CENTERING YOUTH VOICE

Collaborating with Opportunity Youth to Foster Systems Change

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Letter from OYC Partners

Nashville has enjoyed unprecedented prosperity, but not all residents have participated in that prosperity at the same rate. Nashville-Davidson County has seen a consistent and alarming increase in the number of young people disconnected from meaningful education or employment. When young people are disconnected as they emerge from high school and move into adulthood, there are implications on the future health of our economy, workforce and neighborhoods. These young people, identified as Opportunity Youth (OY) by the US Department of Labor, are impacted by a web of complex systems, very few of which target them directly. Addressing this complexity demands an approach that braids together resources from across systems to build meaningful pathways into education and employment for Opportunity Youth.

The current local and national crises have revealed that this population is not experiencing the economic recovery that we have celebrated since the Great Recession. Young people are cycling through low wage jobs, or trying to navigate the unemployment system, without the education, experience, or support system to obtain jobs that lead to economic stability. As we transition into recovery, the impact on the quality and quantity of jobs will likely disproportionately affect young people engaged in sectors characterized by unpredictable and low-wage work. In addition, many young people that are marginally connected to post-secondary education are at a high risk of being disconnected. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we think differently about how to provide stronger systems of support for OY.

The Opportunity Youth Collaborative is a coalition of diverse stakeholders, including OY, coming together to shape systems change and create access for all, with an underlying and driving commitment to equity and inclusion for those who have been left out of our city's prosperity and growth. This Collaborative has shaped a path to collective action, infused with OY voice at every level of the work. Partners in the OYC are committed to a process that authentically embraces OY as leaders, providing fresh insight and new energy that drives our work together.

This report represents continuous investment across systems to create strategies for change through strong youth and adult partnerships. Recommendations in the report represent a framework to build capacity to work more effectively together to reduce the number of OY in Nashville-Davidson County. A commitment to systems thinking allows the OYC to weave together interrelated approaches to social change, transforming how we work together and engage young people in meaningful education, leading to employment in in-demand career pathways that allow for growth in both position and salary over the lifetime of a career.

We are grateful to the young people who shared their experiences and worked with adult stakeholders to define these strategies for improving our city. We are energized by their insight and the commitment of youth and adults to collaboratively implement these recommendations.

The imperative going forward is to work collectively to address the growing number of OY who are out of work and out of school. As more youth complete career credentials and degrees and enter in-demand career pathways, the region can look forward to a stronger workforce, economy and city.

The work of the OYC is guided by a team of leaders that are committed to embracing complex systems and nurturing a collective response to improve outcomes for opportunity youth. As such, this team will work with a diverse group of youth and adult stakeholders to ensure that the recommendations in this report drive our effort and that data driven analysis leads to relevant adaptations. Together, we will work to foster stronger systems of care and support for young people in Nashville.

Sincerely,

Michael Centi, Oasis Center

Rod DeVore, Nashville Career Advancement Center

Tracey Dill, United Way of Greater Nashville

Megan Godbey, Nashville Public Library Foundation

Courtney Matthews, DCS - Independent Living

Pam Madison, Monroe Harding

Kent Miller, Martha O'Bryan

Carol Martin-Osario, Nashville State Community College

Jody Patterson, Crossroads Campus

Laura Ward, Nashville Chamber of Commerce

Acknowledgments

The work that has informed this report was built on the foundation of Alignment Nashville's investment to ensure that Opportunity Youth remain a priority in our city's efforts to see all young people succeed. This commitment has provided fertile ground for convening a cross-sector collaborative to address this issue. We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with Alignment in this effort.

This work would not have been possible without the dedication of our Youth Research Team - Sharniqua Brodie, Irving Brown, Sierra Utley, Jacob O'Rear, Carlandrea Tucker, Kaylen Tucker, Shantell Cheirs, Sierra Riley, Grace Oboh, Khadir Magras, Ebony Gray, Mae McCorkle, Kaitlen Barras, and Chineerah Khan. These young people trusted us to participate in a research project that was deeply personal and challenging. Thank you for being willing to share your experience and expertise as we walked through this process.

We cannot express enough thanks to Elevate Consulting for their commitment to high quality community based research that authentically represents youth voice and challenges the practices that shape our efforts to address community issues. We also want to thank Brandon Hill for guiding the Youth Research Team with patience, care, and an unmatched level of expertise in youth engagement.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the collaborative partners that have invested considerable time and energy to this work. Their willingness to listen to young people and value youth-adult partnerships has given life to this effort.

This report represents the research and convening conceived of and overseen by the Opportunity Youth Collaborative, as a part of the Alignment Nashville team structure, whose members include the following organizations:

Alignment Nashville
Centerstone Career Connect
Complete Tennessee
Crossroads Campus
Department of Children's Services – Independent Living
Goodwill Industries
Juvenile Court
Mayor's Office of New Americans
Mayor's Office VISTAS
Martha O'Bryan
Metro Action Commission
Metro Homeless Impact Division
Metro Nashville Public Schools
Mid Cumberland Human Resource Agency
Monroe Harding
Nashville Chamber of Commerce
Nashville Public Library
Nashville Sheriff's Office
Nashville State Community College
Oasis Center
Park Center
Preston Taylor Ministries
Tennessee College Access & Success Network
United Way of Middle Tennessee
Youth Villages

This report represents the experiences and lessons learned over the 8 months of convening the Opportunity Youth Collaborative. It was authored by Rod DeVore and Ellen Zinkiewicz of Opportunity NOW and the Nashville Career Advancement Center and Amy Merritt-Campbell of Elevate Consulting. Illustration credits go to Jody Lentz and Bekah Wertz. The photography credits go to Hannah Russell of Hannah Meredith photography. Special thanks to the United Way of Metropolitan Nashville for support through the Prosperity Pathways funding.

Executive Summary

FROM ITS ONSET, OPPORTUNITY NOW, THE MAYOR'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE, HAS SOUGHT TO SUPPORT NASHVILLE'S NEXT GENERATION OF WORKFORCE IN ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS AND ECONOMIC POTENTIAL.

However, even in the initiative's brief existence, it has become clear that a substantial subset of young people is not successfully connecting to the employment or educational opportunities.

In Davidson County, approximately 9,000 young people ages 16–24 are not working and not in school, and therefore not accessing education and employment pathways that lead to economic opportunity. Disconnection among this age group is not limited to Nashville. Nationally, these young people are known as "Opportunity Youth" because they hold untapped potential for both their local economies and communities, as well as for their own personal economic mobility.

Across the country, communities are focusing on how systems change can improve outcomes for Opportunity Youth (OY) and establish effective policy and practice that can be scaled and sustained. The development of Reengagement systems targeting this population is tied to a vision for a more equitable and inclusive community that ensures that there is a system of support to reconnect OY to education and employment.

