

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Opportunity Youth Initiative



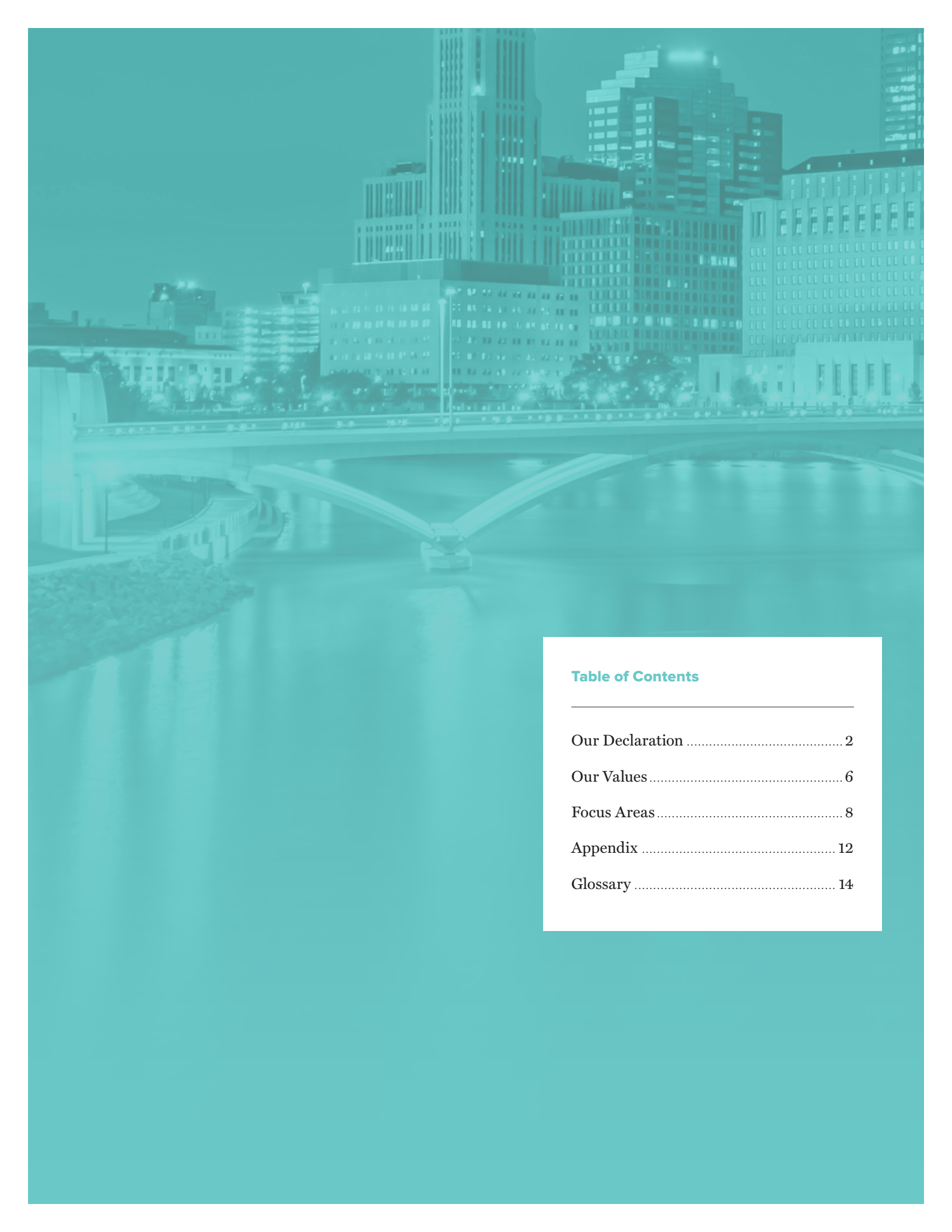


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Franklin County Opportunity Youth Initiative

Theory of Change:

All youth enter adulthood prepared to pursue opportunities to live well.

Focus Areas:

Civic Engagement
Education
Health & Wellness
Housing
Support Systems
Workforce

Our Declaration

This document is a statement of intent. It is a declaration to the Franklin County community that we must make intentional investments in all of our young people if we want to continue to be a strong, healthy, and vibrant place to live. *Opportunity Youth* are **16–24 year olds who are not attending school and are not working**. If we believe that all young people are among our greatest assets, they must believe we value them.

