The Opportunity Youth Forum: Forging a National Network to Advance Equitable Systems Change
2019 Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Forum Annual Evaluation Summary

### ABOUT THE NETWORK

The Network is home to 3.4 million 16 to 24-year-old youth

- 12% are disconnected from work and school
  - High school disconnection rate: 14%
  - Postsecondary disconnection rate: 21%
  - Workforce disconnection rate: 11%

*All numbers based on 2017 ACS data

### COLLABORATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

#### AREAS OF FOCUS

Top groups prioritized include:

- Juvenile justice involved: 74%
- Foster system involved: 65%
- Boys and men of color: 57%

Collaboratives that have set targets against disconnection rates:

- High School: 50%
- Workforce: 44%
- Postsecondary: 35%
- Community (all OY): 22%

#### SIZE

- More than 10 years: 13%
- 5-10 years: 74%
- Less than 5 years: 13%

Network median: 29 partners
Range: 1-85 partners

### BACKBONE CHARACTERISTICS

#### TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS

- Community-based organizations: 30%
- Community foundation or funder: 17%
- Intermediary: 13%
- Workforce investment board: 13%

Others include:
- Chambers of Commerce
- Partnerships
- Educational Institutions

#### TOTAL BUDGET

- Community: Median: $8.3M
  Range: $130,000 to $80M

- Opportunity Youth-Specific: Median: $500,000
  Range: $43,000 to $4.3M

#### TOTAL STAFF

- Community: Median: 22 FTEs
  Range: 2-200 FTEs

- Opportunity Youth-Specific: Median: 3 FTEs
  Range: 0.5-17 FTEs

#### TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

- More than 10 years: 17%
- 5-10 years: 70%
- Less than 5 years: 13%

Network median: 6 years

### CORE VALUES

Equity, youth-led change, and community power are core to OYF efforts to build collaborative capacity, improve local systems, and build pathways to education and employment.

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

91% of collaboratives have at least some structures in place to engage youth in shaping, refining, and supporting implementation of the opportunity youth agenda.

57% of collaboratives reported strong evidence that stakeholders discussed challenges that affect various racial, ethnic, gender, or age groups.

52% of collaboratives reported strong evidence that their membership reflects the diversity of the community.
ORGANIZING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

The 2019 evaluation investigated two core elements of communities across the Network:

1) **Collaborative capacity** to carry out the opportunity youth agenda, and

2) **Systems and conditions necessary** to promote education and career outcomes for opportunity youth.

 Greater collaborative capacity is generally associated with greater evidence of systems change, reinforcing the need to build the collaborative muscle necessary for creating systems that promote opportunity youth success.

COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY is strong in convening diverse members and promising in data use, yet resource development, particularly financial support for the backbone organization, poses challenges.

- Leadership, planning, and convening power: 53% Strong Evidence, 40% Some Evidence
- Data and learning: 43% Strong Evidence, 79% Some Evidence
- Raising awareness/Strategic communication: 38% Strong Evidence, 68% Some Evidence
- Resources for the collaboration: 20% Strong Evidence, 69% Some Evidence

65% of collaboratives reached out to decision makers, public officials, and policymakers to build relationships in support of a policy change agenda. Partner organizations were more likely to provide personnel and in-kind support to the collaborative than financial support.

SYSTEMS CHANGES are most advanced in programmatic and organizational changes on behalf of opportunity youth, while other types of systems changes with longer change arcs have shown promise on initial indicators.

- Programmatic Change: 53% Strong Evidence, 90% Some Evidence
- Organizational Change: 37% Strong Evidence, 81% Some Evidence
- Narrative Change: 37% Strong Evidence, 76% Some Evidence
- Pathway Improvement: 31% Strong Evidence, 72% Some Evidence
- Data Use: 19% Strong Evidence, 60% Some Evidence
- Public Policy Change: 19% Strong Evidence, 50% Some Evidence
- Funding Change: 18% Strong Evidence, 43% Some Evidence

65% of collaboratives reported strong evidence that stakeholders used language of “opportunity youth” (instead of “disconnected”/“dropout”).

26% of collaboratives reported strong youth influence in decisions about public policy.

**Methods.** Findings come from the 2019 OYF Self-Assessment. Twenty-three OYF Network communities answered questions about their collaborative capacity and systems changes. The Assessment included indicators grouped into four types of capacities and seven types of systems changes, assessed on a four-point scale.