FOSTERING A REENGAGEMENT SYSTEM TO SUPPORT OY

The successful reengagement of these young people is a local and national issue that requires community collaboration that effectively removes barriers, connects the many systems that touch their lives, and builds and deepens education and employment pathways. Currently, the landscape of services targeting Opportunity Youth is not structured to advance a comprehensive reengagement effort. The Opportunity Youth Collaborative was developed to foster the design of a Reengagement system that will support the individual capacity of OY to achieve outcomes while also shaping structures that make it more probable for them to achieve those outcomes.

INTENTIONALLY ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE AS PARTNERS IN THE WORK

Opportunity NOW has invested in a study of local youth and young adult disconnection in order to develop a holistic approach to preventing disconnection and to facilitating reconnection to education and employment for young people in Nashville. Our vision for this approach has been firmly grounded in a commitment to integrating the voices, insights, wisdom, and energy of young people experiencing disconnection not only as

key informants, but also as originators of ideas and equal partners in the work itself. The development of youth-adult partnerships has created space for the co-construction of recommendations that have emerged from the research and from the analysis of pertinent systems.

PROVIDING A CLEAR FRAMEWORK TO DRIVE OUR EFFORTS

This report outlines a process on engaging youth in research and analysis and presents four preliminary findings and eight recommendations that become a framework for guiding collective action.

PRELIMINARY KEY FINDINGS

Preliminary Finding 1: Fragmentations in the existing systems of support align with the challenges young people experience navigating the system.

Preliminary Finding 2: Young people place more emphasis on "internal" barriers, while adult partners focus on addressing systemic or "external" barriers to reconnection.

Preliminary Finding 3: The number and types of barriers that young people face differs among some demographics, particularly across age groups.

Preliminary Finding 4: Supportive and caring adults as facilitators are crucial to success for OY in Nashville.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

LEADERSHIP

Opportunity #1: Incorporate Youth Voice and Leadership
Create space for youth and adults to come together to co-construct systems, a strategy that will not only lead to effective systems, but also to the development of pipelines of engaged, diverse young leaders who can lead this work for future generations

COORDINATION OF SYSTEM PARTNERS

Opportunity #2: Create Coordinated Access Points
Create a coordinated, multi-layered approach that will pull together digital and physical interventions, including transportation, to support young people in vulnerable populations in gaining access to needed resources.

Opportunity #3: Strengthen Support for Navigating Career Pathways
Create a career pathway system that has clear career trajectory options, entry points, transitions, strong supports, work experience, and other elements critical to the success of participants

Opportunity #4: Equip Providers for Effective Relationships
Develop communities of practice that will foster learning environments for providers to gain additional tools and advance their skills to build holistic, positive, and effective relationships with OY

Opportunity #5: Add a Focus on Financial Stability
Focus on financial literacy at key points in order to foster financial stability, the capacity for economic upward mobility, and well-being

STRENGTHENING SYSTEM ALIGNMENT

Opportunity #6: Increase Outreach and Recruitment
Involve Opportunity Youth in the design of outreach and marketing strategies throughout the system of support in order to more effectively reach other OY

Opportunity #7: Align Prevention and Intervention Efforts
Develop strong and strategic alignment of efforts to help young people stay connected or reconnect to the support they need, enabling them to continue their education and to gain employment

Opportunity #8: Reach Potential Dropouts Early
Design strategies that focus on supportive services in the school system, stronger data collection on early indicators, more coordinated referral efforts for struggling students and dropouts, and infusion of workforce development in curriculum

This groundwork has generated essential knowledge needed to drive discussions and actions that will shape a Reengagement system focused on investing in youth and young adults, supporting family and community life, and providing the supports young people need to face the challenges they will experience.

Understanding
Youth Disconnection

TODAY, 11.5 PERCENT OF AMERICANS AGES 16 TO 24—AN ESTIMATED 4.5 MILLION TEENAGERS AND YOUNG ADULTS— ARE NOT CONNECTED TO SCHOOL OR WORK.[1]

Nationally referred to as "Opportunity Youth" (OY), the overall rate of disconnection in this population has declined over the last ten years. However, the problem remains consistent and persistent across states, regions, and metro areas. Certain populations are disproportionately affected; namely, young people of color (particularly young men of color), youth living in poverty, with a disability, and/or young mothers are all far more likely to be disconnected than their peers. Overall, Opportunity Youth are almost twice as likely to live in poverty as their connected peers. Disconnected young women are nearly four times as likely to have a child, compared to connected young women.[2] Approximately half of Opportunity Youth have a high school diploma. Twenty percent of those young people have taken some college courses, but have not earned a degree.[3]

The transitions the disconnected population faces are age appropriate—moving from high school to post-secondary and the workforce. However, because OY are not working or in school as

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Each Opportunity Youth imposes – on average and compared to other youth – a burden of $13,900 per year due to the utilization of tax-payer funded supports, services, interventions, and detainments. In addition, the yearly social burden per opportunity youth balloons to $37,450 (2011 dollars) when lost potential earnings are added.

Reconnecting opportunity youth removes an immediate economic and social burden from the local economy. It is estimated that a one-time investment of no more than $30,000 in reconnecting opportunity youth will return $65,230 in taxpayer savings, generate $105,500 in tax revenue over the course of the young people's lives, and enhance the vitality of the city. Based on lost earnings, lower economic growth, lower tax revenues and higher government spending associated with opportunity youth, taxpayers and society lose out when the potential of these youth is not realized.[+] Source: *The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth,* 2012.

Youth disconnection is deeply embedded in the systems and structures that influence young people and their communities.

they seek to make these significant leaps, they are cut off from the relevant supports embedded in education and employment systems that may be available to their peers. Without direct connection to these formal and informal systems of support, OY are left to navigate the challenging transitions to postsecondary education or career pathways on their own. The lack of systemic support combined with the barriers they disproportionately face, often propels OY into "survival mode," where they prioritize meeting basic needs over gaining experiences that could help them discover interests, form social networks, develop skills, and build confidence.[4]

"Youth disconnection has serious consequences not just for affected young people, but also for their communities and for society as a whole."[5] Being disconnected during the critical period of emerging adulthood limits the chances and opportunities young people will have throughout their lives. "The negative effects of youth disconnection ricochet across the economy, the social sector, the criminal justice system, and the political landscape, affecting all Americans, not just now but also in the next generation."[6] Youth disconnection impacts local labor-sheds, creates a greater need for public assistance, leads to higher rates

CONTRASTING PROFILES: DISCONNECTED VS. CONNECTED YOUTH

DISCONNECTED		CONNECTED	DISCONNECTED		CONNECTED
16.6%	DISABILITY	5%	25.3%	LESS THAN HS DIPLOMA	2.8%
24.2%	UNINSURED	10.2%	51.3%	HS DIPLOMA, NO FURTHER EDUCATION	22.1%
38.9%	MEDICAID	19.3%	4.9%	BACHELOR'S HIGHEST DEGREE	8.5%