We show them we do by saying “Yes” to them and by providing opportunities for our youth to thrive in central Ohio.

Out of the 38.9 million Americans who fall into the 16–24 age range, about 6.7 million can be described as *Opportunity Youth*.

The Problem

The unequivocal statement “talent is universal; opportunity is not” may seem redundant to some, but recent research on the needs of youth in our community suggests that we are not doing as well as we think when it comes to providing opportunities for young people to thrive. This is especially true of *Opportunity Youth*, who are traditionally marginalized and often invisible until they commit a crime or cost tax dollars.

The Columbus Foundation commissioned the ‘Opportunity Awaits’ report from Jobs For the Future, which found that 20,500 *Opportunity Youth* accounted for an annual deficit of \$647.1 million dollars in lost productivity, tax revenue, and higher expenditures on criminal justice, public assistance, and healthcare across Franklin County. Unfortunately, this population of youth has grown since the report was released in 2015.

Our community is program-rich but systems-poor. In order to support our youth on their journey to productive adulthood, our community must move from

treating youth based on one issue at a time to taking a more comprehensive approach.

Opportunity Youth are born into complex circumstances. Many are trying to navigate life absent of consistent and thoughtful guidance from caring and engaged adults. They often stumble as a result. The problem is the result of a complex, multifaceted set of traumatic circumstances that lead to becoming an *Opportunity Youth*. Families may experience excessive financial strain due to medical bills or a lost job. A parent or guardian dies as a result of succumbing to the opiate crises, or other health issue creating further instability. A young person may also become disconnected when their family or guardian forces them to leave the home due to their sexual orientation. These examples barely scratch the surface of how stark the reality is for some of our young people. This document acknowledges the broad scope of issues faced by *Opportunity Youth* and outlines how we can work together to re-engage them toward stability and success.



20,500 Opportunity Youth accounted for an annual deficit of \$647.1 million dollars in lost productivity, tax revenue, and higher expenditures on criminal justice, public assistance, and healthcare across Franklin County.

We believe that doing our best to nurture healthy and strong young people is an investment in our future.

*The Franklin County Youth Needs Assessment (FCYNA)*¹ found that

to younger children (27 percent) and adults over age 25 (12.6 percent).

According to the Ohio Department of Education, one in ten Franklin County students drop out of high school. School districts are seeing high rates of truancy (absent 72 or more hours in one school year without a legitimate excuse)². What's more, only 65 percent of eighth graders from low-income families are proficient in math, compared to a 91 percent proficiency rate for more affluent students. For many living in impoverished circumstances, this disparity is attributable to such factors as housing instability, family and economic instability, and safety issues in economic depressed areas. While these statistics paint a depressing picture, all is not lost!

200,000 young people, including *Opportunity Youth*, comprise one-fifth of the county's population of 1.2 million. A full third (33 percent) of 12-24 year olds live in poverty, which is disproportionate when compared

¹ *The Franklin County Youth Needs Assessment* was conducted by Community Research Partners, a research firm now doing business as Thoughtwell, on behalf of Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services.

² As outlined in House Bill 410 (<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Chronic-Absenteeism/House-Bill-410-FAQ.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>)



Many communities around the country are working to close the opportunity gap by engaging disconnected youth. We are fortunate that Franklin County is a data-rich environment with the capacity to learn from those communities to develop our own solutions. The ‘Opportunity Awaits’ report highlights the presence of a myriad of career opportunities in multiple industries upon completion of a high school diploma while the FCYNA gives us insights as to why young people seem unable to take advantage of such opportunities. Both reports acknowledge our program-rich environment while identifying the lack of a systems-based approach to youth development. Both suggest the creation of a comprehensive community plan, the development of community-wide best practices, and a means of sharing data that allows service providers to coordinate with schools and other community stakeholders. **These actions will ensure that our community is helping youth move from being young people at risk to young people prepared to take advantage of the**

opportunities in front of them.

It is in that spirit that a diverse group of public and private funders, educators, and service providers convened to begin creating a standardized youth development system across Franklin County. This system will support all of our youth, with particular focus on *Opportunity Youth* and young people ages 12–15 who are at risk of becoming *Opportunity Youth*.

A Path Forward

The Columbus Foundation convened an *Opportunity Youth* Summit on March 27, 2017, to facilitate a conversation directed at formulating a collective response to reconnect and re-engage youth in their communities. Present at the summit were 30 representatives from afterschool and traditional secondary education programs, local city and county governments, as well as members of the philanthropic community, higher education, and workforce readiness organizations.

