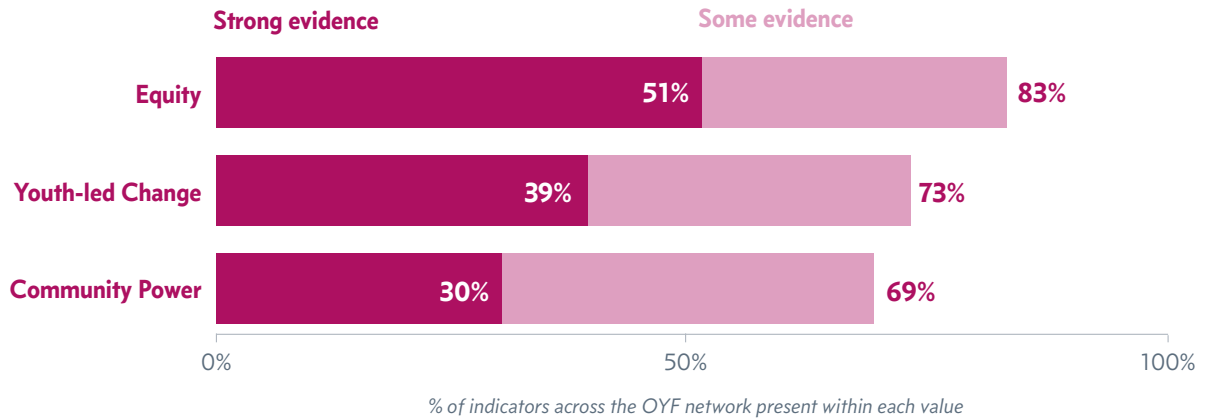
Core Values Across the OYF Network in 2021

Overall, collaboratives rated 42 percent of the indicators representing OYF core values as strongly present in their collaboratives and communities in 2021, with over three-quarters (76%) at least somewhat evident (Figure 5). This represents small growth from 2020 — an increase of one to two percentage points (see Appendix B for trends over time).

Core values were more evident in established urban collaboratives, as well as those with more experienced and better resourced backbones.[17] Two of the three core values — *equity and community power*— were stable from 2020 to 2021, while *youth-led change* increased slightly, by four percentage points. *Attention to equity and equitable practices* was the most strongly evident core value in 2021, ahead of *youth-led change* and *community power* (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8
Core Values in the OYF Network in 2021

Strong evidence   **Some evidence**

Equity	51%	83%
Youth-led Change	39%	73%
Community Power	30%	69%

0%   50%   100%

*% of indicators across the OYF network present within each value*

Moving Together: Capacity and Systems Change

The relationship between collaborative capacity and systems change was consistent with prior years, where collaboratives with greater capacity are statistically more likely to see greater evidence of systems changes necessary for opportunity youth to succeed.[18] Figure 9 illustrates the relationship between each OYF community's collaborative capacity and evidence of systems change, as measured by the 2021 self-assessment. These findings reinforce the need to invest in and build the "collaborative muscle" necessary for creating systems that promote success for opportunity youth.

FIGURE 9
Greater collaborative capacity is associated with greater evidence of systems changes

Values reflect the % of indicators reported as strong evidence by each collaborative.

● = Collaborative

SYSTEMS CHANGE

COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY
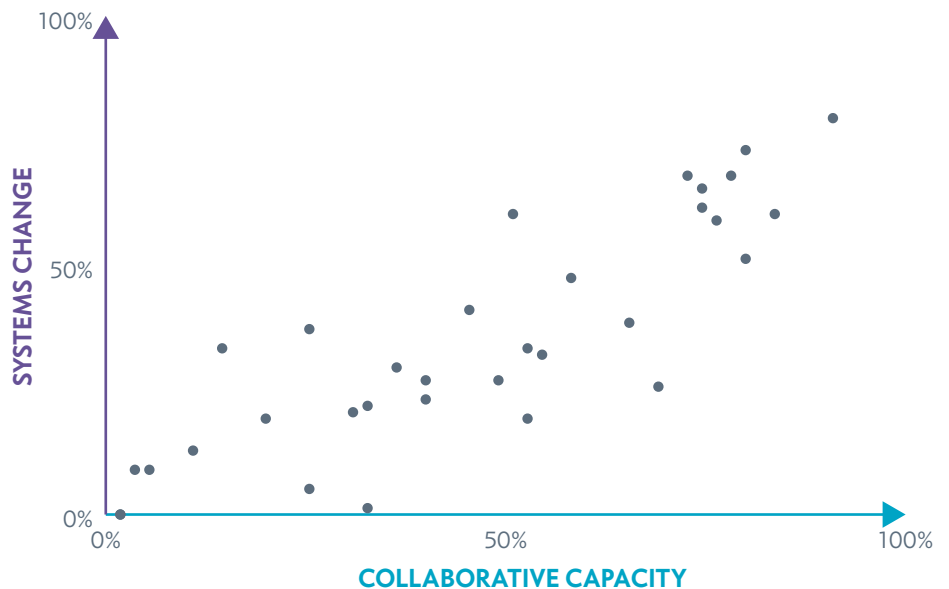
A NOTE ABOUT METHODOLOGY

We drew on findings in this report from the 2021 OYF self-assessment and interviews with collaborative leads. The self-assessment focused on five areas: 1) Community and Opportunity Youth Collaborative Characteristics; 2) Collaborative Capacity; 3) Changes in Programs, Organizations, and Systems (i.e., Systems Change); 4) Healing and Meaning-making Practices; and 5) Youth Outputs and Outcomes.

We followed the same methodology as the 2019 and 2020 OYF Reports. In the assessment of collaborative capacity and systems change, we asked collaboratives to rate the presence of several indicators on a scale from 0 to 3 (0=does not describe us, 1=somewhat describes us, 2=describes us well, and 3=describes us very well). Using the four-point scale in the assessment allows us to examine indicators with more nuance and detail, as well as set a "quality standard" for capacity and systems change.

In analyzing the data, we looked at: 1) strong evidence of an indicator, meaning the indicator was rated a 2 or a 3 ("well" or "very well"); and 2) some evidence of an indicator, where the indicator was rated at least a 1 ("somewhat").

Most percentages reported throughout this report refer to the percentage of collaboratives or indicators that met the highest threshold — at the "strong evidence" level. We use this threshold to establish a standard for determining the extent that a capacity or systems change is fully in place. Occasionally, we provide data on the percentage of communities or indicators that had "some" evidence for additional context or to acknowledge where collaboratives or communities are beginning to make changes.

A DEEPER LOOK INTO THE OYF NETWORK'S SYSTEMS CHANGE STRATEGY

Systems change work is inherently complex. It requires organizations to navigate relationships, power structures, and historical and geographical contexts that have created policies, narratives, and funding conditions from which inequities stem. Systems change work requires an intentional dedication of both human and financial resources that may compete with other choices that organizations face. As a result, systems change work may be deprioritized as conditions emerge that are more pressing to the organization's or community's current needs. Finally, systems change work can be slow, with progress measured over the course of years.[19] Systems change within the OYF network is further complicated by collaboratives' diversity. A community's size, its backbone's staffing, and its access to resources, are just some the variables that contribute to its ability to engage in systems change.

We highlight some of this complexity in four vignettes — each focused on a different type of systems change. Within each, we discuss the OYF's network's approach, gains, and opportunities for further engagement or growth. These topics were selected for deeper investigation as the network has either shown growth and promise in this area or they represent strategies that FCS and the network have prioritized.

The four topic areas are:

1. **DATA USE**
2. **PUBLIC POLICY**
3. **FUNDING CHANGE**
4. **EQUITY**

Deep Dive #1: DATA USE

Using Data to Facilitate Systems Change:
A Formidable Strength of the Network

FCS has made significant investments in building the capacities of OYF collaboratives to collect and use data to improve systems and outcomes for opportunity youth, and these efforts are paying off. In 2021, the OYF network exhibited strengths in internal collaborative data capacity and in use of data for systems change. Data and learning was the highest rated collaborative capacity. In addition, collaboratives have seen substantial growth in data capacity and data use for systems change, increasing 9 and 15 percentage points from 2019 to 2021, respectively. In particular, the network has demonstrated growth in using common data definitions and in sharing data within and across systems.

FCS is committed to a **culture of data-driven decision making** throughout the OYF network, to better understand where and how systems are failing opportunity youth and to drive strategies for change. Over the past five years FCS has made significant investments in building the capacity of OYF collaboratives to collect and use data to improve systems and outcomes for opportunity youth in their communities. These data efforts have focused on both using population-level data (such as the Common Measures) to set community-wide youth outcome goals, as well as improving partner-level data which can provide a more nuanced understanding of local trends and inequities.

FCS has also recognized that communities have varying relationships with data, with some having experienced harm or invisibility, particularly in tribal and rural areas, and has provided more specialized technical assistance and community-building around local data sovereignty. These efforts are helping communities with different contexts and histories to make meaning of data in ways that are important to, and determined by, the communities. The OYF network has embraced using data in a variety of ways — from understanding youth in their communities and their needs, to making the case for change to funders, policymakers, and the public (see Appendix A, OYF Data Use Framework).

FCS Data-Focused Investments

Phase 1: Equity Counts: the development of the Common Measures and the Data Use Framework

Phase 2: Data for Impact (D4I) investments; group and 1:1 technical assistance and learning (open to full network); tribal and rural sites data community of practice.

In 2021, the OYF network exhibited strengths in internal collaborative data capacity and in use of data for systems change. *Data and learning* was the highest rated collaborative capacity among the four capacities assessed. Furthermore, **collaboratives have seen substantial growth in data capacity and data use for systems change over the last one to two years**.

Collecting and Using Data for Systems Change

Significantly, there has been consistent growth in data use to improve systems in OYF communities from 2019 to 2020 to 2021 (strong evidence: 19% to 26% to 34%).[20] The particular areas of growth were in *common data definitions and indicators within and across key systems* (an increase of 18 percentage points from 2020 to 2021) and *data analysis and sharing learning*, or using data across systems to guide strategies and decisions (an increase of 13 percentage points from 2020 to 2021) (Figure 10).

In addition, **in 2021 data and learning as a systems change was ranked relatively high** — over one-third of the data use for systems change indicators (34%) were rated by collaboratives as strongly in place in their communities (see Figure 7). Having common data definitions and tools and sharing and using data within and across local systems to improve programs, inform systems-wide strategies, and drive policy is one dimension of systems change.

To produce accurate data that can be shared and used, shared understandings and common definitions of key terms and markers of progress among stakeholders and partners within and across local systems are critical. Collaboratives reported strong evidence of almost half (46%) of the indicators of common data definitions in systems on the self-assessment (Figure 11). For example:

- 58% of collaboratives reported strong evidence that common OY data indicators were tracked within key systems, with 36% of collaboratives reporting common indicators across different systems.

- 42% of collaboratives reported strong evidence of common definitions of OY indicators across systems.

In other words, partners within systems, and even across different systems, were collecting data and measuring progress — such as enrolling or completing postsecondary education or obtaining a job — in the same way. This is important because it allows for data to be aggregated or looked at for more than one program, organization, or system, which **makes the data much more useful for understanding progress and making strategic decisions about areas or populations to focus on at a *systems level*.**

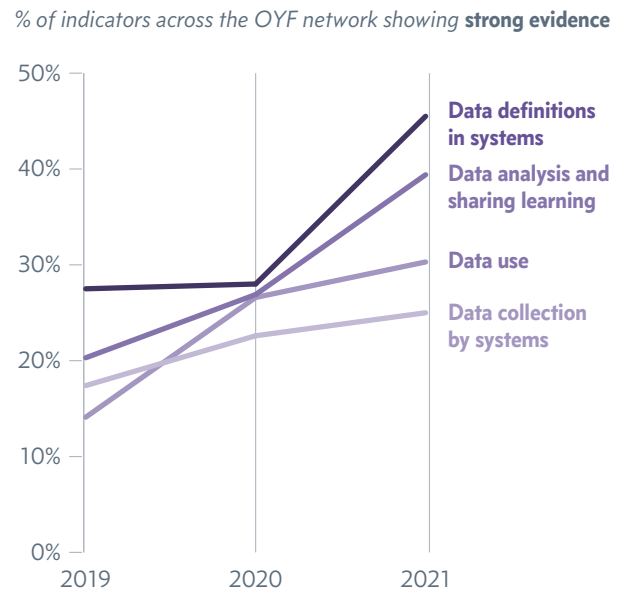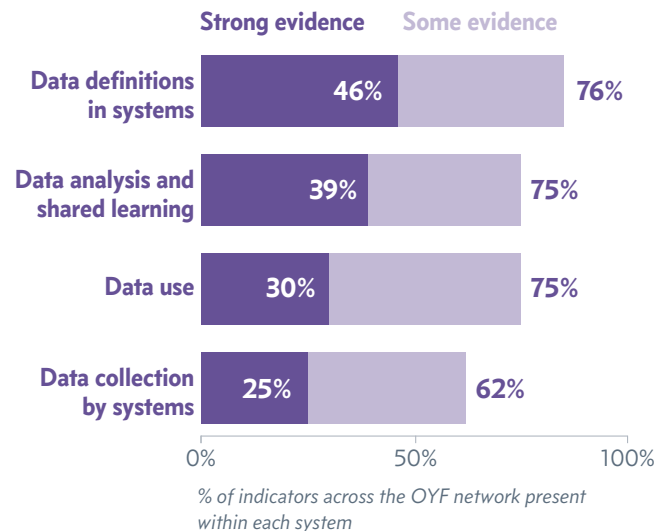**Growth in data use for systems change in OYF network over time, 2019-2021**

% of indicators across the OYF network showing **strong evidence**

- Data definitions in systems
- Data analysis and sharing learning
- Data use
- Data collection by systems

Strengths in data definitions, data analysis, and sharing learning in 2021

	Strong evidence	Some evidence
Data definitions in systems	46%	76%
Data analysis and shared learning	39%	75%
Data use	30%	75%
Data collection by systems	25%	62%

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each system

In fact, *data analysis* and *sharing learning* was the other type of data systems change that was rated relatively high by collaboratives (39% of indicators strongly evident in communities; Figure 11). Almost half of collaboratives (45%) reported strong evidence of *partners within the same local systems sharing data to assess and improve programs and services* for opportunity youth; the percentage dropped to 24% reporting that partners from *different* systems shared data. Sharing data is critical to understanding needs and progress and developing strategies that are aligned within a system, and ideally, across systems. This is how data can facilitate systems change.

Several collaboratives have coordinated and developed common definitions among cross-sector partners or the broader youth ecosystem in order to share and learn from data through **common data systems**. These systems help standardize data across multiple partners, producing more accurate data or information about young people, programs and services, and progress. The information can then be leveraged to help make decisions, align, and target services across local systems, develop connected strategies, case-make, and share progress.

A few collaboratives described data systems which focused on coordinating information within one local system, such as the workforce system or K-12 education system and shared how the collaboratives use these data.

- The workforce system in **Detroit** is using a data management system that tracks all Detroit residents, 18 and over, who seek workforce development services. This will allow the collaborative to monitor the progress of older opportunity youth who seek support from local workforce programs.

- In **Buffalo**, the data team is building a data platform where eight youth employment partners will enter data, and the system will produce aggregate reports. The site lead notes *"… [the] data project is … for the very first time in the history of our community … helping us look across the youth employment system so that we can look at the aggregate data of who are we serving, who aren't we reaching and how are we doing and how could we do better."*

- Through a partnership with a local postsecondary institution, **Jasper** is developing a database to track high school students across six school districts. The system will track college credits, career pathway participation, and courses needed to graduate, as well as being able to identify young people who are at risk for becoming opportunity youth.

Promising Practice:

Convening a Data Working Group to Inform Change

Leads in **Missoula** described participating in a working group to support local systems change. The working group includes the school district's superintendent, principals, teachers, community leaders, and youth. Together, the working group reviews data, elevating opportunities for policy change, practice change, and professional development for teachers. Curriculum and district practices are reviewed through an equity lens and have resulted in the district funding comprehensive training for all educators on anti-racism, anti-bias, and trauma-informed practices.

Data systems can lead to creating "data dashboards" or reports of aggregated data in formats to increase ease of use (such as charts and other visuals). Drawing from their data system, the **Newark Opportunity Youth Network** created a data dashboard that allows the partners to look at, for example, the number of credentials obtained, number of high school diplomas, and the number of employers engaged across the collaborative. The dashboard enables partners to coordinate referrals and programming. These data also inform ongoing technical assistance by highlighting where progress is and is not occurring. The site leads noted that having these data to present to policymakers (e.g., the large number of youth served) helps them strategically advance their advocacy goals.