DISCONNECTED		CONNECTED	DISCONNECTED		CONNECTED
6.9%	LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY	4.1%	33.8%	POVERTY	17.9%
7.5%	NONCITIZEN	6.1%	48.1%	HAVEN'T WORKED IN PAST 5 YEARS	27.6%
6.3%	LIVING IN INSTITUTION	0.3%			

Source: *Making the Connection: Transportation and Youth Disconnection,* 2019.

of crime and incarceration (which have high personal and societal costs), poor physical and mental health, and a heightened risk of poor outcomes for the next generation.[7] Youth disconnection is deeply embedded in the systems and structures that influence young people and their communities, therefore making it a complex issue with no easy solutions. To reengage young people, and prevent disconnection, we must pay careful attention to the challenges that OY face while we also develop multipronged strategies that address the root causes of disconnection.

Across the country, cities are investing in system change efforts designed to improve conditions for Opportunity Youth. Multiple national organizations including National League of Cities, Measure of America, the Brookings Institute, the National Youth Employment Coalition, the Aspen Institute and the Center for Law and Social Policy are using both research and convenings to elevate the long-term impact of disconnection on our society. More importantly, these leaders have ensured that their work is driven by the voices of local communities that wrestle with the complexities of disconnection and that seek to provide opportunities for all OY to thrive. Supported by this national conversation, city-specific initiatives to reengage OY youth have also emerged and contributed to these efforts. Cities including Boston, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia have invested for decades in work that has given visibility to inequitable structures and broken systems that are root causes of disconnection. These cities have provided practical solutions that have measurable impact on their OY populations. The experiences of these cities have provided research and best practice for how to improve systems that serve OY.

YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN NASHVILLE

Nashville is experiencing tremendous economic growth and expansion. The city's unemployment rate has hit historical lows; however, Nashville's Opportunity Youth population remains stubbornly high. Based on three-year estimates (US Census Bureau American Community Survey PUMS, 2014–2016), there are approximately 9,100 OY in Nashville, or 11% of the total population of young people ages 16–24. Comparatively, Nashville has a higher disconnection rate than Austin, TX (8.2%) and Boston, MA (6.1%) and a lower rate than Louisville, KY (12%) and Indianapolis, IN (12.4%).[8] There is room to celebrate the great efforts of our city, but also tremendous opportunities for improvement.

The map to the right depicts the number of Opportunity Youth by Public Use Microdata (PUM) district as a percentage of all young people ages 16-24.

> There is room to celebrate the great efforts of our city, but also tremendous opportunities for improvement.

**The highest concentration of Opportunity Youth in Nashville are located in the North region.**
Percentages represent the total number of OY as a percentage of the total number of youth ages 16-24 in a given area.

21.3%

NORTH

CENTRAL
12.2%

4.9%
SOUTHWEST

11.3%

SOUTHEAST
9.2%
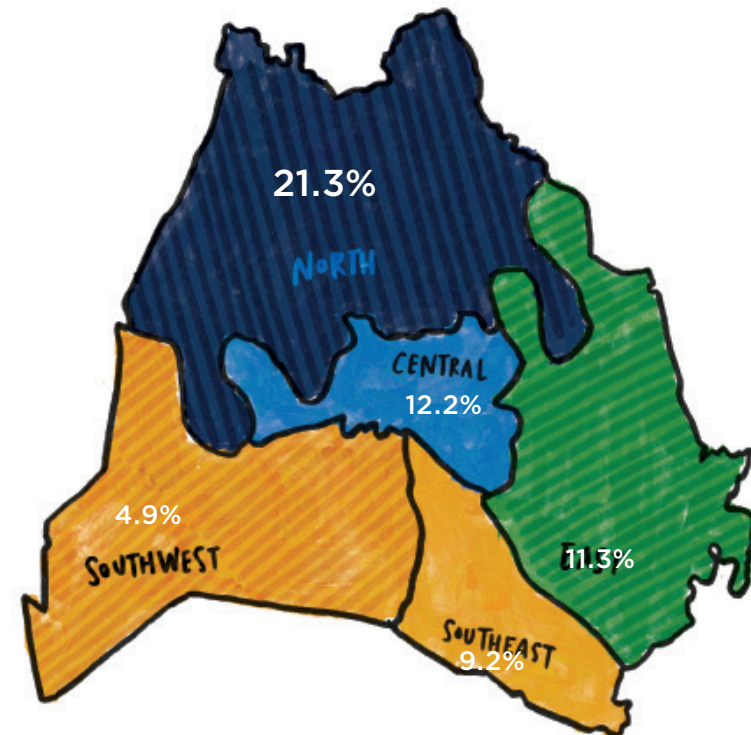
Source: *Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey PUMS, 2014-2016 (3-year estimates)*

Further exploration of demographic data for OY reveals disparities in both race and age groups.

Black youth make up a larger share of the OY population, compared to the total number of black youth in Nashville.
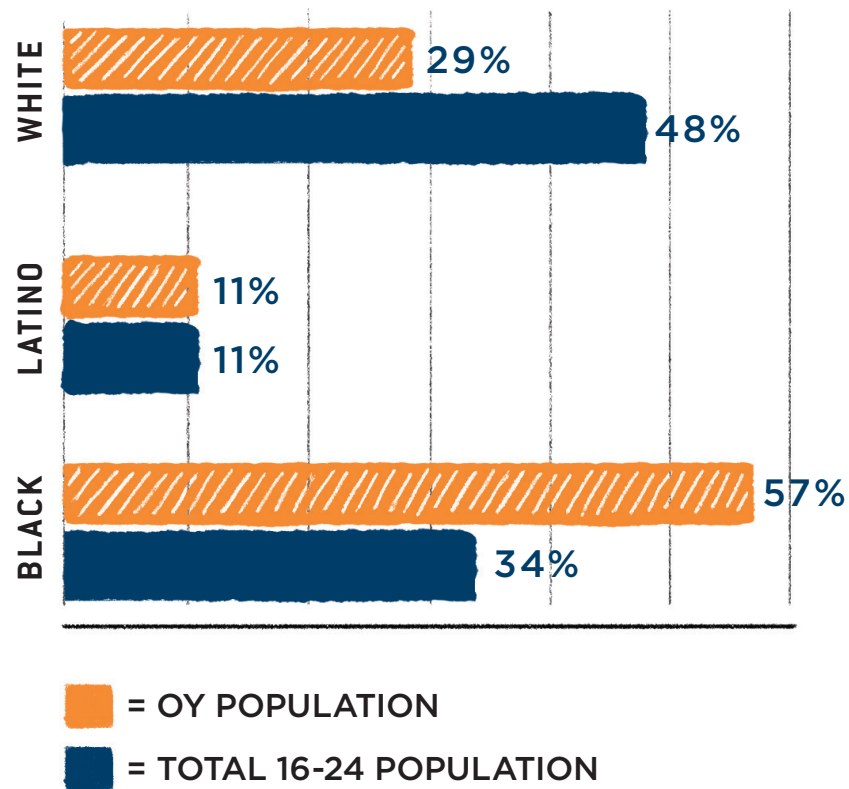
Older youth make up a larger share of the OY population, comparative to the total number of young people in Nashville.