All came together in concert to explore the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Theory of Change Model* and create a *backwards map* to ignite solution-based thinking toward a results-based development strategy. Using the *FCYNA* as a backdrop for the conversation, the group underwent a series of exercises to produce a roadmap to move our young people from the problems they are facing to a community where all young people have equitable access, and the requisite skills to take advantage of opportunities. This larger group has become the Opportunity Youth Community Partners Group (OYCPG). A smaller group, the Opportunity Youth Steering Committee (OYSC), was selected to meet weekly over three months to build a *theory of change* framework for the collective impact model that will guide the county-wide youth development work.

This document is the result of those meetings. It is a summary of our work to date: our working *theory of change*, six equally weighted focus areas, with impact goals and outcomes in each area. Our hope is that this document is useful in engaging the wider community to join the next phase of the youth development systems buildout.



Gratitude

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to members of the OYSC, and the OYCPG for committing to rethinking our collective approach to youth development work in Franklin County. And, we are grateful to Dani Robbins, of *Non Profit Evolution*, for guiding a group of highly intelligent and passionate professionals toward the creation of a document that brings our community ever closer to the place where a young person's dream is no longer predicated on their family's economic status.

It is our intent that the work represented in this document moves our collective thinking forward.

We seek to initiate the processes by which our program-rich county can become an effective and efficient youth development system. This system will help youth and families stabilize, increase levels of health and wellness, and will leverage education and career opportunities to support young people as they become thriving members of our community.



Call to Action

We need you—funders, direct service providers, educators, elected officials, and community members to support this work. Our community is only as strong as our investment in the development of our young people. We will ensure that all of our young people, especially *Opportunity Youth*, have the ability to thrive as valued members of society by simultaneously supporting a) the creation of a county-wide virtual database of services, b) the coordination of programming, and c) the continuation and expansion of academic support, fun activities, and employment opportunities.



.....

JOIN US IN CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE ALL YOUTH ENTER ADULTHOOD PREPARED TO PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE WELL.

Our Values

We believe...

All Youth, especially *Opportunity Youth*, deserve to:

have their basic needs met

be educated and gain knowledge that is valued as a means and an end

be surrounded by caring and engaged adults

have access to opportunities and the ability to take advantage of them

be viewed as a community asset

be treated with respect and have their experiences valued

be safe in their bodies, their homes, and their communities

have access to resources when exposed to traumatic events

Our Community Responsibility is to:

establish and implement a coordinated youth development system

develop and deploy competent and knowledgeable youth development professionals

reduce incidences of adverse childhood experiences

employ a consistent equity lens

offer high quality programs that are fun, high-quality, and relevant for young people

reduce pipelines and increase alternatives to formal justice system involvement

honor, actively engage, and prioritize youth perspectives

provide quality education and gainful employment opportunities

create a youth-facing apparatus for all youth, especially those most vulnerable and marginalized, to come forward and receive support

support all youth to achieve stability, particularly through critical transitions



Because...

**Youth are our
greatest asset!**

**Youth are
the future!**

**We want all
youth, especially
Opportunity Youth,
to thrive!**

Focus Areas

Civic Engagement

When young people are heard, the power of their voice helps them see their own value. Our community benefits from ideas that are not constricted by adult perceptions. We ensure that our democracy continues to grow stronger by instilling democratic values, understanding of civic processes, and the power of listening for solutions when we include young people in the political process. Our community can show *Opportunity Youth* how much we value their voices by advocating for them, by creating spaces that value their input and are conducive to youth attending or providing input, and teaching them how to advocate for themselves by being engaged in our community.

IMPACT GOAL:

Opportunity Youth are actively engaged in our community

OUTCOMES:

- 1 understand the roles and responsibilities at all levels of government
- 2 engaged by community leaders and service providers to serve on their neighborhood commissions, committees, and task forces
- 3 60 percent of *Opportunity Youth* (ages 18–24) vote in Franklin County by 2027
- 4 *Opportunity Youth* understand their rights, and learn how to advocate and organize

Education

Attainment of a high school diploma is one major milestone that unlocks many doors in Franklin County; however, it is not a silver bullet. The FCYNA found that young people who are on track to graduate from high school are encouraged to pursue a four-year degree, a vocational or technical certification, but often do not understand the differences between them and how such opportunities may align with their own goals.