"… we have kind of a monthly checkpoint that we're able to then look at the data collectively to look at how that youth workforce ecosystem is doing and then also individually."

"…being in a data collaborative and seeing not only youth-serving organizations, but even our public school system being very transparent about the data that they're experiencing, the challenges and successes that they're having engaging young people throughout the school year, has really, I think, shifted the culture around collaborative building, and specifically into data."

Data systems with common definitions and measures also lend themselves to group discussions of patterns and trends. For example, the **New Orleans Youth Alliance** is part of a data-sharing collaborative called Let's Discuss Data. The group includes cross-system partners such as youth-serving nonprofit organizations and the New Orleans public school system. They use common measures to track trends around enrollment, outreach and recruitment, case management, and mental health services. In addition to data sharing, the group also acts as a community of practice, identifying challenges with data and sharing best practices for engaging young people.

Data systems can also be flexible, bringing on new partners or additional systems in order to be even more comprehensive of the local ecosystem impacting opportunity youth. The **Hartford Data Collaborative** (affiliated with HOYC) is expanding the shared data system and data dictionary they developed in previous years to include local "sister initiatives," initiatives doing similar work locally or impacting the same young people. As more cradle-to-career initiatives in Hartford join this shared data system, there is the potential for an even greater understanding of the local ecosystem, as well as the potential for additional investment from funders. The expansion will also, however, lead to a greater need to align terminology and data collection procedures.

While using data to change systems is an area of growth, the ability to collect, use, and share data within and across systems varied by the type of collaborative. Collaboratives that were older, more experienced, and with better staffed and resourced backbones showed more evidence of data use for systems change. In addition, established urban collaboratives had greater data systems change than urban collaboratives new to the OYF network and rural and tribal collaboratives.[21] Resources and experience clearly matter in being able to do the challenging work of coordinating common data collection and sharing data in cross-sector partnerships and local ecosystems.

"…as we have some sister initiatives developing in Hartford, they've all kind of piggybacked on this [data] system, so now we're getting additional organizations who are on the cusp of sharing their data, and as they move into that data sharing, I think there'll be even a greater diversity of input, feedback, and practice."

Strong Internal Data Capacity

Building a collaborative's internal capacity to collect and use data is strongly tied to their ability to collect and use data within and across systems to guide systems-wide strategies and changes.[22] In 2021, over half of the data capacity indicators (52%) were considered strongly in place by collaboratives (see Figure 6). ***Data and learning was the highest scoring domain*** among the four types of capacity, ahead of *leadership, planning, and convening power*; *raising awareness and strategic communications*; and *resources for the collaborative*.

In prior years, *leadership, planning and convening power* was consistently the highest scoring internal capacity, reflecting the foundational nature of setting up structures for membership, workplans, and strategies. Now *data and learning*, with the highest score, is also clearly recognized as a foundational capacity for OYF collaboratives seeking to change systems and improve outcomes for opportunity youth.

While data capacity is strong across the OYF network, some collaboratives have built this capacity more extensively than others. As with using data for systems change, collaboratives with backbones that are older and have more experience also have greater data capacity.[23] Relatedly, established urban collaboratives have greater data capacity than newer urban collaboratives, rural collaboratives, and tribal collaboratives.[24] **Time, experience, and local context influence a collaborative's ability to build its capacity to collect, analyze, and use data** to advance collaborative OY strategies.

Overall, the **OYF network's data and learning capacity grew from 2020 to 2021** (40% to 52%, an increase of 12% points)[25], as did each specific type of data and learning capacity, although changes from 2019 to 2020 were more mixed (Figure 12). The largest growth was in *promoting learning* (increase of 20% points from 2020 to 2021) and *data analysis and interpretation* (increase of 16% points from 2020 to 2021), indicating that over the past year, more collaboratives in the OYF network took a learning orientation and bolstered their capacity to analyze and understand data to inform their OY strategies.

FIGURE 12

Growth in collaborative data capacity in OYF network over time, 2019-2021

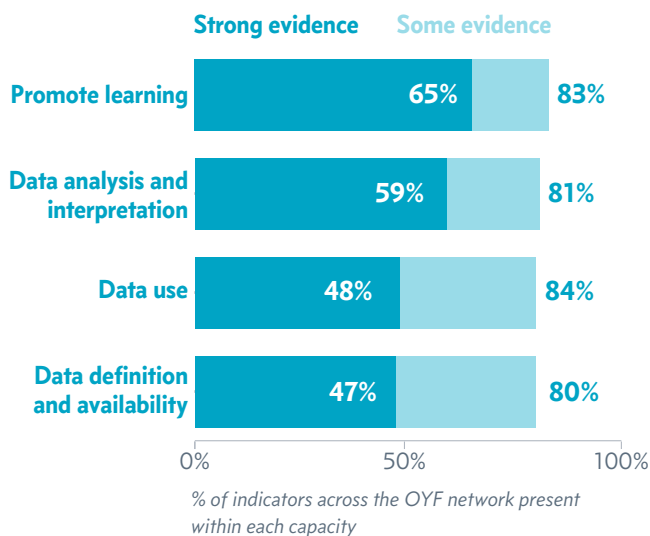*% of indicators across the OYF network showing* **strong evidence**
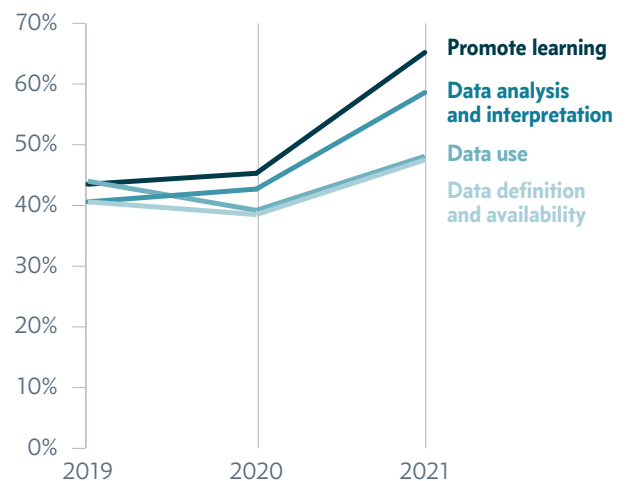
The OYF collaboratives' strengths in data capacity illustrate a strong learning orientation towards collecting, analyzing, and using data to inform their OY work. The strongest data capacity in 2021 was *promoting learning*, where 65 percent of the indicators were reported as strongly in place (Figure 13). For example, about three-quarters of collaboratives (73%) reported strong evidence that they convened learning opportunities for partners and stakeholders. A few of the collaboratives such as **New Orleans** (described in the previous section) and **Hopi** described data working groups or communities of practice, a structured space for building data capacity and for shared learning. In addition, 58 percent of collaboratives reported strong evidence that they *used a continuous improvement or other learning framework*. Looking at disaggregated data is also a common data and equity practice. Over half of collaboratives (55%) noted strong evidence that the collaborative and its partners *used disaggregated data to identify inequitable outcomes*.

Collaboratives also learned from analyzing, disaggregating, sharing, and reflecting on data. The capacity to *analyze and interpret data* was also strongly present in the collaboratives (59% of indicators were strongly evident; Figure 13). Sixty-one percent of collaboratives reported that they *shared, analyzed, and reflected on OY data to refine their work*. Significantly, 61 percent of collaboratives reported that they had the *staff they needed to analyze and use data*.

FIGURE 13
Capacity strengths in promoting learning and data analysis and interpretation in 2021

Strong evidence   **Some evidence**

Promote learning — 65% | 83%
Data analysis and interpretation — 59% | 81%
Data use — 48% | 84%
Data definition and availability — 47% | 80%

0%   50%   100%

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each capacity

A few of the collaboratives explicitly mentioned the **critical role of dedicated data personnel**, staff with expertise and comfort with data, who can help collaboratives collect and use data more effectively. In **New Orleans**, a dedicated staff person to focus on data management and training, and to facilitate a community of practice, has been very beneficial. *"…[H]aving a dedicated person to help support us through -- how do we build out our data collection system, what information are we trying to actually collect, how are we utilizing that data and looking at trends."*

52% of backbones had at least 0.5 FTEs dedicated to data for their OY efforts.

In **Philadelphia**, the site lead described how dedicated staffing has resulted in more sophisticated and deeper analyses and learning from data. Rather than just looking at data that they were accountable for to funders, data staff are now looking at *"things much more deeply, like the connections between the demographics of the participants over the years and … cross-matching with what their outcomes look like and who those providers are. Just asking those more kind of multi-layered questions."* The collaborative is getting greater clarity on what their data means. For example, when youth are "dismissed" staff are digging into why — was it a successful dismissal? Are program staff defining it in the same way? This deeper analysis leads to more reliable and useful information.

In addition to staff, some collaboratives described how clear agreements between the backbone and partners increased their ability to collect and use data to improve systems for opportunity youth. The **Newark Opportunity Youth Network** and **Phoenix Opportunities for Youth** described the importance of clear expectations for data collection when partners join the collaboratives. Newark shares common definitions and metrics in partner MOUs and Phoenix outlines data responsibilities in partner agreements and during onboarding. **Greenville** also put into place data-sharing agreements which helped them better understand who was doing what and at what scale.

69% of collaboratives reported having data-sharing agreements between collaborative partners and the backbone.

Integrating Youth Voice into Data Collection and Analysis

Youth voice and youth engagement, especially in implementing programs for opportunity youth, is a strong core value in the OYF network. However, while some collaboratives have demonstrated effective ways of *engaging youth with data,* these indicators tended to be rated lower on the self-assessment. For example, 27 percent of collaboratives reported strong evidence of *regularly and directly engaging young people in reviewing, reflecting on, and making sense of its data.* Thirty percent of collaboratives reported strong evidence that *youth led or were engaged in participatory research and/or data gathering efforts.* Involving youth in data efforts not only builds important skills in young people but is critical to fully understanding what the data mean, by drawing on young people's lived experience and perspective.

A few communities shared their experience involving youth in their collaborative's data work or their plans for doing so.

- In **Santa Clara County,** young leaders reviewed data and quickly identified housing as a critical barrier related to other issues and data points. The site lead described this as *"…one of my pivotal moments in this work of why participatory action research is so important, that experience of actually living what the data is telling you gives that added layer of nuance."*

- The **Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative** described why they want to more frequently involve youth in looking at their data. In addition to engaging youth with data to build skills, they want to ensure that the data collected and how it is shared is relevant to youth. Their data consultant said *"… having [young people] help us create data that is important to them and speaks to them in terms of things they find are important and in providing data in ways that they can digest and feel like they can act on."* Data can also help guide youth by providing current information about the labor market and other opportunities that are most likely to lead to success.

- Through working with the California Opportunity Youth Network (COYN), **San Diego's Youth Opportunity Pathways Initiative** hired youth fellows to do local needs assessment work and is continuing to look for ways to employ participatory methods with young people to collect data and understand young people's perspectives.

"…it's also important for [young people] to understand [data] in a way they can engage with what some of the realities are. They can say they really want to start their own businesses and do freelance work and do all the things that youth today tend to think a lot about, when the reality is, that can be a really tough slog, and there are lots of openings and a lot of occupations that might serve them in the meantime, while they are doing this stuff. Finding a way to create a balanced picture for them while serving up the information they want is important."

Looking Ahead: Data Use

It is evident that FCS' investment in data-focused efforts is paying off as the OYF network has consistently improved over time in using data at the systems level to affect change and has shown improvements in collaborative capacity to collect and use data.

While there is much to be proud of, there is room to continue to improve network-wide consistency in collaborative-level data collection, analysis, and use. For example, while most collaboratives were able to provide an estimate of the number of youth they served through direct programming, fewer were able to provide demographic characteristics of those youth, and fewer still the outcomes they achieved (such as reconnection to education and/or the workplace). Just over half of collaboratives (55%) reported they *collected youth output and/or outcomes data from all or most of their partners.* These data are important for understanding who the OYF network is reaching and how direct services provided by collaboratives and their partners impact youth reconnection. Balancing these data needs with staff burden, multiple data systems, and data privacy concerns will continue to inform data improvement discussions and learning.

Deep Dive #2: PUBLIC POLICY

Leaning into Public Policy Change: Progress Will Take Time

Public policies influence the flow of resources within systems, set laws and accountability structures for system actors, and incentivize and prioritize behaviors for system stakeholders. OYF collaboratives work to enact new or modify existing public policies to address barriers encountered by opportunity youth. In 2021, the OYF network rated its evidence of public policy change relatively low compared to other system changes. In contrast, scores in 2021 represent promising signs of growth — increasing five percentage points from 2020 levels. Collaboratives leveraged several strategies to influence policy — including building relationships and sharing data with public officials and informing the public of their goals. Building internal capacity for public policy, including having staff with policy expertise, can support the network's continued growth.

Public policies influence the flow of resources within systems, set rules and accountability structures for system actors, and incentivize and prioritize behaviors for system stakeholders. For much of history, public policies have contributed to inequitable outcomes for people served through society's education, workforce, and other systems. By working to enact new or modifying existing public policies, collaboratives can attempt to address the challenges and barriers encountered by opportunity youth at their structural and historical root.

Engaging in advocacy and public policy change can be both time and labor intensive. Organizations may need to dedicate funding for advocacy efforts or hire staff with specialized training. Legislative "wins" may unfold slowly, often taking years, depending on the level (e.g., local policy or federal policy). As a result, the costs and barriers to entry for collaboratives to engage in public policy change are relatively high compared to other systems changes. Collaboratives may also choose to focus efforts on institutional policy change, influencing the practices of organizations that play a role in systems, such as employers and universities.

Collaboratives may approach public policy change with different motivations, influencing how they might engage in change or advocacy efforts. For example, two large, urban collaboratives shared divergent views on how to engage in policy. The first described the collaborative as "*all in*" on policy change. They explained their motivation for engaging in policy, elevating how policy change challenges systems differently from programs: *"We know that there are multiple factors at play that contribute to youth disconnection from both education and the workforce. We also know that there are a lot of factors at play… that limit CBOs' abilities to serve those young people."* The second collaborative shared a more guarded approach, observing that policy change has historically been difficult for the backbone to pursue as they navigate what is allowed given their 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation. Representatives described the collaborative's approach to policy change as "*cautious*."

Public policy was among the least leveraged systems changes across the OYF network. Collaboratives reported strong evidence on just 21 percent of public policy indicators and some evidence on 49 percent of the indicators (see Figure 7). The network, however, is showing promising growth. Building organizational capacity and expertise for policy and advocacy, in addition to continuing to raise awareness for OY issues, may prove to be a reliable road map for the network's continued improvement.

Public Policy Scores are Trending Upwards

Several collaboratives reported evidence of public policies that influence local systems. Nearly one-third of collaboratives (30%) reported strong evidence that new local policies addressing OY issues and barriers were implemented by systems or governments (Figure 14).

"Unless we change the rules and the regulations that govern [systems], we'll always be swimming upstream to a certain extent."

Examples of the types of policy changes that collaboratives supported or engaged in include:

Expanding access to youth job programs

- **San Diego:** Supported a state bill to increase California's apprenticeship program for youth.
- **Boston:** Supported increasing the upper age limit for participants in the city's job program from 24 to 26.

Increasing youth wages

- **Tucson:** Supported increase of city's minimum wage from $12.50/hour to $15/hour by January 2025.
- **Philadelphia:** Advocated to increase the youth wage and incentives for the city's summer youth job program.

Increasing funding to support young people

- **Austin:** Supported a bill that provides funding for youth in the foster system or youth experiencing homelessness to complete driver's education courses.
- **Hartford:** Secured additional funding for job training and other youth supports through the CARES Act.