WHITE

29%

48%

LATINO

11%

11%

BLACK

57%

34%

■ = OY POPULATION

■ = TOTAL 16-24 POPULATION

27%

13%

33%

43%

40%

44%

16-18   19-21   22-24

■ = OY POPULATION

■ = TOTAL 16-24 POPULATION

There are also place-based disparities in certain outcomes linked with disconnection. Review of dropout rates of public high schools in Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) reveal that certain neighborhoods are more likely to see higher dropout rates than others. Similarly, the total numbers of violent crime among 16 - 24 year-olds are higher in certain geographic areas than others (Maps 2 and 3).

Although drop out and crime data are both purely correlational (i.e., not directly tied to OY or disconnection), the numbers provide a picture of the kinds of challenges faced by OY across Nashville. When looking at these outcomes alongside the numbers of OY in Nashville (Map 1), some clear patterns and trends arise.

Opportunity Youth in Nashville tend to come from disconnected, opportunity scarce communities that are struggling with the impact of concentrated disadvantage. In Nashville, young people of color who live in communities experiencing high rates of poverty, low levels of adult educational attainment, and high rates of crime experience very different paths when attempting to connect to education and employment than do their peers. The number of disconnected youth in our city has major implications on our present and future economy, workforce, and neighborhood health.

These demographic and outcome disparities call for not only a strategy to address disconnection across the city but also a targeted approach to understanding how OY in different demographic groups and neighborhoods experience disconnection. It is imperative that our recognition of how young people are situated drive how we plan to address these structures.

The highest concentration of Opportunity Youth in Nashville are located in the North region.
Percentages represent the total number of OY as a percentage of the total number of youth ages 16-24 in a given area.
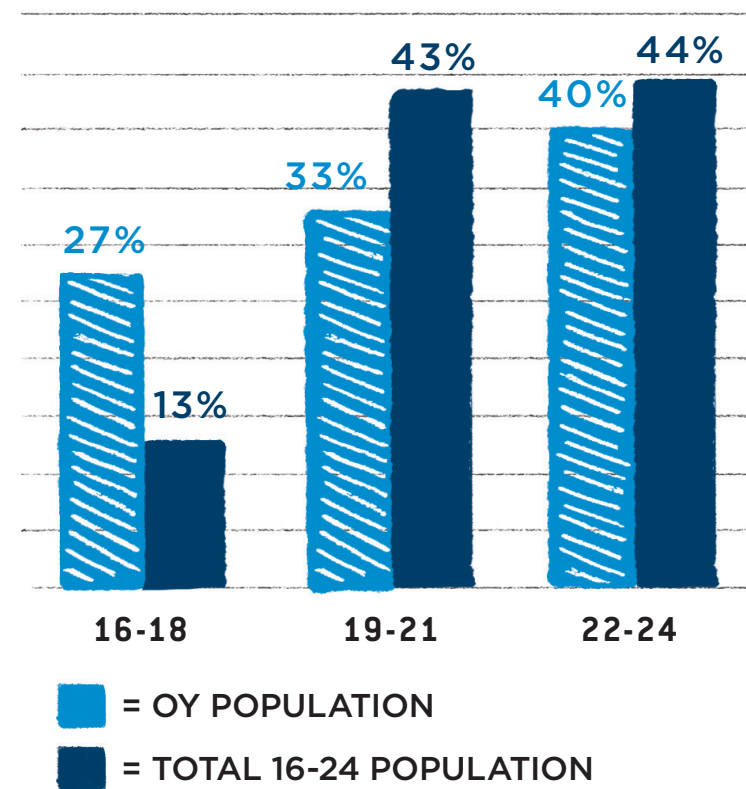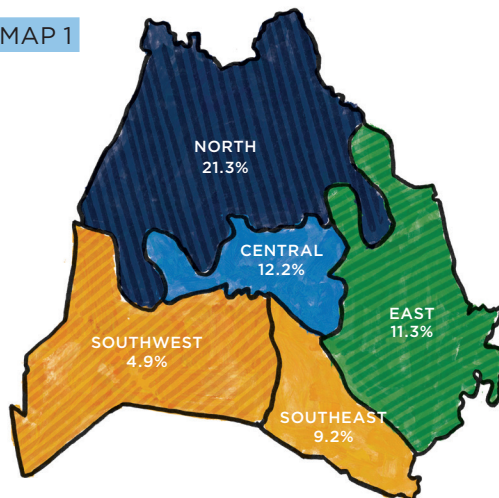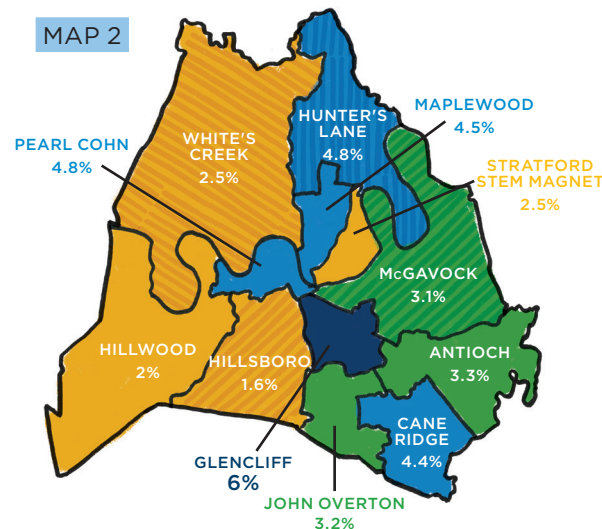
MAP 1

NORTH 21.3%
CENTRAL 12.2%
EAST 11.3%
SOUTHWEST 4.9%
SOUTHEAST 9.2%

SOURCE: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey PUMS, 2014-2016 (3-year estimates)

The highest dropout rates for MNPS public high schools are at Glencliff, Hunter's Lane, Pearl Cohn, Maplewood and Cane Ridge.
Percentages represent the total number of youth who have dropped out of school as a percentage of total school enrollment.