Opportunity Youth are not on track to graduate and, similarly to their low-income peers who are in school, face a plethora of obstacles related to academic success ranging from housing and food instability, and safety, to having to care for younger siblings while their parents are at work. These factors, and others, increase the rates of truancy and high school dropouts (10 percent of students drop out of high school each year in Franklin County). Our community can support our young people toward academic success by working to ensure they do not disengage from high school or college. We must also re-engage *Opportunity Youth* through innovative educational programming that addresses current financial needs while simultaneously establishing a pathway to academic achievement.

IMPACT GOAL:

All youth are supported and prepared to engage and navigate an ever-changing world

OUTCOMES:

- 1 able to read at the developmentally appropriate level or higher
- 2 individual attendance is 94 percent with lowered truancy filings
- 3 increase graduation rates to 100 percent across Franklin County
- 4 increase enrollment in post-secondary training programs offering industry-recognized credentials
- 5 equitable application of school discipline, including suspension and expulsion

Health & Wellness

Stigma, cost, and accessibility are cited as the top three barriers preventing young people from engaging more regularly with health professionals, according to the *FCYNA*. While 83.2 percent of youth surveyed in 2015 by Community Research Partners, now known as Thoughtwell, said they would be very likely, or somewhat likely, to discuss health concerns with a healthcare practitioner, sexually transmitted infection rates are disproportionately high among transition-aged youth (18–21) when compared to adults over the age of 25. Regarding drug use, one in three teenagers admit to having had at least one drink of alcohol in the last 30 days, 21 percent have used marijuana, and almost 10 percent have admitted to use of inhalants.

According to the Children’s Defense Fund “[c]hildhood *trauma*³ can adversely impact academic achievement, social and emotional development, and mental and physical health in extensive and lifelong ways.”⁴ Moreover, food insecurity impacts almost one-quarter of Franklin County’s children under age 18. The Franklin County community can better support *Opportunity Youth* by coming together to provide targeted programming for 16–24 year olds focused on substance abuse, health and wellness, and trauma-informed care, so that all youth, especially *Opportunity Youth*, can thrive.

IMPACT GOAL:

Opportunity Youth have the tools to be and stay healthy

OUTCOMES:

- 1 have a primary care physician, access to mental health services, and receive annual check-ups
- 2 receive comprehensive nutritional and fitness education in their learning environment
- 3 have appropriate sports and recreational activities in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities
- 4 learn healthy food habits and have a well-balanced diet consisting of affordable, healthy, and fresh foods available where they live

³ <http://mha.ohio.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=287>

⁴ <http://www.cdfhio.org/research-library/2015/addressing-childrens-trauma.pdf>



Housing

Between 2013 and 2014, The Community Shelter Board⁵ reported that of the 4,000 homeless young people, 38 percent left shelters for the streets or other unstable housing. Particular populations of youth are especially vulnerable to housing instability. Best estimates by the National Coalition for the Homeless⁶ suggest that as many as 40 percent of homeless youth identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, or Asexual (LGBTQIA+), many of whom have been forced out of their homes or ran away because of intolerant family beliefs.

Additionally, the FCYNA reports that just under 50 percent of households led by single mothers are below 130 percent of the federal poverty line⁷ and struggle to make ends meet, while not having access to adequate support services. This often disproportionately puts working mothers and their families in the precarious position of unstable housing and increased *student mobility*—which creates significant barriers to academic success. We are committed to removing the obstacles related to housing insecurity by working together to ensure that youth and families have stable housing.

IMPACT GOAL:

Youth have equitable access to safe and decent shelter and housing

OUTCOMES:

- 1 have access to a continuum of affordable, safe, and decent housing
- 2 the community ensures that the number of housing units available to *Opportunity Youth* meets the need
- 3 housing programs and homeless shelters proactively respond to the unique needs of *Opportunity Youth*

⁵ <https://www.csb.org>

⁶ <http://nationalhomeless.org>

⁷ In 2017, an annual gross income of \$31,980 for a family of 4 meets the 130% threshold where the baseline is \$24,000. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>



Support Systems

The *FCYNA* asserts that we “lack a user-friendly central information portal or mobile app that (a) youth can use to access information and link to local programs, (b) where organizations can update program information, and (c) presents information in multiple languages. Further, Franklin County lacks a central data management system that enables stakeholders to gauge progress, identify and address issues across the youth system, and verify what is working.”