Removing barriers to young people accessing opportunities

- **New York:** Advocated for school district reform so that partners could loosen Regents testing requirements to allow for more work — based learning opportunities.
- **Los Angeles:** Secured WIOA waiver that allowed in-school foster youth to participate in WIOA-funded programming.
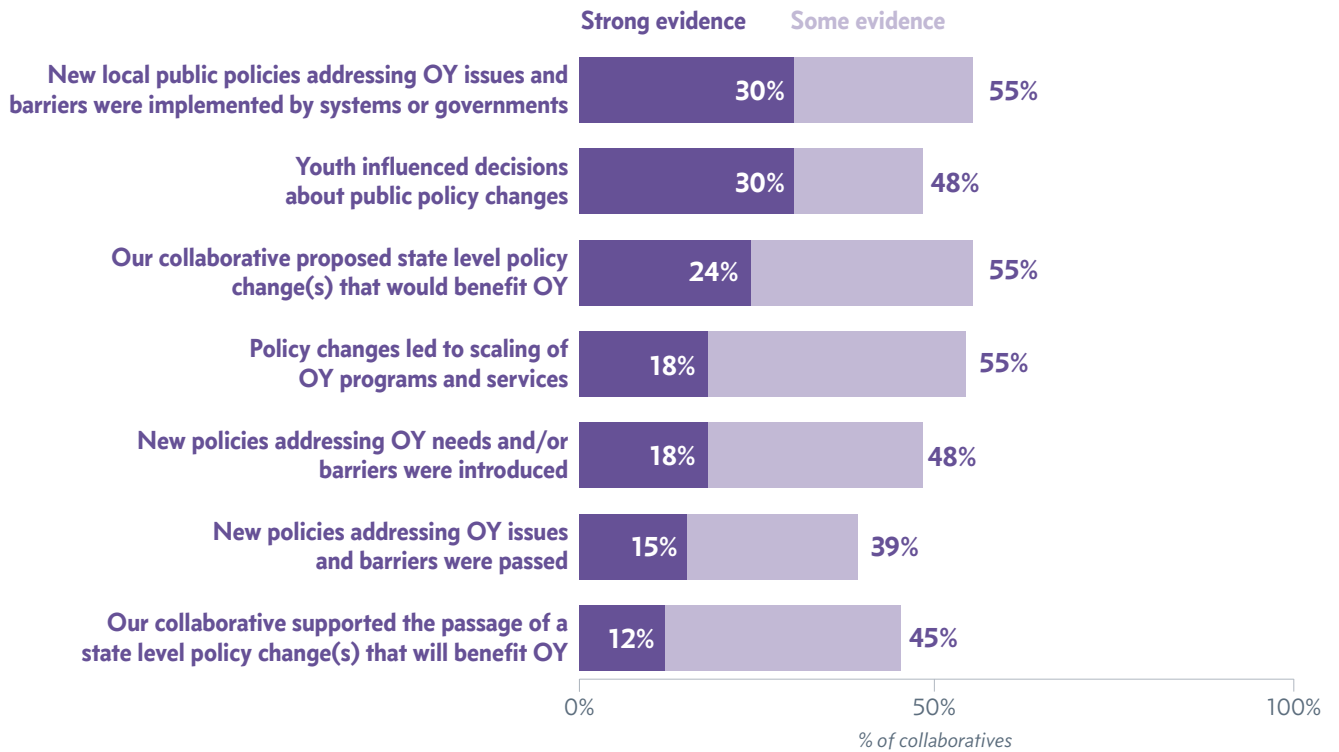
Advocating for new types of research

- **Newark:** Advocated for the creation of the Office of Dropout Prevention and Recovery within the New Jersey Department of Education, which would create a task force to study youth disconnection in New Jersey.
- **San Diego:** Advocated to the county for research on alternatives to incarceration for transition-aged youth (18–25).

While the examples above are evidence of the network's progress, collaboratives across the network have not played an extensive role in shaping legislation, particularly at the state level. In 2021, eight collaboratives (24%) reported strong evidence of proposing state level policy changes. Four collaboratives reported strong evidence of supporting the passage of state-level policy changes (Figure 14). While state-level advocacy has not been an expectation of OYF collaboratives, communities from two states — California, through the **California Opportunity Youth Network (COYN)** and Texas, through the **Texas Opportunity Youth Network (TOYN)**[26] — have collaborated to collectively address state — level policy changes. COYN and TOYN are state-level policy change collaboratives made up of individual OYF member collaboratives in those states.
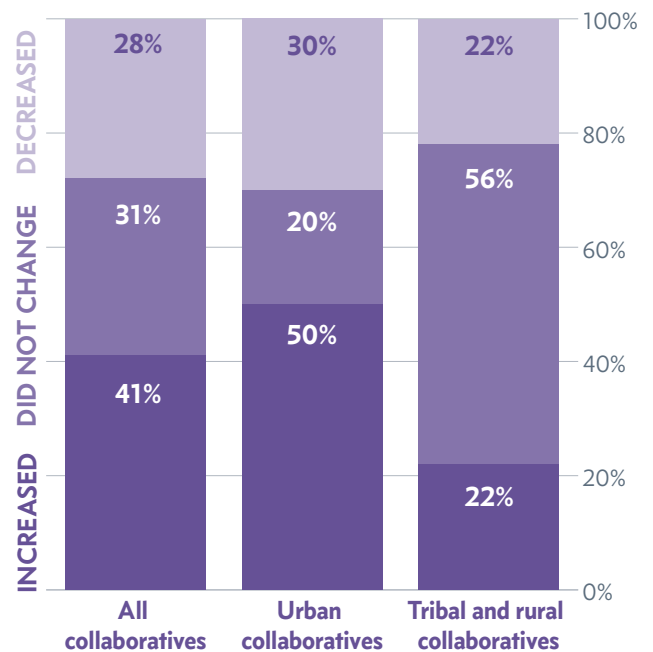
FIGURE 14
Percentage of collaboratives reporting types of policy changes in 2021

Strong evidence   Some evidence

New local public policies addressing OY issues and barriers were implemented by systems or governments
30% 55%

Youth influenced decisions about public policy changes
30% 48%

Our collaborative proposed state level policy change(s) that would benefit OY
24% 55%

Policy changes led to scaling of OY programs and services
18% 55%

New policies addressing OY needs and/or barriers were introduced
18% 48%

New policies addressing OY issues and barriers were passed
15% 39%

Our collaborative supported the passage of a state level policy change(s) that will benefit OY
12% 45%

0%   50%   100%

% of collaboratives

The network is showing promising signs of engaging in policy change. In 2021, the network increased the percent of indicators scored as *strong evidence* by five percentage points over 2020 levels, surpassing 2019 levels by two percentage points (see Appendix B). Twelve sites reported higher public policy scores in 2021 than they did in 2020, compared to just six who reported a lower score.[27] The network's growth may be fueled by a specific group of sites. Of the 12 sites reporting higher scores in 2021, 10 are from urban centers. Three out of four tribal sites and all but one of the rural sites reported either a decrease or no change from 2020 to 2021 in their public policy scores. In 2021 urban communities reported higher public policy scores than rural communities (Figure 15).[28] The data signals that a community's geographic context may influence its policy engagement. Factors such as proximity to stakeholders and partners may facilitate policy and advocacy change in urban communities.

FIGURE 15
Urban collaboratives more likely to improve on policy change, 2020-2021

DECREASED   DID NOT CHANGE   INCREASED

	All collaboratives	Urban collaboratives	Tribal and rural collaboratives
DECREASED	28%	30%	22%
DID NOT CHANGE	31%	20%	56%
INCREASED	41%	50%	22%

Raising Awareness of Issues Related to Opportunity Youth as a First Step to Policy Change

Raising awareness and strategic communication is one of the four collaborative capacities tested in the self-assessment and reflects a collaborative's ability to communicate its vision, bring attention to the needs of opportunity youth, and engage partners and system actors in efforts to change systems — all necessary actions to engage in public policy change and advocacy. In the self-assessment, public policy and raising awareness were highly correlated, indicating a strong relationship between the two elements.[29] In 2021, collaboratives rated 36 percent of the indicators related to *raising awareness and strategic communication* as having strong evidence — an increase of eight percentage points over 2020 levels (Figure 6). Older backbones (established for 10 or more years) were more likely to have greater *raising awareness* scores.[30]

Many collaboratives are laying the groundwork for engaging in public policy and advocacy by engaging with public officials.

Over half of collaboratives (52%) reported strong evidence of *reaching out to decision makers, public officials, and policy makers to build relationships in support of its OY policy change agenda*. These relationships were leveraged to help policy makers prioritize opportunity youth in legislative decisions, including funding and appropriations. Some collaboratives used their audience with public officials to broadly discuss opportunity youth. For example, one urban site recalled being invited to the state's governor-appointed workforce council to focus the council's attention on opportunity youth.

Other collaboratives took a more focused approach in raising awareness. One tribal community, for example, discussed sponsoring a policy summit and highlighting Indigenous young people in the foster system, along with increasing attention on the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous people in the state. A collaborative representative from another tribal community emphasized building relationships beyond their local representative, noting *"at a state level, in order to make everything happen and change the law, you need the support of senators and representatives. Not only those that represent us within our district, but the key positions, those ones that hold the chair positions in the education committees, in the appropriations, in the policy committees."*

Collaboratives shared that data is an effective way to communicate with public officials. Almost half of collaboratives (46%) reported strong evidence of *sharing data or research with decision makers and policy makers to make a case for policy change*. For example, collaborative representatives from San Antonio worked with a local university to develop a report on the number and location of opportunity youth in the city.

But relationships with public officials need time to develop and mature. Relatedly, backbone age and experience does appear to influence a collaborative's policy change scores. More mature backbones (those that have been leading OY efforts for more than 10 years) report higher policy change scores than less mature collaboratives.[31]

Promising Practice:
Using Policy Briefs to Advocate for Change

Philadelphia's backbone drafted a policy brief to advocate for an increase in youth wages in the city's summer jobs program (WorkReady Summer). The brief was shared with partners from the city's Office of Children and Families and included youth survey and program utilization data. The brief contributed to wages increasing from $9/hour to $11/hour.

Collaboratives also have begun to inform the public of their goals and vision.

While just 10 collaboratives (30%) reported strong evidence that the *public was knowledgeable about their vision*, several collaboratives reported at least some evidence in the following items:

- 76% of collaboratives *produced OY-focused public reports throughout the year*

- 61% of collaboratives *released publications and other dissemination products that leveraged recent data on the local OY population*

- 58% of collaboratives *sought and garnered attention about OY-related issues in their local media*

Promising Practice:
Influence Youth Practitioners through Professional Development

Missoula's backbone, Empower Montana, offered professional development training to schools and communities to build inclusive teaching and learning environments. Collaborative leads reflected, *"You can't change policy without changing hearts and minds."*

Collaboratives delivered and shaped messages based on their audiences.

For example, collaborative representatives from **New York** found it important that recommendations are practitioner-informed and described their recent policy document as *"rooted in the voices of our partners from all of our areas of work in addition to other key stakeholders in a system."*

Other collaboratives discussed the ways in which the local political environment influences messaging. For example, **Houston** framed messages around supporting the economy, noting *"we can build a narrative around the economy, and this is hurting our economy and the prosperity of our people when young people aren't set up for a prosperous adulthood… Anytime you frame things around the economy or prosperity, that's a very Texas welcoming message."*

OYF tribal communities each shared needing to elevate the specific barriers, opportunities, and contexts for Indigenous opportunity youth. One community described an opportunity to host a committee of representatives from the state legislature and create *"an agenda that was more tribal, Native specific"* and *"prioritize challenges that tribes may be facing."* Another summed up the collaborative's work: *"It's more focus-based on the issues within our own community and what we see with our youth."*

Promising Practice:
Convene a Policy Working Group with Practitioners

Collaborative representatives in **New York** highlighted convening a policy working group of practitioners. Including practitioners helps ensure policy recommendations center the experiences and expertise of those working directly with young people. Collaborative representatives described including practitioners in conversations with local policy makers, including council members that focus on education, workforce development, and young adults.

Building Internal Capacity to Engage in Policy Change and Advocacy

Staffing can play a key role for backbones in facilitating policy and advocacy work, but policy positions are scarce.

One urban site highlighted the impact of bringing on a full-time policy advocacy manager. Doing so has opened the door for the collaborative to *"identify the policy landscape in [our state] in terms of what certain legislators may have appetite for."* A tribal community discussed the value of having a policy and civic engagement director at their backbone organization to help navigate state policy decisions that will impact tribal communities. The lead reflected this capacity was needed as *"a lot of times the policies come from the state or from very urban-centric development."*

However, staff dedicated to policy is not common in the OYF network. Two-thirds of the backbones reported having less than one FTE focused on OY policy and a quarter reported having just one staff member. This may present a challenge for backbones juggling multiple priorities.

Beyond staffing, a collaborative's capacity for pursuing policy change may be supported externally by the backbone organization. **California's COYN** and **Texas' TOYN** provide added capacity to backbones in advocating for state policy change. Several of the **California**-based OYF communities named legislative policy gains that were supported through COYN's advocacy in our interviews.

Collaboratives engage young people in their advocacy efforts.

As youth inclusion and incorporating youth voice remain key tenets of the OYF strategy, several collaboratives have included young people in their advocacy efforts. Thirty percent of collaboratives reported strong evidence of *youth influencing decisions about public policy changes*. Many collaboratives (42%) reported strong evidence of *youth using strategic storytelling about their experiences to communicate and elevate issues to the public*. Collaboratives from both rural and urban communities shared examples of taking young people to meet with legislators and including young people's voices in testimony supporting bills.

Reflected one collaborative representative, *"It's important for young people to tell their story and own their story, not for us to consistently talk for them… For them to get in front of these legislators, for them to get in front of these policy changemakers and say, 'This is why you need to pay attention to us. This is why it's important to change the systems around how you serve us. This is why it's important to value us and include us when you're thinking about how you are changing systems around education, and access, and equity.'"*

> *"We empower youth to have their voice heard. We amplify their needs and issues, and we create opportunities for them to have their voices heard."*

Looking Ahead: Public Policy

Public policy remains a critical part of changing systems and removing the historic barriers that have limited access to opportunities for too many young people. Through our assessment, OYF collaboratives highlighted the various ways they engage in policy change, including raising awareness of OY issues, building relationships with policy makers, and providing testimony on proposed legislation. Across the network, each collaborative's ability to engage in policy change varies widely. The network may consider developing a *policy change framework* that highlights an array of approaches collaboratives can take as they work to influence public policy. Such a framework may give collaboratives guidance on approaches and examples of how to engage local leaders in policy change, considering the collaborative's local context, current level of capacity, and level of government (local, state, and federal) they seek to influence. FCS' Data Use Framework[32] is a helpful example of a model that highlights multiple engagement strategies.

Deep Dive #3: FUNDING CHANGES

Shifting Funding Practices: Increasing Access and Opportunities for Young People and for the Network's Sustainability

Public and private funding represent intentional decisions and priorities of system leaders and reflect presiding public narratives, policy preferences, and historic precedents. Collaboratives work to shift funding practices and distribution of resources to create more opportunities for opportunity youth and fund transformative systems change. In 2021, the network continued its steady annual growth in funding — increasing six percentage points from 2019 levels. Funding shifts may be difficult to enact. Barriers include misalignment between collaboratives and funders, limited interest in funding backbone activities, and expanding established funder relationships. Collaboratives leverage various strategies to overcome these barriers, including shifting narratives around opportunity youth.

OYF collaboratives find and leverage resources to fund organizations, programs, and staff serving and working on behalf of young people in their communities. These funds may be channeled through public dollars, as is the case with a municipality's tax revenue funding a summer jobs program. They may also be allocated through private dollars, perhaps through a private foundation providing a grant to a community-based organization. Regardless of the source, funding allocations represent intentional decisions and priorities of system leaders and reflect presiding public narratives, policy preferences, and historic precedents.

Funding decisions may intentionally or unintentionally create or exacerbate barriers for young people and the organizations and systems attempting to serve them. Funding may be insufficient given the goals of the initiative or bill. It may be too narrowly earmarked, perhaps not adequately addressing root causes of the challenge or providing for the holistic needs of the organization. It may prioritize certain behaviors or programs over others, at times against the wishes or without the knowledge of community members and practitioners.

Shifting funding practices and the distribution of public and private resources in local systems creates more opportunities for OYF collaboratives to not only better serve young people, but also to pave the way for more transformative systems change.

Despite its promise and potential impact on young people, funding changes remain one of the least leveraged systems changes across the OYF network and among the more difficult to engage. Collaboratives reported strong evidence on 24 percent of *funding change* indicators, with some evidence on 60 percent of *funding change* indicators (Figure 7). However, the network's evidence of funding change is increasing.
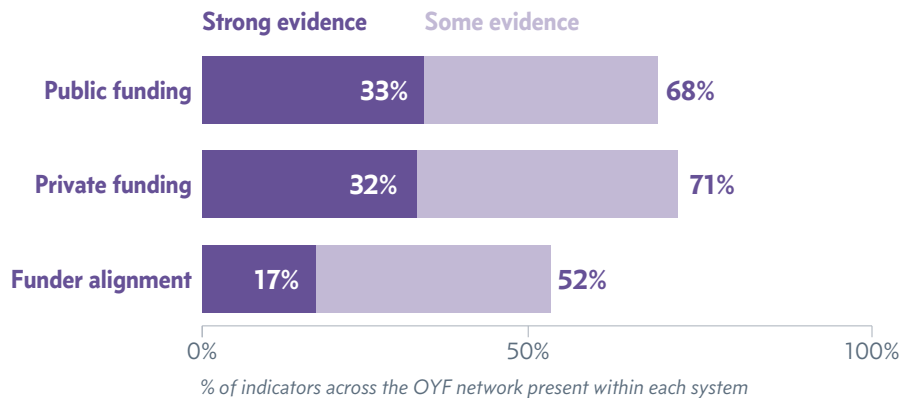
Shifting Funds for Systems Change

Shifting resources to create and expand OY pathways is a critical goal of the network's systems change efforts. These shifts in funds for OY pathways may indicate that new narratives or priorities around opportunity youth have emerged. It likely signals an increase in access to career or educational opportunities as well.