MAP 2

PEARL COHN 4.8%
WHITE'S CREEK 2.5%
HUNTER'S LANE 4.8%
MAPLEWOOD 4.5%
STRATFORD STEM MAGNET 2.5%
McGAVOCK 3.1%
HILLWOOD 2%
HILLSBORO 1.6%
ANTIOCH 3.3%
GLENCLIFF 6%
CANE RIDGE 4.4%
JOHN OVERTON 3.2%

SOURCE: Metro Nashville Public Schools Data Warehouse, SY 2017-2018

The highest rate of violent crime* charges for youth ages 16-24 are in the South and Hermitage precinct districts.
Percentages represent the total number of violent crime charges by youth ages 16-24 in these precincts, as a percentage of the total violent crime charges by youth 16-24 in Nashville.
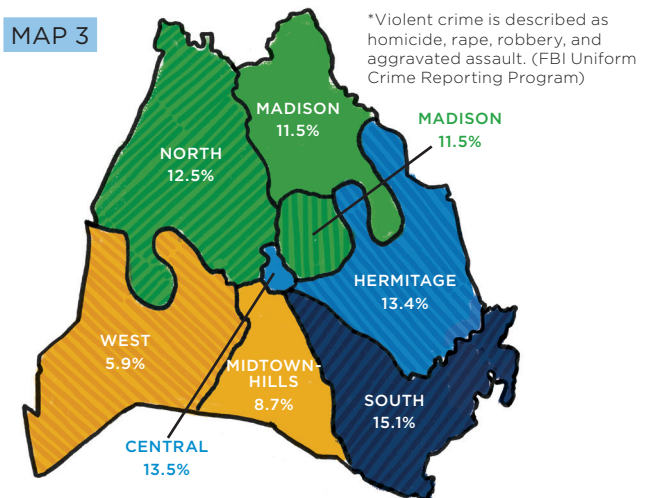
*Violent crime is described as homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. (FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program)

MAP 3

MADISON 11.5%
MADISON 11.5%
NORTH 12.5%
HERMITAGE 13.4%
WEST 5.9%
MIDTOWN-HILLS 8.7%
SOUTH 15.1%
CENTRAL 13.5%

SOURCE: Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County Police Department — Open Records Request

Addressing Disconnection in Nashville

NASHVILLE'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT DISCONNECTION FROM EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT HAS EMERGED ON THE FOUNDATION OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL EFFORTS.

In particular, Nashville has learned from the expertise of Andrew Moore with the National League of Cities and Kathy Hamilton with the Boston Private Industry Council. Andrew Moore's book, Reengagement: Bringing Back Students to America's Schools and the Boston PIC's landmark study, "Too Big to Be Seen," have both provided greater understanding regarding the national landscape of OY initiatives. Both Andrew and Kathy visited Nashville in the early phases of local design and provided insight into research and community-building approaches that more effectively uncover the local challenges facing disconnected youth.

In Nashville, as in other communities, the current landscape of services targeting OY is not coordinated on the systems level, making it challenging for young people to navigate the available services. There are a wide range of sectors, including multiple organizations and agencies, with varying levels of engagement with OY. These services have different areas of focus that typically concentrate on individual barriers or characteristics (such as parenting support or High School Equivalency attainment) rather than on more holistic services to a broader young adult or disconnected population. These organizations and agencies operate in isolated instances of partnership and collaboration that lack substantial strategic alignment. This approach has created a fragmented network of services that has failed to make significant impact on the number of disconnected youth in Nashville. For Nashville to tackle this complex problem, the city has to foster an ecosystem that provides the support OY need to connect to education and employment.

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH COLLABORATIVE

Building on the long-term work of the Alignment Nashville 16-24 Out-of-Work and Out-of-School A-Team, the Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC) formed to be a catalyst for the Nashville community to inform the development of pathways for reconnection and career development collectively. Opportunity Youth are affected by a web of complex systems, very few of which target these young people directly. The complexities in these systems demand an approach that knits together these diverse resources in order to build meaningful supports for disconnected youth to reengage with work and school. Developing a comprehensive approach requires bringing together multiple stakeholders to achieve the goal of opening doors to
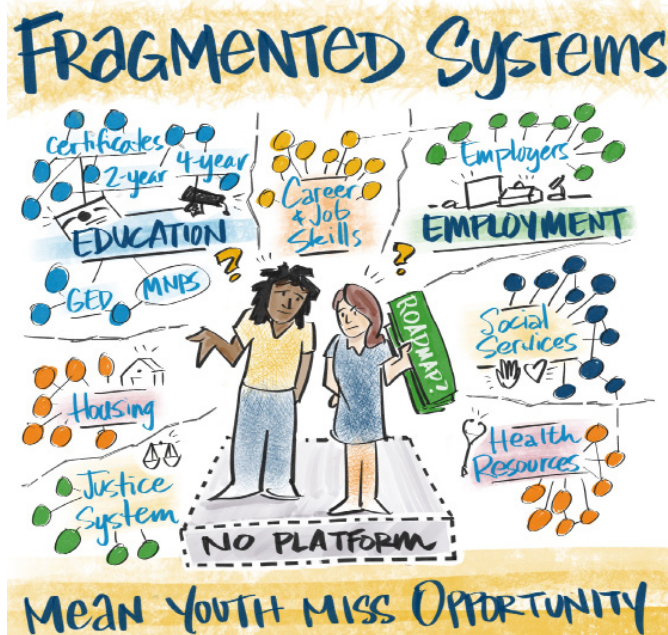
postsecondary and career success for Opportunity Youth. With the forming of the Collaborative, key players, including Metro Nashville Public Schools, Juvenile Court, Department of Children's Services, and the Mayor's Office were actively involved in this conversation.

The OYC entered the discussion with the Collective Impact (CI) framework as its foundation. Committed to CI principles the OYC next focused on using a system-thinking framework to shape how the group thought about OY, how OY experienced the available services, and how the OYC should work together to create change. From the beginning, the OYC prioritized a critical assessment of both the mental models that shape the dominant narratives regarding OY in Nashville and the system of support needed to increase reconnection to education and employment.