The ‘Opportunity Awaits’ report finds that *Opportunity Youth* have additional barriers to success including low academic achievement, lack of job-related skills, and access to limited transportation that can be overcome with specialized structures and supports which can be provided by social service agencies, schools, and employers. Together, our community can become partners in the success of our youth by investing in supportive systems.

IMPACT GOAL:

Our community ensures that all youth are connected, engaged, and supported

OUTCOMES:

- 1** community leaders and service providers introduce and operate within a coordinated, county-wide youth development strategy
- 2** community stakeholders design and implement a county-wide virtual database of outcome data, services, activities, learning, and employment opportunities to track success and identify areas in need of improvement
- 3** all community stakeholders are partners in the success of *Opportunity Youth* through increased engagement with, and employment of, young people in this demographic

Workforce

The *FCYNA* cites a gap in programming that prepares *Opportunity Youth* for the world of work. As our region’s economy continues to change at a rapid pace, and with it, the skills required by employers, we recognize that career success depends on a solid foundation of both technical and soft skills. All youth, especially *Opportunity Youth*, deserve pathways to both a living wage and into the middle class.⁸ Access to hands-on career training through apprenticeships, vocational education, and/or higher education is essential in helping all youth secure a bright economic future. Our community can best support *Opportunity Youth* by engaging them earlier in career exploration, increasing awareness of post-high school options, and developing programming that supports their entry into the workforce.

IMPACT GOAL:

***Opportunity Youth* will have meaningful and fulfilling career opportunities**

OUTCOMES:

- 1** all youth are educated, prepared, and able to adapt to ensure success in the workplace
- 2** job training/readiness programs address the unique needs of *Opportunity Youth* and eliminate the barriers and challenges to employment
- 3** employers, educators, and service providers are engaged in partnerships that provide *Opportunity Youth* with career training, mentors, and advancement opportunities.
- 4** county-wide commitment to removing structural barriers to ensure maximum access to opportunities for youth

⁸ See appendix for the 2016 self-sufficiency standard for Ohio families

Appendix

Partner Organizations

Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Central Ohio

www.bbbscentralohio.org

Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus

www.bgccolumbus.org

City of Columbus

<https://www.columbus.gov/MBK/>

City Year Columbus

<https://www.cityyear.org/columbus>

Columbus City Council

<https://www.columbus.gov/council/>

Columbus City Schools

www.ccsos.us

Columbus Police Department

<https://www.columbus.gov/police/>

Columbus State
Community College

www.csc.edu

Communities in Schools
of Central Ohio

www.ciskids.org

Community for New Directions

<http://cndonline.org>

Community Shelter Board

<https://www.csb.org>

Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services

<http://www.ethiotss.org>

Franklin County Children's Services

<http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov>

Franklin County Economic
Development and Planning

<https://development.franklincountyohio.gov>

Franklin County Job
and Family Services

<https://jfs.franklincountyohio.gov>

Franklin County Youth Needs
Assessment 12–24: this research
was conducted by Community
Research Partners, now doing
business as Thoughtwell, on behalf
of Franklin County Department of
Job and Family Services.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59499706414fb5a5e082b6b0/t/59ca6d3fa9db098f1ff44b94/1506438508578/FC_YNA12to24.pdf

FutureReady Columbus

www.futurereadycolumbus.org

Goodwill Columbus

www.goodwillcolumbus.org

Huckleberry House

www.huckhouse.org

Jewish Family Services

<https://jfscolumbus.org>

JPMorgan Chase

www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/Corporate/global-philanthropy.htm