"What we are trying to do is to shift … the funding in the [city's] school system [to] prevent young adults from becoming [OY] or to help them in their pathway."

The network is reporting evidence of leveraging both new and existing *public and private funds* (strong evidence on 33 percent and 32 percent, respectively, see Figure 16). Most collaboratives reported at least some evidence that new funding was dedicated to OY pathways: 73 percent of collaboratives reported some evidence of *new public funding* emerging, while 76 percent reported some evidence of *new private funding* dedicated to opportunity youth.

FIGURE 16
One-third of public and private funding indicators were strongly evident in 2021


Strong evidence   Some evidence

Public funding — 33% | 68%
Private funding — 32% | 71%
Funder alignment — 17% | 52%

0%   50%   100%

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each system

Sites shared examples of shifting funds to ensure funding is better earmarked for opportunity youth:

- **Newark:** Collaborative partners advocated for the state passing the Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot Program bill. As a result of this bill, funding from the youth incarceration system is being reallocated to local CBOs serving young people.

- **New York:** Collaboratives are supporting a shift in funding in the school system towards opportunity youth prevention, including workforce training, career pathways, and apprenticeships. Collaborative leads described a pilot where select schools receive newly allocated funding from the school system to support these initiatives.

- **San Diego:** Collaborative leads advocated for local funding to be allocated to employ youth in the county's green jobs, including parks services. The same allocation provided funding for nonprofit organizations to also hire young people for "green jobs".

Despite the relatively low scores in 2021, the network's ability to leverage funding for systems change appears to be improving — at least for urban communities. Funding scores have grown steadily since 2019 — from 18 percent in 2019, to 21 percent in 2020, and ultimately to 24 percent with this past year's assessment. This growth of six percentage points is among the larger two-year gains across all the systems change domains measured in the self-assessment. The overall growth in funding change corresponds to related increases in both *public and private funding indicators*. Each increased by seven percentage points during the same two-year window. The network's score on public funding, specifically, has significantly increased since 2020. Public funding improved by 12 percentage points in 2021, increasing from 21 percent to 33 percent.

FIGURE 17
Growth in funding changes in OYF network over time, 2019-2021

*% of indicators across the OYF network showing **strong evidence***
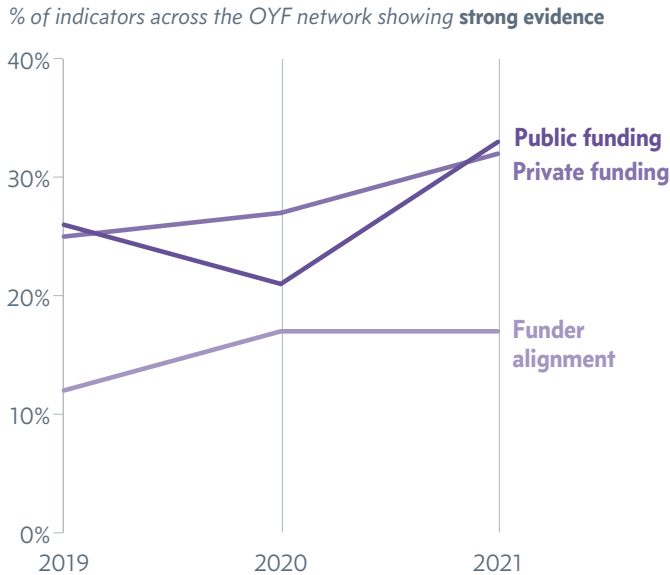
The network's growth in funding change seems to be driven by urban communities. Of sites that completed an assessment in both 2020 and 2021, 10 sites reported an increase in their funding change scores in 2021. These sites represented large, urban communities. Seventeen sites reported either a decrease from their 2020 level or sustained a score of zero — meaning that the community did not report making any progress in leveraging funding for systems change. The 17 communities include all the 11 rural or tribal communities. This difference suggests that a community's geographical context may impact its ability to leverage funding for systems change. The context of urban communities — including the number of partners, density, and proximity to system actors — appears to make it more likely that they will rate higher scores on funding change than rural or tribal communities. This is further evidenced by the self-assessment data in 2021, in which urban communities reported statistically higher scores in funding change than other types of communities.[33]

Barriers and Limitations in Pursuing Funding Change

Systemic funding shifts may be difficult to enact. They require a longer time horizon to build relationships and educate stakeholders. They may require specific expertise and staff capacity. Factors external to the backbone and partners, including the local political context, may also influence how a collaborative engages in funding change. Collaboratives elevated both challenges and other factors that may influence or otherwise limit their pursuit of funding change.

The goals and strategies of funders and collaboratives may be misaligned.

The network found it difficult to shift funders' priorities. Just 24 percent of collaboratives reported strong evidence that *funders prioritized work aligned with collaborative's goals*. This could be explained by collaboratives' reflection that it is difficult to find funding for systems change work.

In fact, just 15 percent of collaboratives reported that *new funders invested in local systems-level work around OY issues and opportunities*. One site observed, *"it's hard to find funders for that and articulating that we're not doing direct service."*

> *"Foundations that are sometimes overly directional and pushing their agenda versus pushing an agenda that actually is something that's wanted [by the community] is a challenge."*

Collaboratives also found it difficult to raise funds to support backbone activities, which may be overlooked in favor of direct service support.

In explaining the challenge, one site lead recounted: *"You're funding us to support the network that does the direct service and improve the overall coordination, raise awareness of opportunity youth, strengthen that network of partners, all of that. So that is a big challenge because funding is project oriented."* Another site put it succinctly: *"Programmatic dollars are relatively easy to come up with."* Collaborative partners offer limited support for collaborative and backbone activities. Fewer than one-third of sites (30%) reported strong evidence of *partner organizations committing in-kind supports to the backbone*. Just three sites (9%) reported strong evidence of *partner organizations committing financial resources to the backbone*. Similarly, 18 percent of sites reported that *partner organizations committed financial resources to collaborative efforts*. However, partner organizations were more likely to *dedicate personnel to support collaborative goals* (49% of sites reported strong evidence). Examples include partner staff lending their time and experience to collaborative working groups or a municipality supporting backbone staff positions.

Collaboratives may find it more difficult to increase existing funds than find new dedicated funding to support or sustain OY pathways.

This trend held true for both public and private sources of funding. For example, over 40 percent of collaboratives reported strong evidence of *new private funding* compared to under a third of collaboratives (30%) reporting *improving on existing levels of private and public funding*. This suggests that collaboratives may find it easier to develop new partnerships than to shift existing funder relationships. But this may come at a cost, as finding new partnerships can be resource-consuming. One collaborative lead commented on the toll of having to find new funders: *"You can't just keep applying and adding more projects and more projects because we have this backbone work we have to do…"* Some collaboratives, however, found that longer-lasting funding relationships are more likely to evolve with time.

Collaboratives appear to be balancing disparate funders and funding opportunities, which may make it more difficult to shift systemic funding practices. Relatively few collaboratives reported seeing evidence of funder collaboration in local systems. Fewer than one fourth of collaboratives reported strong evidence of *private and public funders collaborating* or that private funders collaborated, even with one another.

> *"They've seen our growth as an organization, and I think we've both or all have evolved to the point where we understand this is the next phase of the work."*

Some sites shared preferences for pursuing one type of funding over others.

While not a challenge, this disposition may limit the types of funding collaboratives pursue. Collaboratives who preferred private funding referenced the relative flexibility of those dollars. One site described how working with a private funder allowed them to design a new pathway for their community's young people: *"The grants that we have with them, they're kind of open to what we can use them for. For instance, we're going to start an electrical pathway."* Other sites described the challenge of using public dollars to pursue policy or advocacy goals. One interviewee reflected, *"We take no public dollars. So I think that's what keeps us neutral, because we don't take public money so we can kind of push in different places differently. Because when you take public dollars, it's really hard to advocate."* On the other hand, one backbone intentionally avoided private dollars in favor of public dollars, noting that they did not want to be in competition with their community-based organization partners who typically rely on private foundations. Another site offered that while public dollars may be more inflexible, they also tend to be larger: *"This one particular government grant is going to sustain our partnership director for four years and really help us to build [capacity]…"*

Strategies to Support Funding Changes

Collaboratives elevated several capacities and strategies that support establishing new, expanding current, or shifting funding opportunities for partners and young people.

Collaboratives leverage strong relationships with funders to secure longer-term funding.

Collaborative leads shared the benefits of creating and maintaining established partnerships with funders. Some reflected that established relationships make it easier to request funding for nonprogrammatic elements that are traditionally more difficult to fundraise for, like advocacy work or convening. Established relationships make it more likely that funders understand not only the OY landscape, but the trajectory and evolving needs of collaboratives and backbones.

One collaborative lead observed that their funders *"have a really grounded and tenured experience working with the OY population"* and that *"helped us sustain our work for a decade."* This is true for public funding as well. One lead recalled, *"having that key leader in city government from the beginning I think led us to other possibilities."*

> **"What we've been trying to do is actually get an inside voice into our city government to determine how that funding is going to be distributed over the years."**

Collaboratives work to shift narratives around opportunity youth to influence funding.

Collaboratives reflected on the role public perceptions of opportunity youth play in influencing funding priorities. One community observed that when the public held a distrusting opinion of opportunity youth — for example, conflating a rise in city violence and crime with young people — funding priorities shifted towards policing rather than social services for young people. Some collaboratives choose to counter such messages, prioritizing educating the public and public officials about opportunity youth. Collaboratives reported success in these efforts. Nearly half of OYF collaboratives (49%) reported strong evidence that the *narrative about OY in the community focused on assets, contributions, aspirations, and skills over deficits*. One community credited the collaborative's success at raising public dollars to a public report published on opportunity youth.

The lead continued, *"I think our city leadership mayor council now understand[s] who opportunity youth are. They're including them specifically in funding, mentioning them, mentioning opportunity youth by name, which was not the case before."* One lead recalled having to educate public officials on the kinds of investments needed to shift systems, including longer-term supports and not just short-term training supports.

Overall, the OYF network has made strong progress in influencing positive public discussion of opportunity youth. Most collaboratives — 27, or 82 percent — reported some evidence (11, or 33% reported strong evidence) that *local community and/or civic leaders elevated the strengths of opportunity youth*. Two-thirds of collaboratives reported strong evidence that the *challenges of opportunity youth were discussed among stakeholders as systemic, and not individual*. However, the network's efforts with business leaders appear to lag.

Promising Practice:

Engage influential third parties in messaging

Collaborative leads in **San Antonio** shared how a large banking institution hosted an event with key business leaders on the impact of opportunity youth in the community. Leads recalled, *"I think the event really helped elevate what we were trying to do and affirmed that it wasn't just those of us on the ground working with kids saying this. We now had a very prestigious outside organization coming in and affirming the work that we were doing."*

FIGURE 18
Communications strategies to support funding changes in 2021
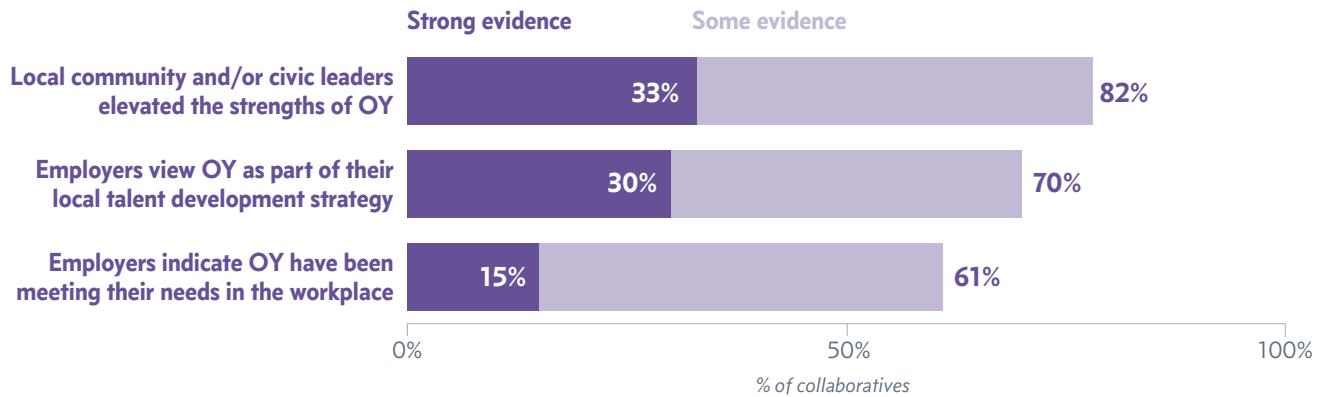
Collaboratives build organizational capacity to navigate funding streams.

Collaborative leads elevated the complexity of accessing various funding systems, particularly public funding. These challenges include understanding how to apply for public funding, what public dollar allocations are earmarked for opportunity youth, and how funding that stems from state and federal allocations funnels down locally. Some collaboratives described the benefit of having access to staff with expertise in public funding to help navigate these challenges.

In discussing having access to staff with this expertise, one site lead offered, *"I think we'd all just be scrambling because we wouldn't know what was coming without having that dedicated resource."* Another discussed how knowledge of the local public funding system helped the collaborative advocate for dollars, *"and given our [experience] with working with the city and advocating within the budget cycle, we knew how to work the system a little bit and who to go to get their support."* However, 76 percent of sites report having less than one FTE devoted to OY fundraising — let alone any with dedicated knowledge of complex public funding streams.

Looking Ahead: Funding Changes

Shifting funds and funding practices to increase access and opportunities for young people is one of the more direct and impactful ways to change systems. It is also one of the most challenging, requiring both time and expertise. Public funding — both federal and state — offers unique opportunities for collaboratives to secure, scale, and expand their work, but these funding streams tend to be complex, exacerbated by burdensome application and reporting processes. As the network looks to the next decade, it may consider how to elevate and pool collective learning, best practices, and resources to help collaboratives navigate cumbersome funding processes. Specific consideration should be given to rural and tribal communities, whose access and opportunities may be different than those of urban communities.

Deep Dive #4: EQUITY

Shifting Funding Practices: Increasing Access and Opportunities for Young People and for the Network's Sustainability

Equity, along with youth-led change and community power, is a stated core value of the OYF work, embedded in how collaboratives build their internal capacity and work to change systems to better serve opportunity youth. Over half the equity-focused indicators were strongly evident in OYF collaboratives and communities in 2021. Equitable practices increased between 2019 and 2020 and remained stable in 2021, indicating that equity remains a priority across the network. Equity shows up in collaboratives in a variety of ways — as a guiding principle, in diverse membership, in targeted strategies, and in narratives about opportunity youth. As FCS transitions to a north star of Belonging, Meaning, Wellbeing, and Purpose (BMWP), there is evidence that many in the network are already incorporating equitable practices around meaning making and healing from trauma.

FCS defines equity as the "just and fair inclusion in a society in which all can participate, prosper and reach their full potential".[34] OYF is an **equity-centered network**, focused on dismantling inequitable systems in education, workforce, justice, and human services that keep young people from achieving educational and economic success, particularly youth of color.

> *"…equity is what frames all of the work that we do."*

The network represents a wide geographic diversity of collaboratives serving urban, rural, and tribal communities (see Figure 1, map) and where over 80 percent of the young people served by collaboratives and partners are youth of color.[35] Equity, along with youth-led change and community power, is a stated core value of the OYF work, embedded in how collaboratives build their internal capacity and work to change systems to better serve opportunity youth (see Figure 4, Theory of Change). Equity is also an outcome, as OYF aims to achieve more equitably distributed success among opportunity youth.

While maintaining its emphasis on improving education and workforce outcomes for opportunity youth, FCS has identified a new "north star" for the next decade of work with BMWP — **Belonging, Meaning, Wellbeing, and Purpose**. BMWP is an approach aimed at counteracting the impact of racist systems and creating more equitable outcomes. Evidence shows that BMWP interventions have a strong positive effect, especially on young people of color.[36] The network is working towards embedding BMWP in programs, pathways, structures, systems, and narratives about opportunity youth.