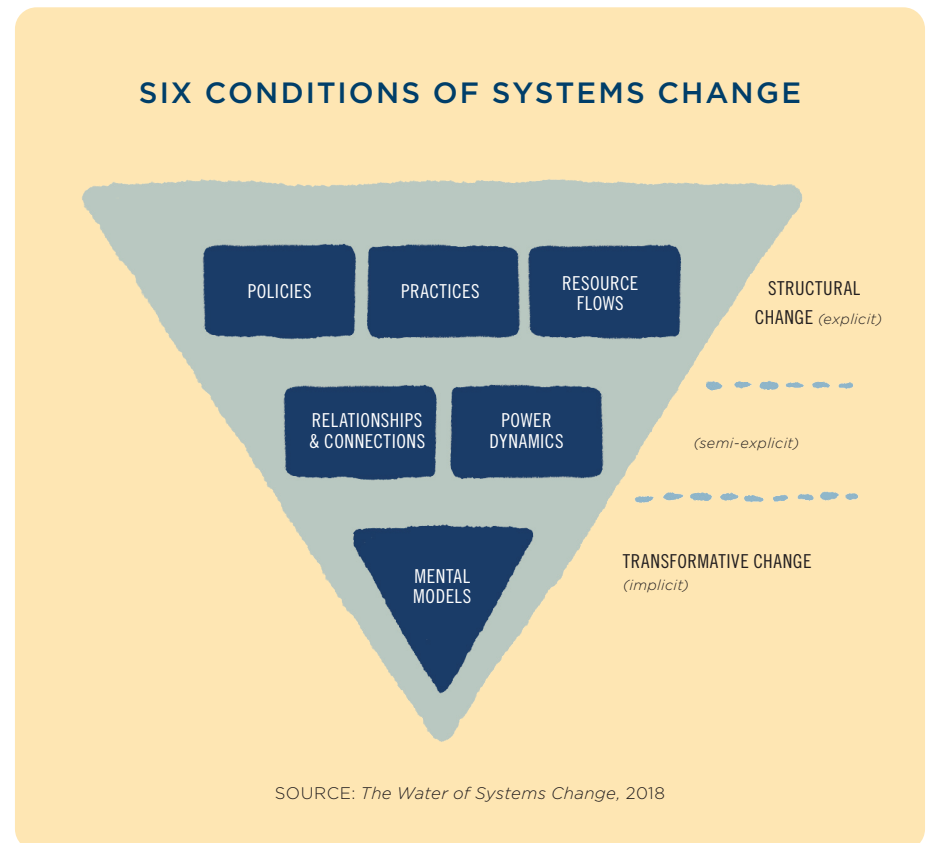The involved leaders committed to a process that would focus on building the capacity to work collectively by concentrating on five areas of work:

- Collaborating for Impact

- Building Effective Pathways to Education and Employment

- Using Data to Guide Decisions and Assess Impact

- Leveraging Partnerships and Funding to Support and Sustain Innovation[9]

- Developing Strategies to design a reengagement system

With an emphasis on system thinking, the OYC used the Six Conditions of System Change[10] to establish a foundation for clarifying what it means to shift the conditions that are holding the problem in place. This focus allowed the group to employ tools to develop an understanding of the fundamental characteristics of the complex system with which OY engage in Nashville and the implications of those characteristics. Human-Centered Design tools such as Actor Mapping, Trend Mapping, and Journey Mapping helped establish context, identify connections, reveal patterns, and elevate perspectives. Incorporating these tools helped the team visualize potential connections and dig deep into both gaps and assets. Additionally, these practices created space to develop parallel exercises with young people, thus providing a structure that allowed the adults to resist the temptation to move to adults-only decision making.

To facilitate further this mutual connection, the OYC identified a series of checkpoints that brought together adults and youth, allowing for the OYC and a group of OY to share ideas, build credibility, and establish trust. Processes initially established as communication strategies became critical milestones for ensuring that work happened mutually, neither by adults nor by young people alone. This commitment to ensuring young people would stand at the forefront of discussions was foundational for building their confidence in the adult stakeholder's willingness to take their ideas seriously and create a plan for action.

SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

POLICIES

PRACTICES

RESOURCE FLOWS

STRUCTURAL CHANGE *(explicit)*

RELATIONSHIPS & CONNECTIONS

POWER DYNAMICS

(semi-explicit)

MENTAL MODELS

TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE *(implicit)*

SOURCE: *The Water of Systems Change,* 2018

YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT/YOUTH VOICE

In order for systems and services to authentically engage the population they are designed serve, that population must be meaningfully involved in their creation, implementation, evaluation, and improvement. This engagement approach is especially relevant for youth and young adults. Most systems serving this age group are limited; often, youth and young adults are forced to navigate the "gaps" between child-serving and adult-serving systems in ways that are misaligned with their specific developmental and experiential needs. Engaging youth in developing and managing these systems strengthens the system by bridging these gaps, making it more adaptable, culturally relevant, and accessible for the age group in need of service.

In addition, genuine engagement of young adults in the review, evaluation, and improvement of the systems seeking to serve them requires professionals, educators, and community organizations to shift their views of young people from recipients of services to community assets, active contributors, and agents of change. Supporting young people in becoming assets and contributors leverages their unique ideas, skill sets, and situational knowledge into the creation not just of new initiatives and improved systems, but also of improved outcomes.

Authentic youth engagement results in a variety of positive benefits for young people and communities. In contrast to interventions that are exclusively adult-led and often focus solely on addressing deficiencies and problem-areas, the practice of youth engagement utilizes a strengths-based approach that directly builds skills and competencies. Youth and young adults who are engaged personally in youth/adult partnerships develop critical leadership skills, strengthen their self-efficacy and sense of empowerment, create important social-political connections, and improve relational skills that support their individual development as well as their professional trajectories. Studies consistently show that youth in civic engagement programs are more likely to graduate, adopt productive attitudes about their role in the community, and avoid risky behaviors. When these same youth reach adulthood, they tend to vote, volunteer, become valuable members of the workforce, and become lifelong civic leaders.

Youth engagement also affects organizations, communities, and larger political spheres. Involving youth in city decisions leads to a greater connection between plans and the realities of the targeted [young adult] segment of the city's population. Programs and structures more firmly grounded in the practical realities of the populations they target have improved likelihood of achieving success. The partnerships created between local government and young people can be invaluable in helping youth learn about, and then work on behalf of, city plans and policies. Young people can raise genuine concerns about their education, health and safety and offer workable options and solutions that may result in improved policies and programs.

See Appendix 4 to learn more about Youth Engagement

INCORPORATING YOUTH VOICE

Several cities across the country have engaged in research efforts to inform their effort to reengage Opportunity Youth. Nashville's commitment to valuing equity and inclusion, while pursuing a system thinking approach, led to the creation of a research project unique in the country.

Building on the work done by national partners, but with a specific intention of infusing youth voice at every level of the work, the Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC) sought intentionally to engage Opportunity Youth (OY) in designing and implementing Nashville's research. This engagement led to an approach based on the tenets of youth participatory action research (YPAR).

YPAR is an innovative approach to positive youth and community development in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to their own lives, communities, and the institutions intended to serve them.[11] Similar to other engagement methods or approaches for this population, YPAR achieves dual goals of 1) enhancing the work by bringing cultural relevance and new perspectives and 2) supporting the development of youth participants by providing opportunities for empowerment, connections to both adults and peers, and skill development. YPAR can address issues within specific institutions, such as schools or prisons, or in the broader community. While grounded in traditional social science research methods and processes, the key difference is that youth researchers are involved to some degree in the development of research questions and data collection methods, analysis of data and interpretation of findings, and decisions about recommendations and dissemination methods.