Juvenile Justice Coalition

<http://jjohio.org/>

Kaleidoscope Youth Center

www.kycohoio.org

Nationwide Children's Hospital

www.nationwidechildrens.org

Non Profit Evolution

<http://www.nonprofitevolution.com>

Opportunity Awaits Report

https://columbusfoundation.org/umbraco-media/1230/report_opportunity-youth.pdf

The Columbus Foundation

<https://columbusfoundation.org>

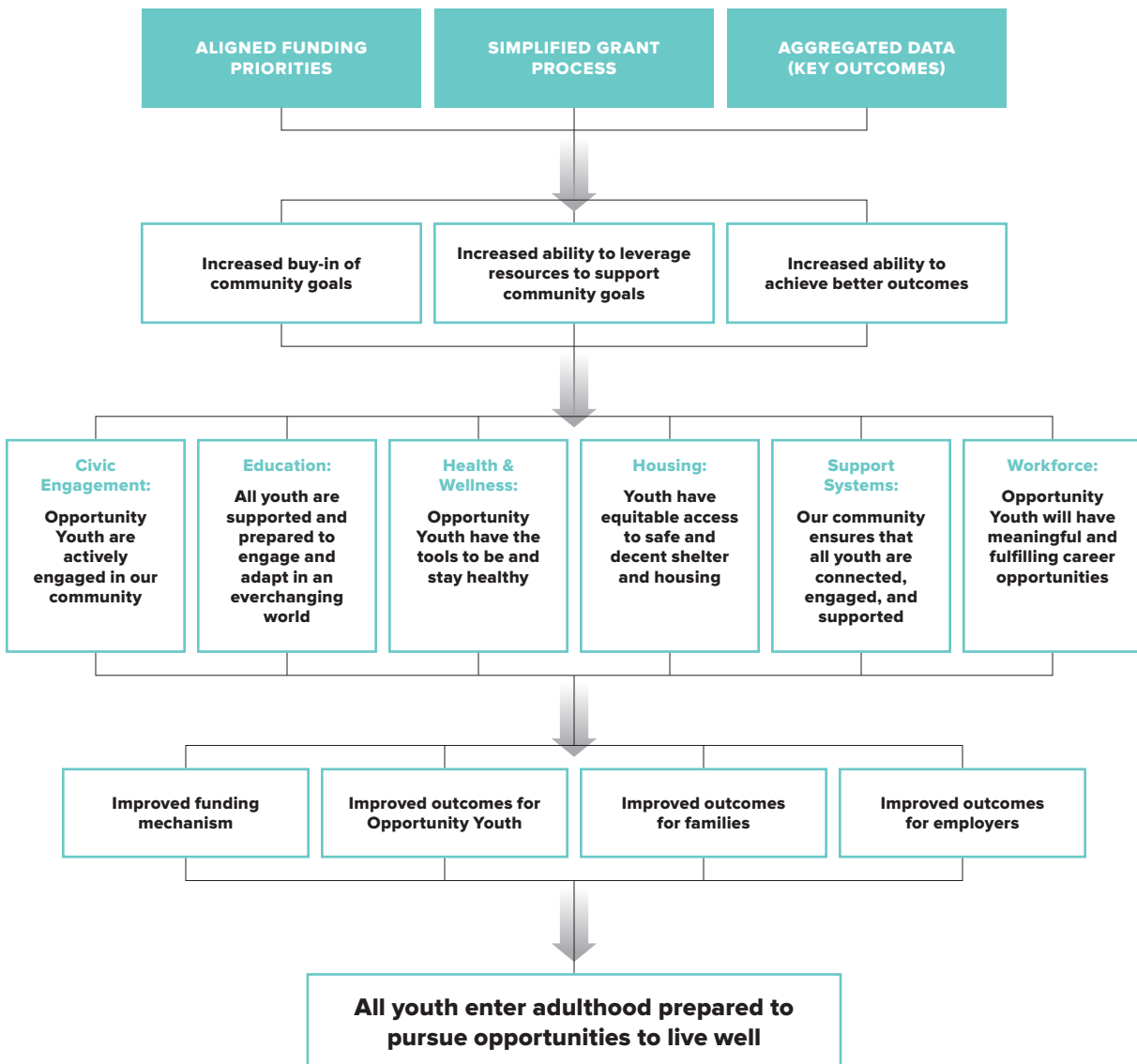
The Ohio State University

www.osu.edu

United Way of Central Ohio

<https://liveunitedcentralohio.org>

Opportunity Youth Outcome Map



Outcome mapping is a methodology for planning and assessing development programming that is oriented toward change and social transformation.

Glossary

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES):

potentially damaging childhood experiences that have been found to contribute to the development of risk factors for morbidity and mortality in adult life.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>

BACKWARDS MAPPING:

the process of beginning with your long-term goal and working “backwards” toward the earliest changes that need to occur.

BASIC NEEDS:

the elements required for survival and normal mental and physical health, such as food, water, shelter, protection from environmental threats, and love.