The 2021 self-assessment and our interviews with site leads continued to explore how and to what extent collaboratives were embedding equitable practices in collaborative capacity building and systems change throughout the network — practices such as the diversity of members, using disaggregated data to identify and address disparities, and equity-focused narratives, goals, and policies. As OYF began its partnership with Arnold Chandler and centering BMWP in the work of the network, we also wanted to explore if and how collaboratives were incorporating meaning-making in their programming and systems change work. As the work evolves, we will continue to look at the integration of BMWP in collaboratives and local systems and its ties to equitable practices and outcomes.

Equity: A Core Value of the OYF Network

In 2021, among the three core values — equity, youth-led change, and community power — **collaboratives reported the greatest evidence of equity** (Figure 8). Over half (51%) of the equity-focused indicators were strongly evident in OYF collaboratives and communities in 2021. *Equitable practices* increased between 2019 and 2020 and remained stable in 2021 indicating that equity remains a priority across the network (Figure 19). In fact, equity was one of the highest rated domains among all the areas the self-assessment examined in 2021.

Growth in equitable practices in OYF network, 2019-2021

*% of indicators across the OYF network showing **strong evidence***
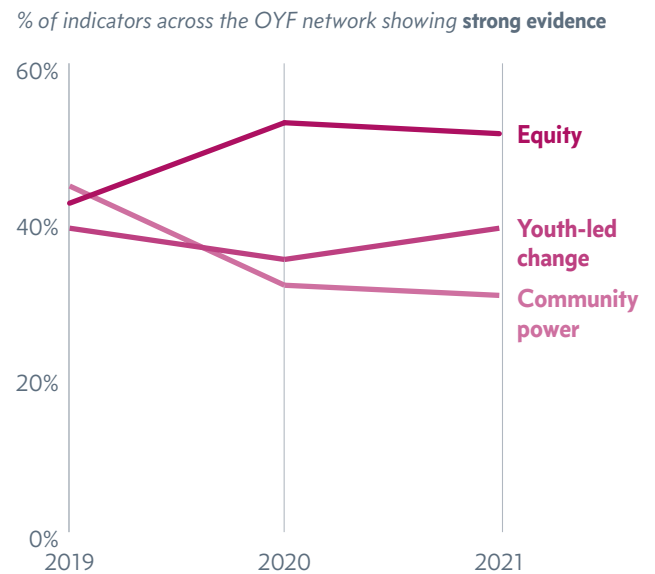
Equity is Evident in Collaborative Structures and Strategies

Collaboratives' commitment to equity influences the way they develop their cross-sector partnerships and their OY agendas. In 2021, over three-quarters of collaboratives reported that planning included *explicit acknowledgement of racial equity and/or community-specific disparities*, and this increased from 2020 to 2021 (68% to 76%).

> Half of the OYF collaboratives identified boys and men of color as a priority population for their OY work in 2021.

Sixty-one percent of collaboratives reported strong evidence that *collaborative members reflected the demographic diversity of the community*; about half (52%) noted this for members with decision-making authority. For example, the new collaborative in **Roaring Fork Valley** plans to hire a co-director who is Latina, someone with lived experience to represent the work, and a Spanish-speaker who is well-positioned in the local Latino/a community. By prioritizing this high-level position early on, the collaborative hopes to send a message about the importance of equity and representing the community.

Over half the collaboratives (55%) reported strong evidence of *using disaggregated data to uncover disproportionate outcomes for OY priority populations*, and this increased from 2020 to 2021 (46% to 55%). Among other uses, collaboratives used disaggregated data to identify their priority populations and specific systems on which to focus their OY efforts. For example, in response to disaggregated data showing inequitable postsecondary outcomes for Black men and Latinos, the **Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative** helped create the HOPE Initiative (Halting Oppressive Pathways in Education) at Bunker Hill Community College. Male students of color serve as HOPE ambassadors, conducting research, serving as peer mentors, and providing feedback to the college administration. The program seeks to empower young men of color, who have been disenfranchised on college campuses, and change the narrative from one of *"students being college-friendly, to colleges being student-friendly."*

> *"… we've made the intentional decision to start by talking about barriers, systems, structures, conditions that affect Black and Latino male students… because that's where the data tell us we should look at. If we don't follow it, then we can't say with full honesty that we are a data-driven, equity seeking collaborative."*

Collaboratives also reported evidence of attention to and understanding of equity and disparities among their key stakeholders and across local systems. Two-thirds of collaboratives noted strong evidence that *stakeholders discussed the challenges that racial, ethnic, gender, or age groups in their communities have faced*, and 64 percent of collaboratives reported *stakeholders understood racial disparities and the need to target strategies*. About 58 percent of collaboratives noted strong evidence that *equity was a focus of the narratives promoted about opportunity youth*. In addition, systems *using disaggregated data to improve programs for sub-populations* has been steadily increasing over the last three years, from 27 percent in 2019 to 36 percent in 2020 and increasing to 46 percent in 2021.

"…when we are not avoiding conversations about race and we're specifically saying, this is how Black students are doing, this is what we're seeing in our data, we're normalizing that so much more…"

A focus on equity and equitable practices was stronger in collaboratives with more resources (backbone organizations with larger OY budgets) and in established urban collaboratives, compared with new collaboratives, rural collaboratives, and tribal collaboratives. The local political and social context can have a significant effect on the ability to do community-wide equity work, as well as on the narrative of equity, race, and systems change for opportunity youth. For example, one collaborative described an environment where the superintendent, governor, and attorney general were banning conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion and the collaborative was a *"little island continuing on despite some pretty fierce opposition."*

Promising Practice:

Equity trainings to build narrative and equitable organizational changes

Equity trainings are one initial way that some collaboratives are facilitating equitable changes to programs and organizational practices by building common foundational knowledge.

South King County Road Map Project, which is focused on racial equity and specifically on centering the joy, needs, and experiences of Black students and young people, brought in Black equity trainers to provide partners with a foundation for understanding and talking about racial equity and how to weave it into their programs. One training was a *"deep dive anti-racist session around data"* where the collaborative looked at data in the context of national and local events.

In **Buffalo**, many local organizations and employers, including employers in the collaborative's youth apprenticeship pilot, have participated in racial equity impact training run by the Race Matters Institute. The comprehensive training includes foundational learning to develop a shared understanding of racial history and a shared language, and advances to work planning and utilizing an equity tool to assess organizational policies and practices. Site leads described changes in organizations from this training including hiring chief diversity officers to ensure policies align with equity goals, changing marketing strategies, and addressing hiring and retention practices.
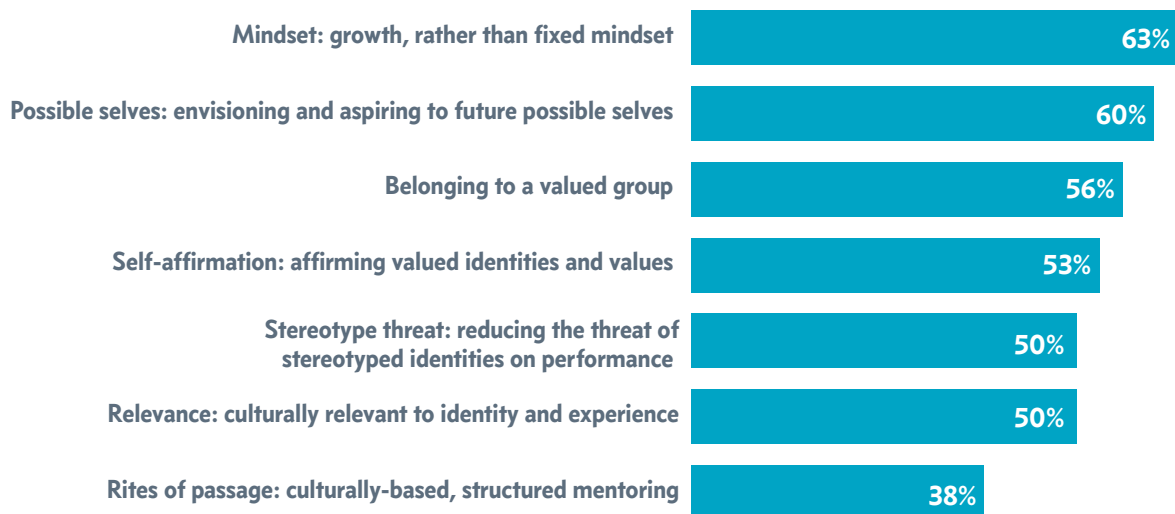
Exploring Meaning-making in the OYF Network

With the introduction of BMWP to the network in 2020 and 2021 through the Power of Place virtual learning series, we asked exploratory questions in the 2021 self-assessment about meaning-making — defined by Arnold Chandler as *"focusing on improving the identity-related meaning that youth apply to both themselves and the challenging contexts in which they strive to achieve."* BMWP, and specifically meaning-making activities, are important for all young people, but particularly essential and empowering for youth of color navigating inequitable spaces.

Using this definition of meaning-making, much of the network reported applying these elements in their work. **Three-quarters of collaboratives (76%) reported at least somewhat *integrating meaning-making elements into their programs for opportunity youth*, with 21 percent doing so "a lot."** In addition, at least half of collaboratives reported their partners were strongly incorporating six of Arnold Chandler's seven types of meaning-making into their OY programs or interventions. *Incorporating a growth mindset and possible selves*, or *envisioning and aspiring to future possible selves*, were the two most evident meaning-making practices across the network (Figure 20 and Appendix E).

FIGURE 20
Percent of collaboratives whose partners incorporate meaning-making into their OY programs
(incorporates well or very well)

Mindset: growth, rather than fixed mindset	63%
Possible selves: envisioning and aspiring to future possible selves	60%
Belonging to a valued group	56%
Self-affirmation: affirming valued identities and values	53%
Stereotype threat: reducing the threat of stereotyped identities on performance	50%
Relevance: culturally relevant to identity and experience	50%
Rites of passage: culturally-based, structured mentoring	38%

Overall, site leads are interested in and excited about centering BMWP in the OYF network and see it as promising and valuable for their work. Many see a close tie to their focus on youth voice and youth engagement, a long-standing core value of the network. For programs and pathways to be relevant and meaningful, they must incorporate young peoples' perspectives and the value of their lived experiences (see page 36 for more on incorporating healing as an equitable practice). Site leads also discussed the importance of BMWP not just for young people, but for the staff and providers who need to feel connected and supported to effectively work with young people.

"… young people have to feel connected and safe in order to be able to move to the next step."

"A lot of times, we hear about these feelings of disenfranchisement [from young people] that can originally stem from not being included in the conversation at all."

"You have to heal the healers to help the healers heal the children."

Looking Ahead: Equity and BMWP

Site leads are eager to see BMWP move from a more abstract concept to tangible strategies. Collaboratives described how additional resources for meaning-making work could provide training and learning opportunities to providers on how to incorporate BMWP into programs and services for opportunity youth, including promising practices and case studies. It will be important to see how BMWP can be embedded not just in programs for opportunity youth, but in organizational practices, in education and career pathways, and in policy. This is an exciting new direction for the network and the field, and we will explore how BMWP is operationalized and how it connects to and builds on the current work of the collaboratives.

Healing as an Equitable Practice in the OYF Network

Incorporating **healing from trauma** in programs and pathways is an equitable practice. The self-assessment (in 2020 and 2021) asked OYF collaboratives about the different strategies they employed to acknowledge and support healing among opportunity youth in their communities. In 2021, **nearly all collaboratives (97%) reported that they at least somewhat** *acknowledge trauma in their work with young people*; 70 percent of collaboratives do so "a lot."

The most common strategies used in 2021 by collaboratives to acknowledge and support healing among young people were: *training and skill development in youth organizing, advocacy, social justice, and/or critical awareness (72%) and incorporating **restorative justice** and conflict resolution practices*, which increased significantly as a strategy from 2020 to 2021 (32% in 2020 to 59% in 2021). Incorporating *culturally relevant healing practices* (e.g., ceremonies, body work, mindfulness, yoga) also increased significantly as a strategy for healing from 2020 to 2021 (23% in 2020 to 56% in 2021) (see Appendix E).

As the BMWP work is built out, there is likely significant overlap between the healing strategies that collaboratives are using in their programs and resources and the ways to embed the principles and promising practices of BMWP.

Healing Practices Incorporated by Collaboratives in Their Youth Organizing/Engagement Efforts

- Training on navigating workplace discrimination

- Supporting youths' community connections/ building social capital

- Youth Liberation Movement leadership development

- Trainings/learning series for providers on trauma- informed practice

- Community Healing Vigil and other community and cultural events

- Restorative justice circles

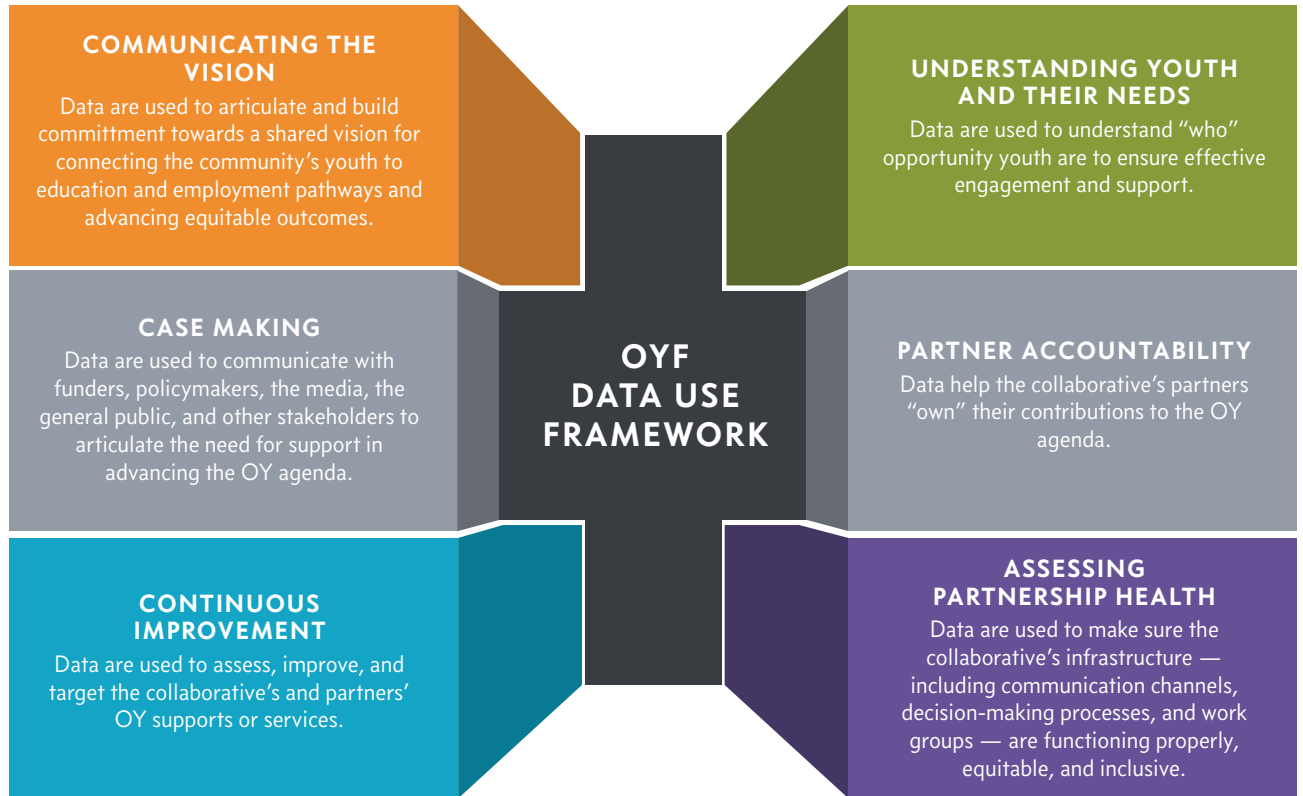- Open listening and healing sessions

NOTES

1 The OYF network includes 42 collaboratives across 39 communities, with four collaboratives located in New York City. Data in the report correspond to 33 collaboratives, including four from New York City, who completed the 2021 self-assessment.

2 The six new communities to join the OYF network in 2021 were: Bozeman, MT; Buffalo, NY; Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, SD; Hawai'i; Pueblo of Laguna, NM; and Roaring Fork Valley, CO. Because they recently joined the network, four of the six did not complete the 2021 self-assessment.

3 Kania, John, Kramer, Mark, and Senge, Peter. (FSG), The Waters of Systems Change, May 2018.

4 The correlation between collaborative capacity and systems change in 2021 is r=0.89 (p<.001).

5 https://www.aspencommunitysolutions.org/opportunity-youth-forum/

6 Some of Equal Measure's past reports can be found here: https://www.equalmeasure.org/oyf-2020-evaluation/.

7 https://measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2022/

8 See Appendix F for additional data on youth outputs and outcomes, based on the 2021 self-assessment.

9   These numbers will be updated using 2021 ACS data. 2020 ACS data were unreliable due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

10 The OYF network includes 42 collaboratives across 39 communities, with four collaboratives located in New York City. All data presented in this report corresponds to the 33 collaboratives, including four from New York City, who completed the 2021 Self-Assessment.