NASHVILLE'S YPAR IMPLEMENTATION

To build a Youth Research Team (YRT), organizations in the collaborative and other community organizations recommended OY who might have a particular interest in this work. Applicants were vetted through an application process, interview, and orientation session before being offered a position on the research team. Because the OYC is a project of Opportunity NOW, Nashville's larger youth employment initiative, researchers earned an hourly wage for their contribution to the project.

Often in YPAR or other community-based research methods, professional organizers and researchers are included in the process to provide support and capacity building for participants. For this project, an experienced youth engagement specialist with background in community research efforts was hired as a consultant to manage the YRT and provide guidance and skill building for YRT members. A Nashville-based research and evaluation consulting firm provided research training to the Team, guided them in the process of designing and implementing the research project, analyzed data, and guided them in interpreting the data to develop findings.

DESIGNING THE RESEARCH

Similar to other cities who have conducted research with this population, Nashville sought to implement a mixed methods approach to understand better the local needs of young people. While adult partners provided the overall structure for the research and facilitated group planning sessions, the YRT were encouraged to contribute to the content, structure, language, and data collection methods. The YRT explored the landscape of systems and services designed to support the young adult and Opportunity Youth population, as well as the barriers and facilitators they themselves had experienced while navigating systems and services. After establishing an understanding of the complexity and context of the challenges facing OY, the YRT collaborated with adult consultants to develop the questions and

the structure for collecting data for both the survey and the focus groups. *(See Appendix 4 to learn more about the Research Design and Data Collection.)*

LESSONS LEARNED AND REFLECTIONS FROM YPAR

Conducting research with youth and young adult researchers presents both opportunities and challenges. These lessons learned are critical to understanding both the findings of the research and the recommendations they inform:

With community-based research approaches like YPAR, involving participants requires tradeoffs between rigor and relevance. The potential tradeoffs are related primarily to the level of rigor that can be achieved; often, participants in this type of research are not skilled statisticians, and therefore analyses are limited to those that are less rigorous. The benefits of doing this kind of research are that the methods, data collection tools, processes, and interpretation of data are all informed by the target population; that is, the research is validated at every step of the process to ensure cultural relevance and the findings are truly informed by the target population. Often, the benefits outweigh the tradeoffs, especially when the target population's voice is typically underrepresented in decision-making spaces. While there are tradeoffs in research rigor, the critical addition of youth voice ensures not only that Opportunity Youth are given the chance to expand their leadership skills, but also that they are at the table and engaged in making decisions that impact their lives and the lives of their peers.

Opportunity Youth Researchers (the YRT members) experience the same systemic barriers and challenges that the research seeks to understand. These barriers include transportation, childcare, managing multiple competing responsibilities, and navigating the

obstacles in developing their own professional skills and competencies. This poses a challenge not only in conducting the project, but also in getting these young people engaged in the first place. This population is underrepresented in many youth leadership programs, and due to the nature of the barriers they experience, it is often difficult to identify disconnected youth who fit squarely into the target population, engage them, and keep them engaged and supported throughout the project.

This process is as meaningful for young people who participate as it is for the contributions that they make to the work. In a debrief session, the OY Research Team shared the personal impact of their participation in this work. They described this element in several ways, including:

> **Improvements to their professional skills,** including soft skills like communication and presenting, as well as technical skills related to research;

> **Increases in their ability to understand and relate to their peers,** thus deepening their capacity for empathy and understanding; and

> **Increases in their capacity to see their "story" in relation to the stories of their peers,** and recognizing that they are not alone in their struggle to increase their self-sufficiency and achieve their goals.

These are experiences and lessons that these young people are likely not to have had the opportunity to develop outside of this work and are just as important to YPAR work and work with Opportunity Youth as are the insights and contributions they bring to the table.

Connecting the YRT and the OYC

The research and analysis conducted by the YRT fostered a sense of anticipation and excitement among the adult stakeholders. The YRT's presentation of their findings and recommendations strongly conveyed the capacity of young people to stand as equal stakeholders. The adults involved also gained a better understanding of the ideas formed during the research process through structured discussions with the YRT. At the end of the research process, the YRT and OYC came together in a full day strategy session where both youth and adults wrestled with the eight recommendations initially developed by the YRT. This effort to co-construct recommendations opened the door for collaboration that truly represents community voice. The final recommendations and strategies that emerged are outlined later in this report.

The barriers Opportunity Youth face include transportation, childcare, managing multiple competing responsibilities, and navigating the obstacles in developing their own professional skills and competencies.

Preliminary Key Findings

TO INFORM THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES, THE OYC AND YRT TOGETHER UTILIZED A SUBSET OF THE LARGER BODY OF INFORMATION COLLECTED AS PART OF THE STUDY.

That comprehensive information (i.e. the mapping exercises combined with the survey and focus groups, etc.) provided a broad spectrum of experiential, story-based data as well as qualitative and quantitative data that could lead to a better understanding of the experiences of OY in Nashville. A full research report will be released that will include a more in-depth analysis of the data collected, including key findings and recommendations for future strategies based on this analysis. The analysis will specifically seek to identify trends in barriers faced and access to facilitators to success across demographic groups, as well as developing a better understanding of the nature of the barriers and facilitators experienced by OY in Nashville.

However, four very clear lessons learned regarding the overall experience of OY in Nashville have already become clear.

PRELIMINARY FINDING 1: Fragmentations in the existing systems of support align with the challenges young people experience navigating this system

Through system and journey-mapping activities, the OYC and the YRT were able to begin to build a shared understanding of both the individual experiences of young people and how the systems they have to navigate operate. Through this exploratory, qualitative process, the OYC and YRT unpacked the emotions young people experience as they proceed or fail in that navigation. Simultaneously, both groups together were able to identify places where the system could work towards better alignment, like streamlining processes cross multiple (similar) programs, coordinating entry processes and access points so that OY aren't forced to repeat the same enrollment process multiple times, and improving communication across multiple organizations meeting a young person's needs.