EQUITY LENS:

a transformative quality improvement practice used to improve planning, decision-making, and resource allocation leading to more equitable policies and programs as it relates to constituent ability status, age, ethnic group, gender identity, languages spoken, race, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

FORMAL COURT INVOLVEMENT:

the practice of processing youths through the traditional juvenile justice system (petition filing [adult court equivalent-indictment], adjudicatory hearing (trial), delinquency determination (guilty determination), and disposition hearing (sentencing) without consideration of alternative sanctions or diversion.

OPPORTUNITY GAP:

the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to, or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students.

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH:

youth ages 16–24 who are currently out of school and do not expect to enroll in the next year, have not been employed for at least six months, do not hold a college degree, are not disabled to prevent long-term employment, are not incarcerated, and are not a stay-at-home parent with a working spouse. Out of the 38.9 million Americans who fall into the 16 - 24 age range, about 6.7 million can be described as Opportunity Youth.

<http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-OpportunityRoad-2012.pdf>

OUTCOME:

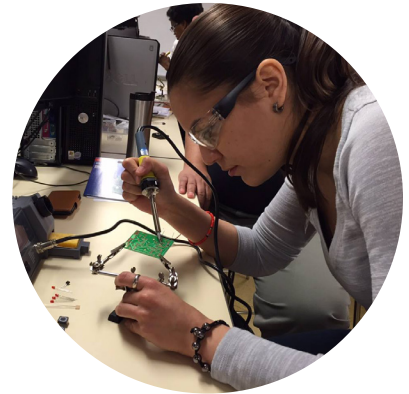
a state, or condition, that must exist for your initiative to work that does not currently exist. An outcome may represent a change in a group of people, organizations, or places.

www.theoryofchange.org

OUTCOME MAP (OM):

a methodology for planning and assessing development programming that is oriented toward change and social transformation. OM provides a set of tools to design and gather information on the outcomes, defined as behavioral changes, of the change process. OM helps a project or program learn about its influence on the progression of change in their direct partners, and therefore helps those in the assessment process think more systematically and pragmatically about what they are doing and to adaptively manage variations in strategies to bring about desired outcomes. OM puts people and learning at the center of development and accepts unanticipated changes as potential for innovation.

<https://www.outcomemapping.ca>



PROGRAM-RICH, SYSTEM-POOR SCENARIO:

an environment in which several nonprofit organizations work to address a community's problems with little or no substantive coordination.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD:

a budget-based measure of the real cost-of-living and an alternative to the official poverty measure. It determines the amount of income required for working families to meet basic needs at a minimally adequate level, taking into account family composition, ages of children, and geographic differences in costs.

Central Ohio Self-Sufficiency Wage (per adult):

Single Adult: \$9.89 hourly/\$20,896 annually

Single Adult & 2 children: \$30 hourly/\$63,355 annually

Two Adults & 2 children: \$16.74 hourly/\$70,703 annually

<http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org>

STUDENT MOBILITY:

In K-12 education, “student mobility,” also called “churn” or “transience,” can include any time a student changes schools for reasons other than grade promotion, but in general it refers to students changing schools during a school year. It may be voluntary—such as a student changing schools to participate in a new program—or involuntary, such as being expelled or escaping from bullying. Student mobility is often related to residential mobility, such as when a family becomes homeless or moves due to changes in a parent’s job. School mobility refers to the frequency of such moves among students in a particular classroom, school, or district. High churn in schools not only can hurt the students who leave, but also those who remain enrolled.

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/student-mobility/index.html>

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

a structure that provides a general representation of outcome relationships that support the theory of change work.

THEORY OF CHANGE:

a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused on mapping out or “filling in” what has been described as the “missing middle” between what a program or change initiative does and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. The process first identifies the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to determine all the outcomes that must be in place (and how these relate to one another) for the goals to occur.

www.theoryofchange.org

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE AND PRACTICE:

a strengths-based framework that is responsive to the impact of trauma, emphasizing physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both service providers and survivors; and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

<http://www.mhcc.org.au/sector-development/recovery-and-practice-approaches/trauma-informed-care-and-practice.aspx>



WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER!

Please join our Community Partners Group with your best ideas, energy, voices, and resources to make sure that all youth enter adulthood prepared to pursue opportunities to live well.



Support our nonprofit partners working on these critical issues by volunteering, serving on boards, and mentoring.

See page 12 for a list of partner organizations



Funding to support the Franklin County Opportunity Youth Initiative, or designate your gift to one of the six focus areas.

Visit the [Opportunity Youth Fund](#)



For more information, to support, or to fund, contact:
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