11 "Tribal" sites, communities, and partners are referenced throughout this report and refer to "native, Indigenous, and tribal" OY communities, collaboratives, sites, and partners.

12 The six new communities to join the OYF network in 2021 were: Bozeman, MT; Buffalo, NY; Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, SD; Hawai'i; Pueblo of Laguna, NM; and Roaring Fork Valley, CO. Because they recently joined the network, four of the six did not complete the 2021 self-assessment.

13 See Appendix C for additional background information on the OYF network and Appendix D for additional data on funding.

14 Kania, John, Kramer, Mark, and Senge, Peter. (FSG), The Waters of Systems Change, May 2018.

15 Backbone OY budget: t-test, p<.05. Peer group: ANOVA, p<.05.

16 Backbone OY budget: t-test, p<.01. Urbanicity: ANOVA, p<.05. Backbone age: ANOVA, p<.05.

17 Backbone OY budget: t-test, p<.01. Peer group: ANOVA, p<.10. Backbone age: ANOVA, p<.05.

18 The correlation between collaborative capacity and systems change in 2021 is r=0.89 (p<.001).

19 Equal Measure's self-assessment measures annual progress.

20 In addition, among sites that completed the self-assessment in both 2020 and 2021, 16 of 30 showed increases in data systems change.

21 ANOVA, p<.10 (backbone age), p<.05 (peer group). T-test, p<.05 (OY budget), p<.01 (OY FTE)

22 Significant positive correlation between data capacity and data for systems change: 0.71, p<.01

23 ANOVA, p<.05

24 ANOVA, p<.01

25 In addition, among sites that completed the self-assessment in both 2020 and 2021, 18 of 30 showed increases in data capacity.

26 The Aspen Institute provides financial support for TOYN.

27 Among sites that completed both the 2020 and 2021 self-assessment.

28 Chi-square, p<.05

29 Correlation coefficient = .69, p<.01

30 ANOVA, p<.001

31 Chi-square, p<.01

32 See Appendix A.

33 ANOVA, p=.012

34 https://www.aspencommunitysolutions.org/report/putting-equity-at-the-center/

35 2021 Self-Assessment Data

36 See OYF's Power of Place Digital Learning Series in 2021: https://www.aspencommunitysolutions.org/power-of-place-series/

COMMUNICATING THE VISION

Data are used to articulate and build committment towards a shared vision for connecting the community's youth to education and employment pathways and advancing equitable outcomes.

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH AND THEIR NEEDS

Data are used to understand "who" opportunity youth are to ensure effective engagement and support.

CASE MAKING

Data are used to communicate with funders, policymakers, the media, the general public, and other stakeholders to articulate the need for support in advancing the OY agenda.

OYF DATA USE FRAMEWORK

PARTNER ACCOUNTABILITY

Data help the collaborative's partners "own" their contributions to the OY agenda.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Data are used to assess, improve, and target the collaborative's and partners' OY supports or services.

ASSESSING PARTNERSHIP HEALTH

Data are used to make sure the collaborative's infrastructure — including communication channels, decision-making processes, and work groups — are functioning properly, equitable, and inclusive.

Appendix B:

2021 Scores and Trends (2019 to 2021) in Collaborative Capacity, Systems Change, and Core Values

FIGURE 1
2021 Domain Scores

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each domain
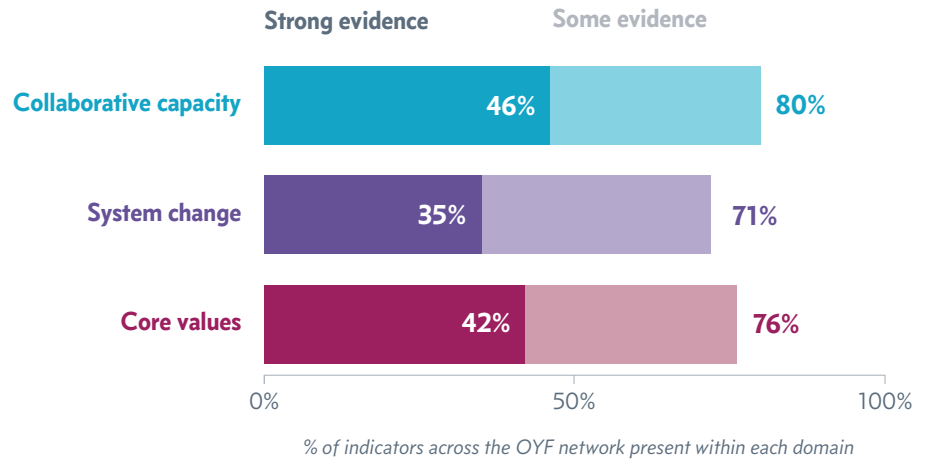
TABLE 1
Changes in Domain Scores Over Time, 2019-2021

Domain	Percent of Indicators showing Strong Evidence			
	2019	**2020**	**2021**	**3-year Change**
Collaborative Capacity	45	41	46	↑
Systems Change	31	32	35	↑
Core Values	41	41	42	↑
Domain	**Percent of Indicators showing Some Evidence**			
	2019	**2020**	**2021**	**3-year Change**
Collaborative Capacity	81	76	80	↓
Systems Change	69	66	71	↑
Core Values	78	74	76	↓

FIGURE 2

Changes in Capacity, Systems Change, and Core Values Over Time, 2019-2021

*% of indicators across the OYF network showing **strong evidence***
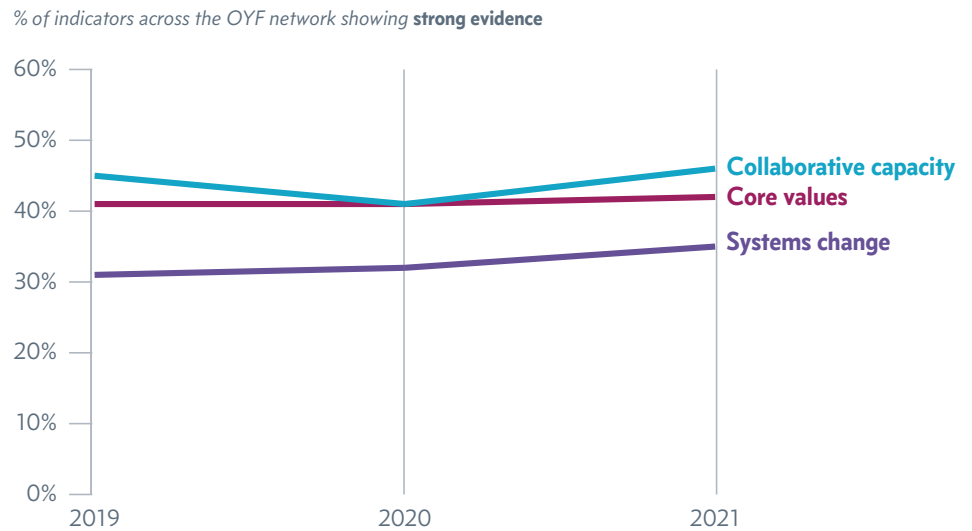
FIGURE 3

2021 Collaborative Capacity Scores

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each capacity
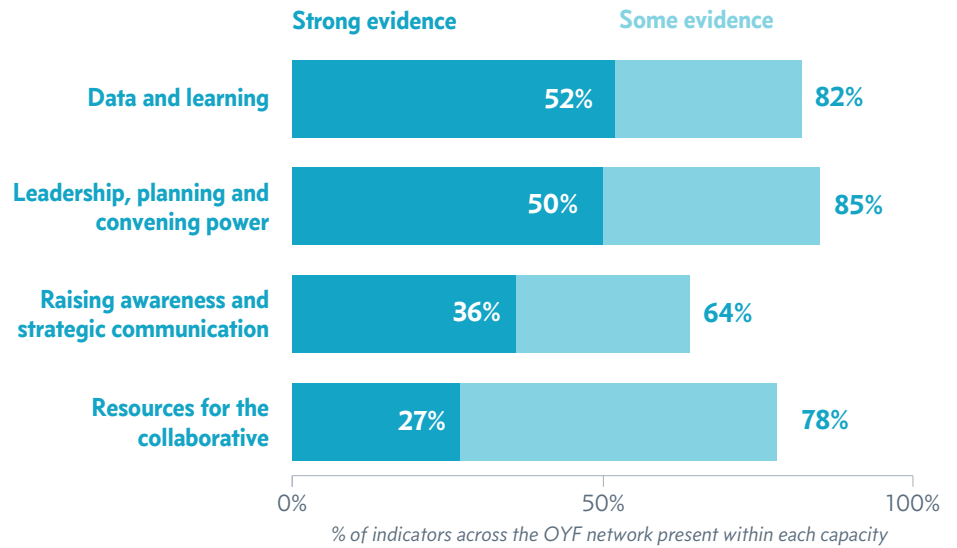
TABLE 3

Changes in Collaborative Capacity Scores Over Time, 2019-2021

Domain	Percent of Indicators showing Strong Evidence			
	2019	2020	2021	3-year Change
Leadership, planning and convening power	53	49	50	↓
Data and learning	43	40	52	↑
Raising Awareness and Strategic Communication	38	29	36	↓
Resources for the Collaborative	20	26	27	↑

Domain	Percent of Indicators showing Some Evidence			
	2019	2020	2021	3-year Change
Leadership, planning and convening power	90	82	85	↓
Data and learning	79	79	82	↑
Raising Awareness and Strategic Communication	68	59	64	↓
Resources for the Collaborative	69	72	78	↑

FIGURE 4

Changes in Collaborative Capacity Scores Over Time, 2019-2021

% of indicators across the OYF network showing strong evidence

- **Data and learning**
- **Leadership, planning and convening power**
- **Raising awareness and strategic communication**
- **Resources for the collaborative**
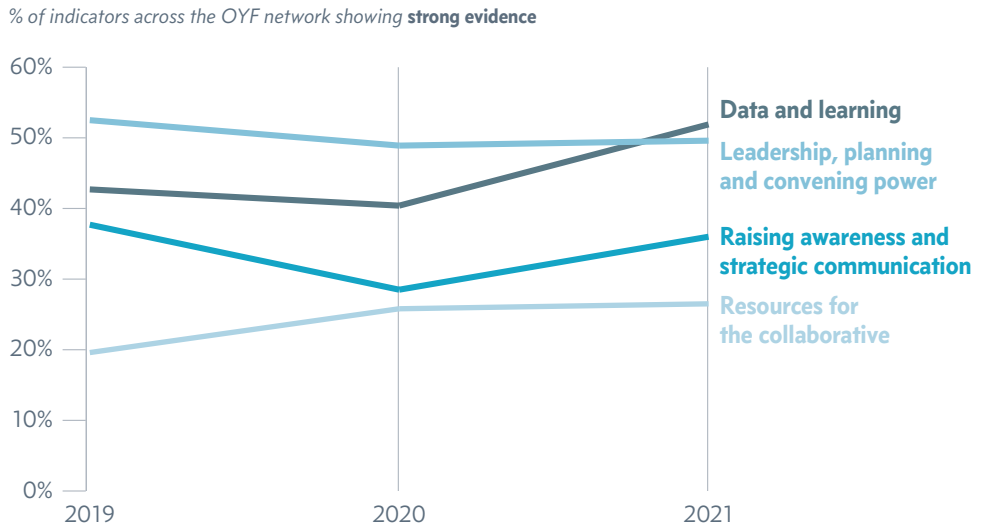
FIGURE 5

2021 System Change Scores

Strong evidence — **Some evidence**

System	Strong evidence	Total
Programmatic change	53%	85%
Narrative change	41%	76%
Data use	34%	71%
Organizational change	34%	76%
Pathway improvement	34%	69%
Funding change	24%	60%
Public policy change	22%	50%

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each system
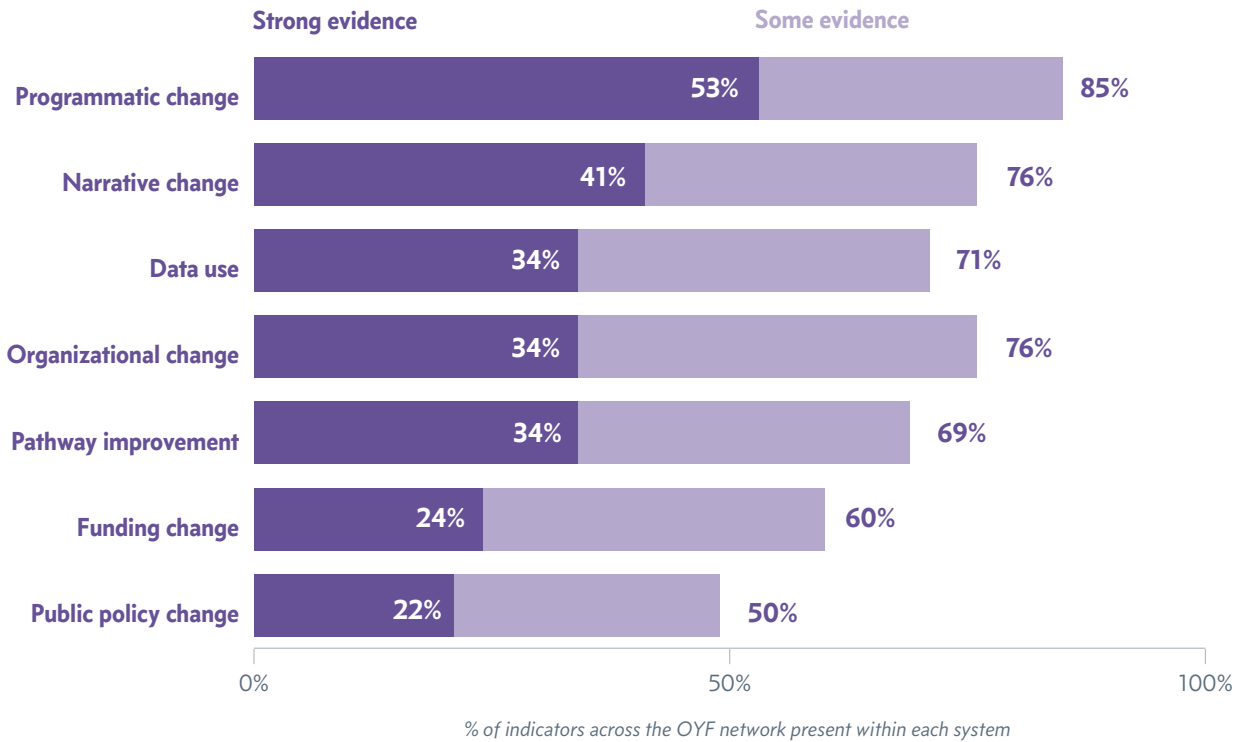
TABLE 3
Changes in Systems Change Scores Over Time, 2019-2021

	Percent of Indicators showing Strong Evidence			
Domain	2019	2020	2021	3-year Change
Programmatic Change	53	49	53	no change
Organizational Change	37	33	34	↓
Pathway Improvements	32	31	34	↑
Data Use	20	26	34	↑
Funding Change	18	21	25	↑
Narrative Change	37	40	41	↑
Public policy Change	20	16	22	↑
	Percent of Indicators showing Some Evidence			
Domain	2019	2020	2021	3-year Change
Programmatic Change	90	79	85	↓
Organizational Change	81	72	75	↓
Pathway Improvements	72	64	69	↓
Data Use	60	68	71	↑
Funding Change	43	52	60	↑
Narrative Change	76	74	76	no change
Public policy Change	50	39	50	no change

FIGURE 6
Changes in Systems Change Scores Over Time, 2019-2021

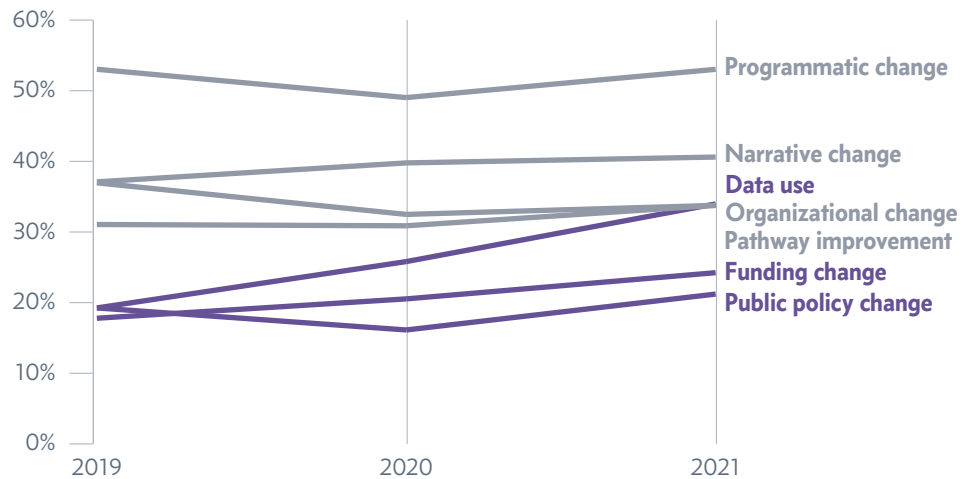*% of indicators across the OYF network showing **strong evidence***
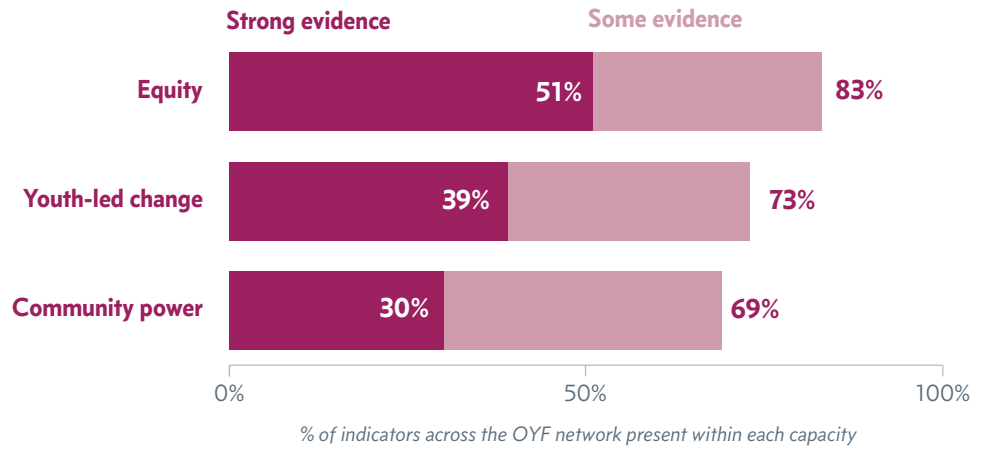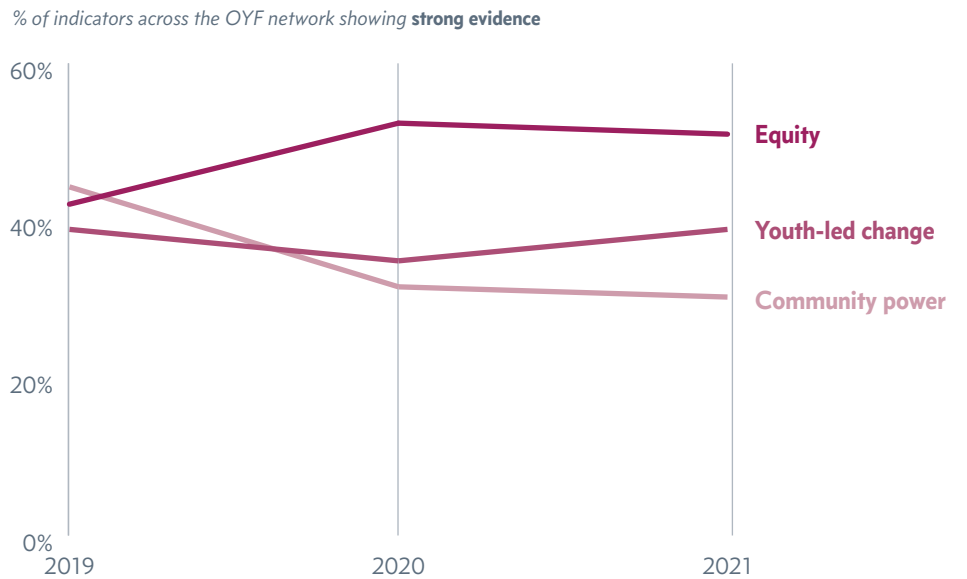
FIGURE 7
2021 Core Values Scores

Strong evidence   Some evidence

Equity	51%	83%
Youth-led change	39%	73%
Community power	30%	69%

0%   50%   100%

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each capacity

TABLE 4
Changes in Systems Change Scores Over Time, 2019-2021

Domain	Percent of Indicators showing Strong Evidence			
	2019	2020	2021	3-year Change
Equity	42	53	51	↑
Youth-led Change	39	35	39	no change
Community Power	42	32	30	↓

Domain	Percent of Indicators showing Some Evidence			
	2019	2020	2021	3-year Change
Equity	84	82	83	↓
Youth-led Change	73	69	73	no change
Community Power	80	70	69	↓

FIGURE 8
Changes in Core Values Scores Over Time, 2019-202

*% of indicators across the OYF network showing **strong evidence***

Equity

Youth-led change

Community power

60%

40%

20%

0%
2019   2020   2021

Appendix C:

Background

Rural (7)	Tribal (4)	Urban – Established (16)	Urban – new to OY collaborative work (7)
Greenville, MS	Hopi Tribe, AZ	Austin, TX	Buffalo, NY
Jasper, TX	Pueblo of Jemez, NM	Boston, MA	Detroit, MI
Missoula, MT	Pueblo of Taos, NM	Chicago, IL	Houston, TX
Roaring Fork Valley, CO	Del Norte County, CA	Denver, CO	New Orleans, LA
San Augustine, TX		Hartford, CT	Oakland, CA
Southern Maine		Los Angeles, CA	San Antonio, TX
Del Norte County, CA*		Newark, NJ	San Diego, CA
		NYC BON	
		NYC T2C	
		NYC YES	
		NYC Youth WINS	
		Philadelphia, PA	
		Phoenix, AZ	
		San Jose/Santa Clara County, CA	
		Seattle/South King County, WA	
		Tucson, AZ	

*Note: Del Norte is categorized in both rural and tribal.

FIGURE 9
The Extent Collaborative Work Addressed Segments of The Education-To-Career-Continuum, N=33[1]

	A Lot	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all
High School/Equivalency	39%	30%	24%	6%
Postsecondary Education	42%	46%	12%	
Workforce	61%	30%	9%	
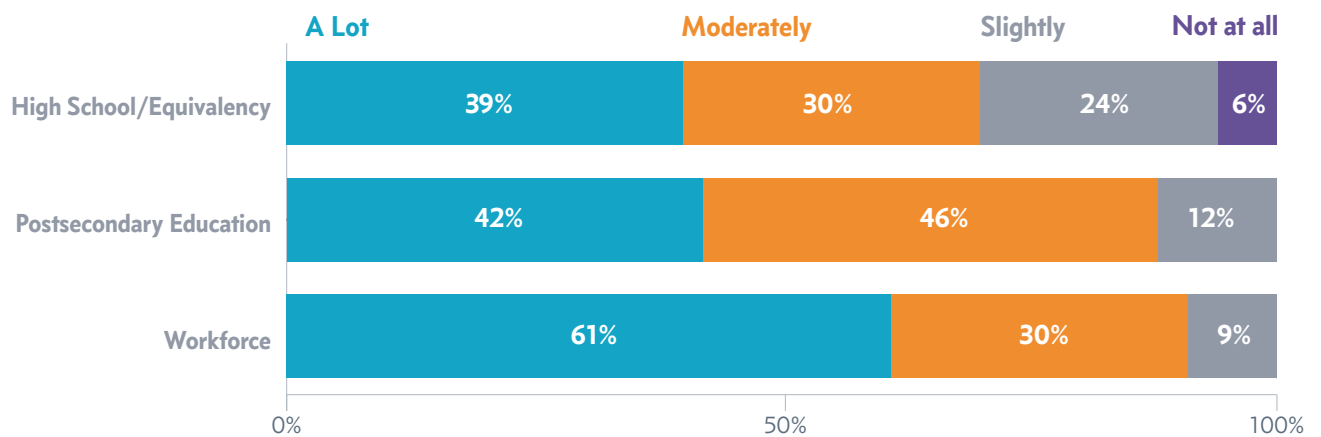
[1] 15 (45%) collaboratives focused on two of the segments "a lot"; four collaboratives (12%) focused on all three segments "a lot."

FIGURE 10

Percent of Collaboratives That Have Set Specific Numerical Targets Against the Common Measures (Disconnection Rates), N=33
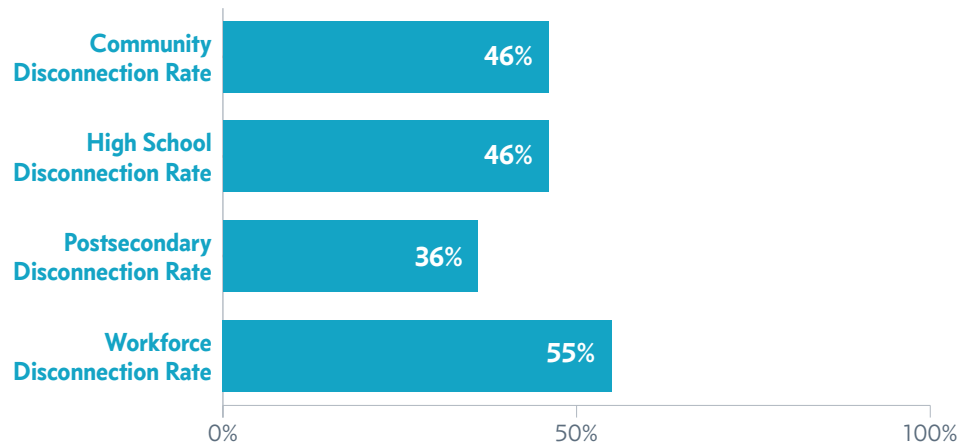

Community Disconnection Rate	46%
High School Disconnection Rate	46%
Postsecondary Disconnection Rate	36%
Workforce Disconnection Rate	55%

FIGURE 11

Percent of Collaboratives That Have Set Measurable Equity Goals for OY Subgroups, N=33

Collaboratives have set goals based on…

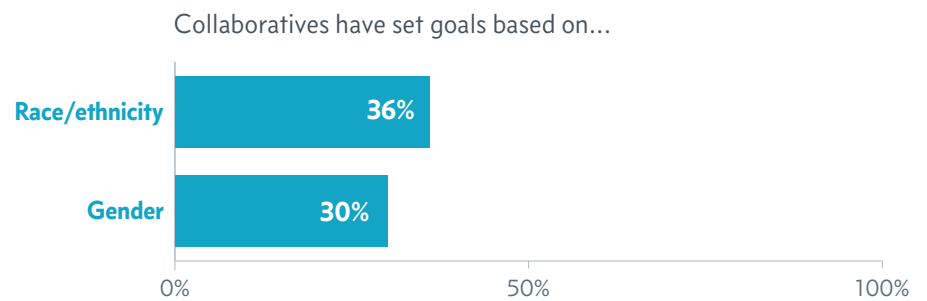|	
Race/ethnicity	36%
Gender	30%

TABLE 5

Percent of Collaboratives with the Following Documents in 2021, N=33

Document	Percent of sites with this document
Data-sharing agreements between collaborative partners and the backbone*	69
Community OY landscape report (i.e., 'ecosystem map'), or list of partners and services for OY (may include a program-level inventory)*	63
OY collaborative charter (i.e., statement of values, purpose, and general goals of the OY collaborative)	55
MOUs or MOAs between collaborative members and the backbone (detailing of organizational members commitments to the collaborative)	55
Theory of Change/Logic Model for your OY collaborative's work	55
Annual action plan with the collaborative's goals and priorities for the year*	53
OY collaborative website or webpage	49
Annual public, written report to the community (such as a success/impact report for the year)	39
OY collaborative three-to-five-year plan (i.e., a longer-term strategic plan)*	38
OY collaborative 'organizational chart' and/or member role definitions	36
5-year community-wide OY goals (which could include targets set against the OYF Common Measures or other goals)*	25

* Only 32 sites responded yes or no to this question

Funding

FIGURE 12
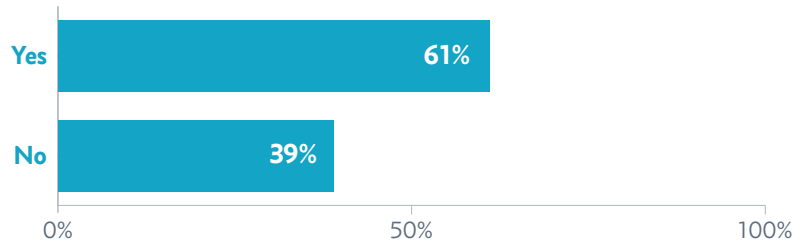**Percent of Backbones Serving as Funder/ Grantor to Any Partners in Community, N=33**

TABLE 7
Median Dollar Amounts Backbone Organizations Received in 2021 for OY Work, by Funding Source

Funding Source	Number of sites	Median	Range
Public Funding	28	$68,000	$0-4,760,000
Private Funding	33	$179,608	$0-25,000,000

FIGURE 13
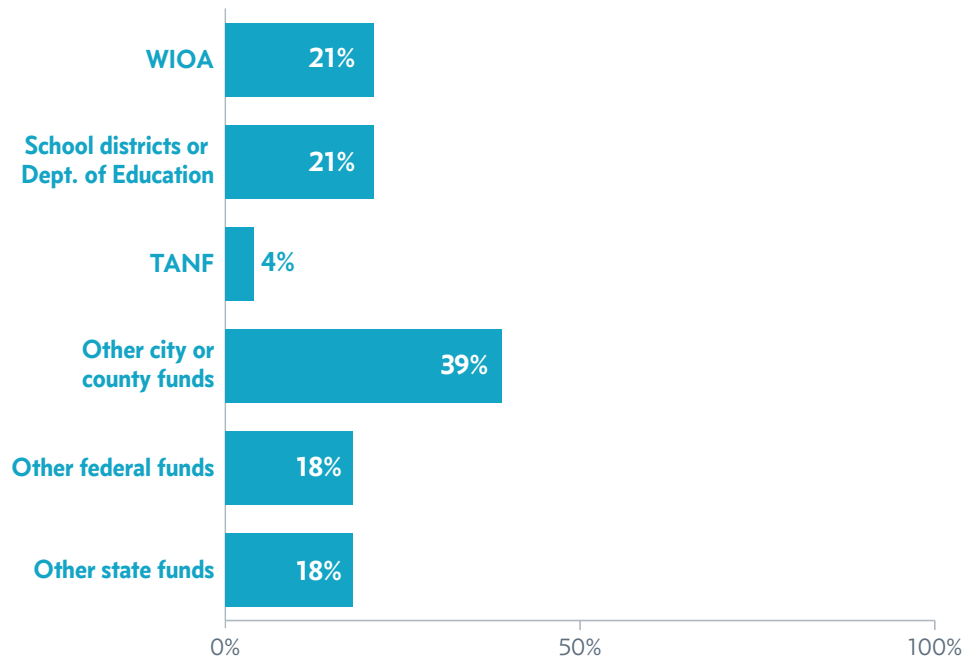**Percent of Backbones Serving as Funder/ Grantor to Any Partners in Community, N=33**

FIGURE 14

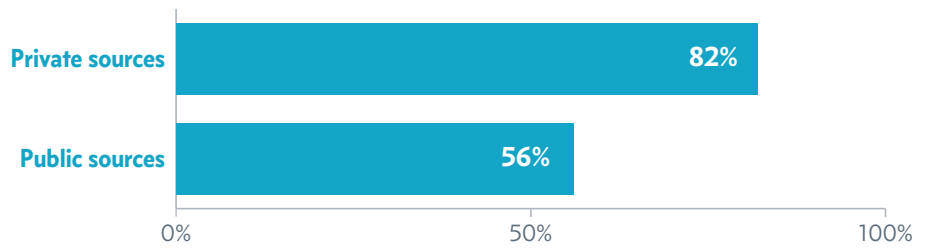**Percent of Backbone Organizations Reporting Receiving Operational Funding from Each Source, N=33**

Private sources	82%
Public sources	56%

0%　　　　50%　　　　100%

TABLE 8

Median Public Dollars Allocated to Community Programming by Type in 2021

Type of Program	Funding Sources: Examples	Number of sites reporting	Median dollar amount	Range
K-12 programs (focused on OY)	WIOA ESSER	16	$62,450	$0 – 17,000,000
Postsecondary programs (focused on OY)	State funds USDOL	11	$0	$0-3,750,000
Workforce programs (focused on OY)	Jobs for the Future TANF	19	$120,000	$0-12,000,000
Other programs supporting OY	AmeriCorps	14	$11,645	$0-20,000,000
MEDIAN PRIVATE DOLLARS TO SUPPORT OY IN COMMUNITY IN 2021				
Funding for OY programs or systems work	Private	23	$173,000	$0-1,750,000

FIGURE 15

Percent of Collaboratives Reporting OY Funders in Their Communities, by Type

Private funders	84%
City and/or County funders	66%

0%　　　　50%　　　　100%
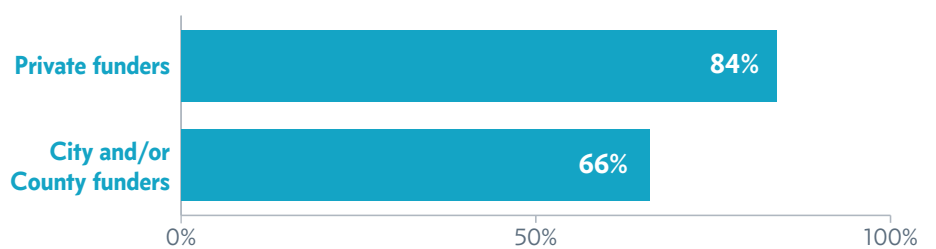
Healing and Belonging, Meaning-making, Wellbeing, and Purpose

FIGURE 16
Percent of Collaboratives with Varying Roles of Young People in Setting Collaboratives' Agenda/Priorities, N=33

Young people are partners in setting the collaborative agenda	27%
Young people's input/feedback is used to set the collaborative agenda	33%
We are still figuring out how to incorporate young people in setting our collaborative agenda	39%

0%　　　50%　　　100%
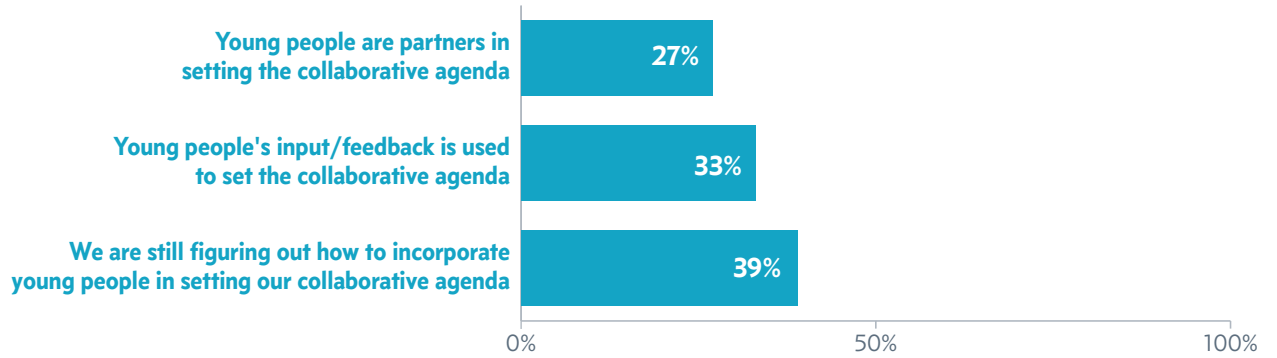
FIGURE 17
Extent Collaboratives Acknowledge Trauma in Work with Young People, N=33

A lot	70%
Somewhat	27%
Not at all	3%

0%　　　50%　　　100%

TABLE 9
Strategies Collaboratives Used in 2021 To Acknowledge and Support Healing Among Young People, N=32

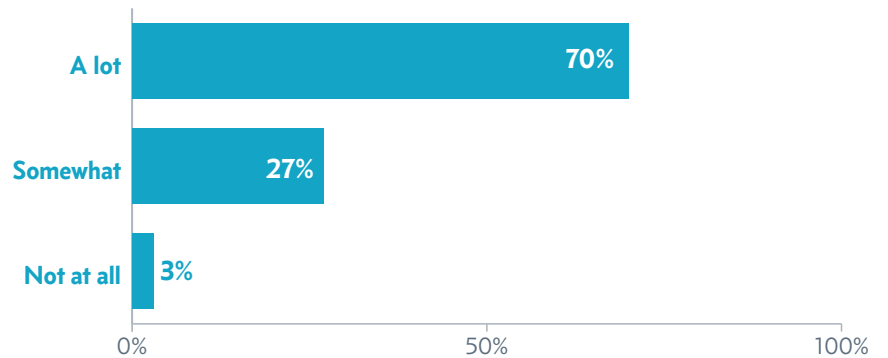| Healing Strategies	Percent of sites
Training and skill development in youth organizing, advocacy, social justice and/or critical awareness	72
Incorporating restorative justice and conflict resolution practices	59
Incorporating culturally relevant healing practices (e.g., ceremonies, body work, mindfulness, yoga)	56
Using gender-neutral language to affirm and be inclusive of all gender identities	53
Individual therapy for young people	47
Creating community-building spaces to share stories	44
Attending and jointly reflecting on advocacy efforts in action (e.g., demonstrations, protests)	44
Creating meaningful organizational leadership roles for young people (e.g., hiring as staff, serving on the board, having young people drive decision making about the organizational agenda)	38
Building relationships between young people and elders	38
Trainings for adults to address adultism practices in youth programming	38
Reflecting to process conditions, experiences, and emotions through writing or discussions	34
Facilitating healing circles or ways to create and establish peer support	34
Regularly incorporating celebration and positive acknowledgement	28
Creating separate spaces for youth and adults, and intentional spaces that bring both groups together	28
Facilitating peer-to-peer approaches to build leadership and promote mentorship	22

FIGURE 18
Percent of Collaboratives That Reported Their Partners Integrate Meaning-making Elements into Programs For OY, N=33

A lot 21%
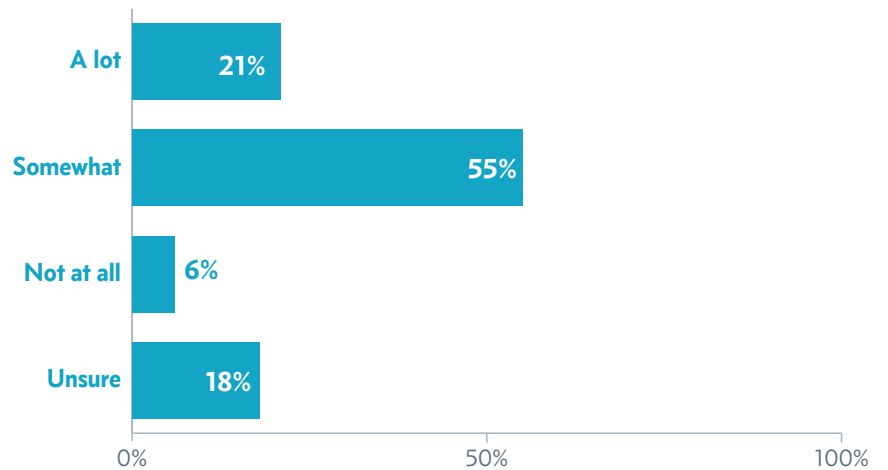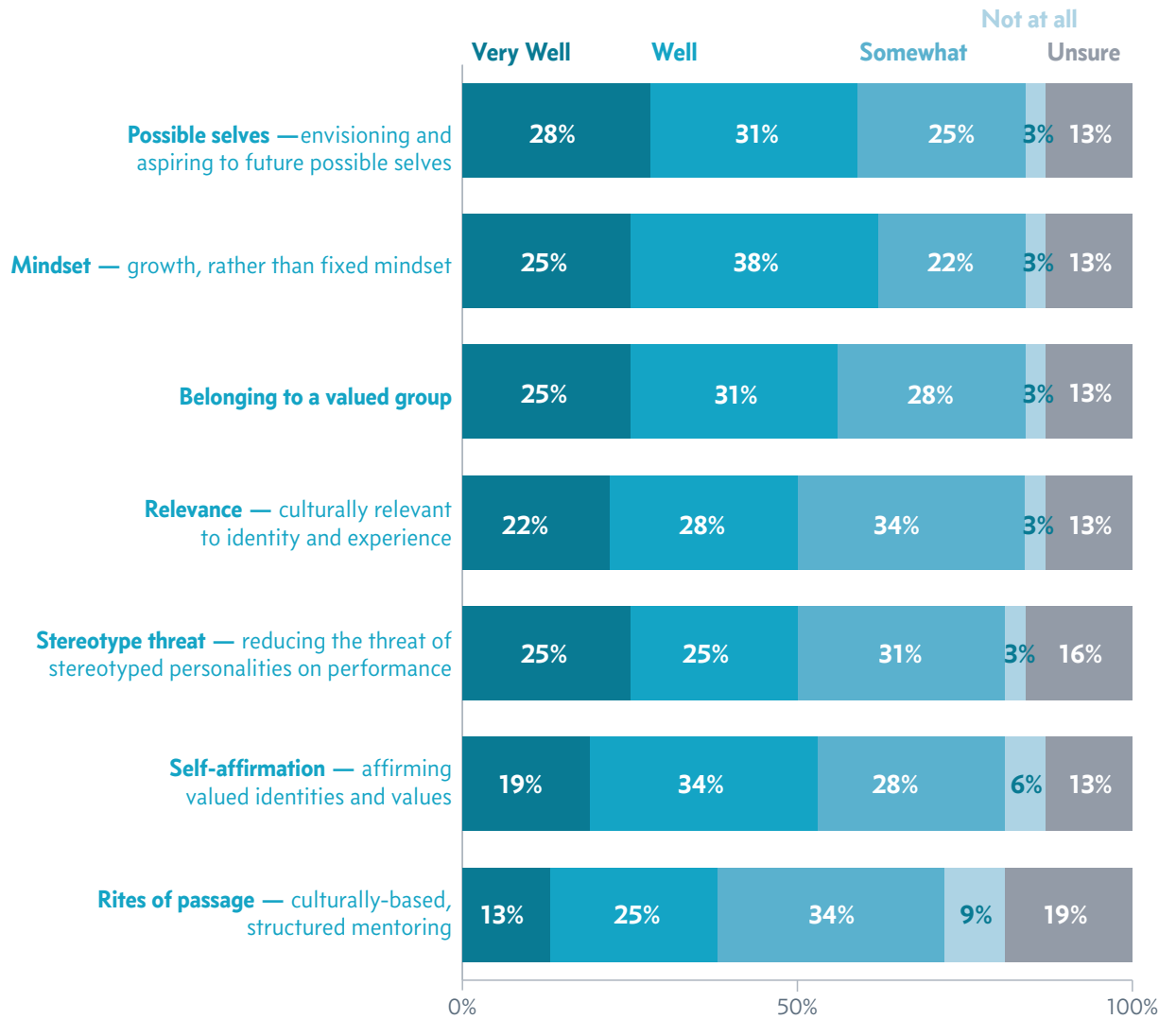Somewhat 55%
Not at all 6%
Unsure 18%

FIGURE 19
Percentage of Collaboratives Reporting Their Partners Incorporate Arnold Chandler's Seven Types of Meaning-making Into Their OY Programs, N=32

	Very Well	Well	Somewhat	Not at all	Unsure
Possible selves —envisioning and aspiring to future possible selves	28%	31%	25%	3%	13%
Mindset — growth, rather than fixed mindset	25%	38%	22%	3%	13%
Belonging to a valued group	25%	31%	28%	3%	13%
Relevance — culturally relevant to identity and experience	22%	28%	34%	3%	13%
Stereotype threat — reducing the threat of stereotyped personalities on performance	25%	25%	31%	3%	16%
Self-affirmation — affirming valued identities and values	19%	34%	28%	6%	13%
Rites of passage — culturally-based, structured mentoring	13%	25%	34%	9%	19%

Appendix F:

Youth Outputs and Outcomes

Collaboratives across the OYF network have been working to lower OY disconnection rates and reconnect opportunity youth to education and employment. In 2021, a subset of partners across the OYF network[2] reported serving approximately 59,500 youth—both opportunity youth and youth at risk of disconnection. Of these youth, about 31,000 were 16- to 24-year-olds who are not in school and not working ("opportunity youth"). Because of reporting challenges, these numbers are likely much higher. These totals are similar to numbers reported in 2020, though lower than reported in 2019 with the various challenges associated with reaching youth during the pandemic. While collaboratives served these youth through a variety of programs and services in 2021, systems change efforts across the OYF network affect all 750,000 opportunity youth living in OYF network communities.

While collaboratives and partners work to increase their data capacity, siloed systems pose challenges to accurately capturing opportunity youth outcomes. However, a subset of collaboratives reported youth outcomes among partners in 2021 (Table 15). More than 12,000 young people (about 21% of those served) obtained employment, while almost 8,000 (13%) enrolled in an internship or related work experience connected to a pathway in 2021.

FIGURE 20
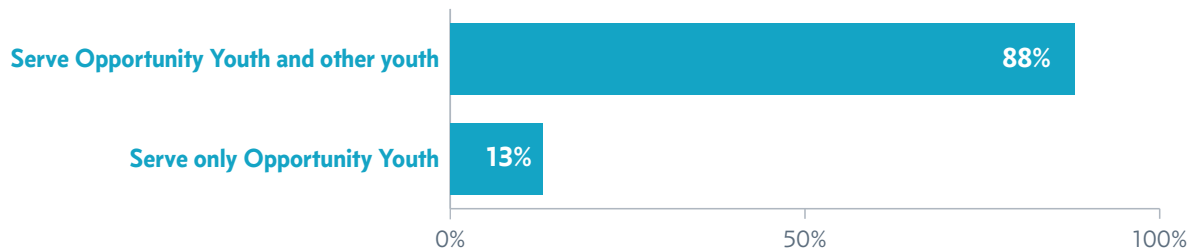**Percent of Collaboratives and Youth They Served in 2021, N=32**

TABLE 10
Total Youth Served by Collaboratives In 2021

Youth Served by Sites	Number of Sites	Total Number Served by Network
All Youth	30	59,516
Opportunity Youth Only	23	30,910

[2] Most collaboratives reported the number of youth served by a subset of their partners; thus numbers should be considered estimates.

TABLE 11
Youth Served by Collaboratives In 2021, by Gender

Gender	All Youth	Opportunity Youth
Young women/girls	26,340	12,814
Young men/boys	23,504	11,954
Transgender	93	74
Non-binary	65	55
A gender identity not listed here*	27	24
Unknown	707	684
Total	**50,736**	**25,605**

* Note: Includes: "Hoova" (the Hopi word for homosexual), Gender Fluid, Non-binary, and Two-Spirit (pan-Indian term for homosexual) and other.

TABLE 12
Youth Served by Collaboratives In 2021, by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	All Youth	Opportunity Youth
African American/Black	25,467	12,256
Latinx	13,947	7,397
White	5,143	3,106
Native American	2,356	1,892
Asian	2,088	414
Multiracial	1,576	706
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	98	81
A race or ethnicity not listed here**	229	150
Unknown	2,072	1,598
Total	**52,976**	**27,600**

** Note: Includes no responses, n/a, and other

TABLE 13
Youth Served by Collaboratives In 2021, by Age

Age	All Youth	Opportunity Youth
Younger than 16	9,141	N/A
16-19	23,486	11,253
20-24	10,503	7,499
Older than 24	1,366	N/A
Unknown	4,699	200
Total	**49,195**	**18,952**

TABLE 14
Youth Served by Collaboratives In 2021, by Special Population

Special Population	All Youth	Opportunity Youth
Criminal Justice/Court Involvement	2,139	856
Foster care, at any point	2,135	2,105
English Learners	1,194	691
Pregnant/Parenting	1,175	1,013
DHS	1,037	28
Disability	605	379
Special Education	553	-
At-risk/Experiencing homelessness	534	456
Low Income	497	497
DCF (Child Welfare) Involvement	84	84
First-generation	83	-
DACA Status	26	-
Affected by Domestic Violence	22	-
Total	**10,084**	**6,109**

TABLE 15
Outcomes Of Youth Served by Collaboratives*

Number of Youth Who	All Youth	Opportunity Youth
Earned a high school diploma or a high school equivalency	6,385	2,499
Participated in an internship or related work experience connected to a pathway	7,912	4,105
Completed an apprenticeship	1,121	1,121
Enrolled in postsecondary education	7,130	2,189
Enrolled in career/industry training programs	2,507	3,250
Earned postsecondary credentials	992	708
Obtained employment	12,298	3,583

*** Note: Between six and 21 collaboratives, of 33 total, reported these data depending on the outcome. For example, only two collaboratives reported any numbers for youth completing an apprenticeship – though seven collaboratives reported that no youth completed an apprenticeship. It is difficult to compare outcomes across years because different programs reported data to the collaborative backbones in 2020 and 2021.