These activities yielded rich dialogue related to the interaction of the system and the lived experience of OY as they attempt to

Young Person #1: Cindy
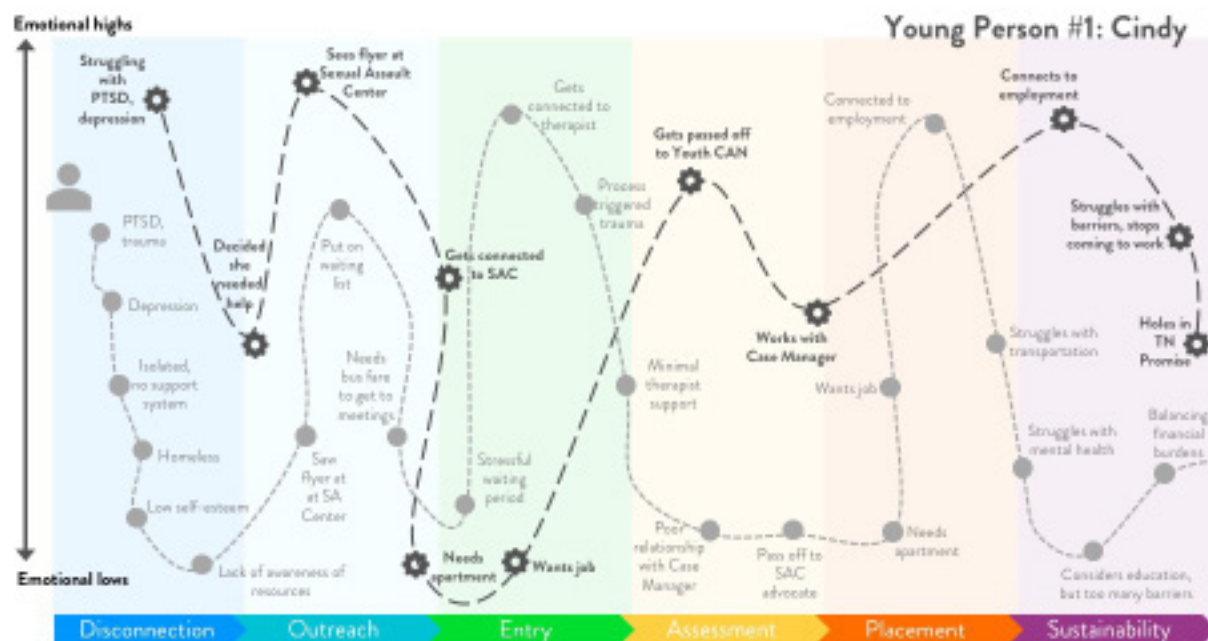
navigate that system. These learnings informed the development of the research structure and the questions asked in the research, and they provided a critical lens through which the adult members of the OYC could view their work and begin to shift their thinking to a more empathetic and empowering approach to the work. In the future, this kind of human-centered dialogue focusing on the OY's perspective should be prioritized in order to ensure that systems and organizations are adapted to align with the needs and preferences of the population they intend to serve.

WHAT IS JOURNEY MAPPING?

A journey map, allows you to visualize a process beginning to end. This simple framework will help you to more easily imagine the entire flow of a experience, whether it's how a service may work or all the touchpoints of a customer's journey with a product.

WHY HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN?

Human-centered design is uniquely situated to arrive at solutions that are desirable, feasible, and viable. By starting with humans, their hopes, fears, and needs, we quickly uncover what's most desirable. Human-centered design offers problem solvers of any stripe a chance to design with communities, to deeply understand the people they're looking to serve, to dream up scores of ideas, and to create innovative new solutions rooted in people's actual needs.

Source: *The Field Guide of Human-Centered Design*

PRELIMINARY FINDING 2: Young people place more emphasis on "internal" barriers, while adult partners focus on addressing systemic or "external" barriers to reconnection.

Better understanding of the types and prevalence of barriers that young people experience most on their journey to reconnection was at the heart of both the survey and the focus groups.

One unique addition to this research directly influenced by the YRT was the inclusion of questions to assess internal factors that affect OY behavior. Throughout the system and journey mapping processes, adult partners often framed barriers and facilitators in terms of external factors (e.g., poverty, transportation, access to

services), but YRT members continually pointed to the role that internal factors (e.g., self-esteem, motivation, self-discipline, etc.) play in how young people are able to connect and stay connected to education and employment systems. This led to exploration of the sociological framework of "agency vs. structure," where "agency" refers to an individual's own capacity to act independently to achieve an outcome (or internal factors), and "structure" refers to the configuration of social systems that may create more or less probability individuals will achieve a particular outcome (or external factors). This specific example is one critical way in which the voice of OY pointed the research in a direction that may not have been explored otherwise.

It is possible that the lack of attention the YRT members gave to structural factors may suggest a lack of understanding among young people of social systems and how to navigate them. It may also be that youth who experience hardship may internalize issues at younger ages before gaining knowledge (through age and experience) of the role social structures play in outcomes of individuals and communities. In either case, this observation may provide a new mental model for how providers and adult partners approach the work. It can also inform new initiatives aimed at increasing youth agency and raising awareness of how to navigate structures intended to address critical needs of OY.
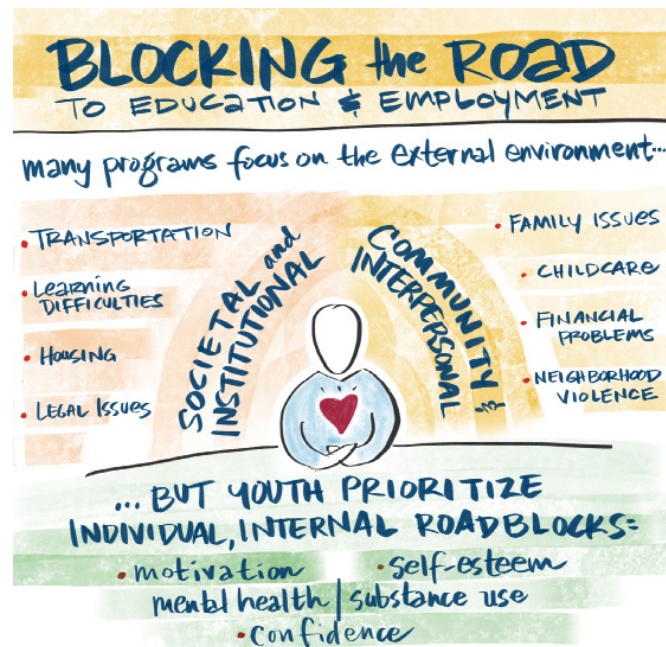
> Youth who experience hardship may internalize issues at younger ages before gaining knowledge of the role social structures play in outcomes of individuals and communities.

PRELIMINARY FINDING 3: The number and types of barriers that young people face differ among some demographics, particularly across age groups.

While OY consistently report internal barriers as key roadblocks to their success, there is variance in the number and types of barriers experienced by different demographic groups. The most salient difference identified in the preliminary analysis is that as OY age, they report more barriers, and the types of barriers they report change from primarily internal barriers (like self-esteem and motivation) to more external barriers (like financial problems and lack of knowledge of opportunities). This disparity in the data encourages us to consider what exists within the landscape of available services for older OY and potential strategies that might improve these offerings. It also provides a reminder of the importance of looking at barriers across demographic groups, which will be a major focus in the upcoming research report.
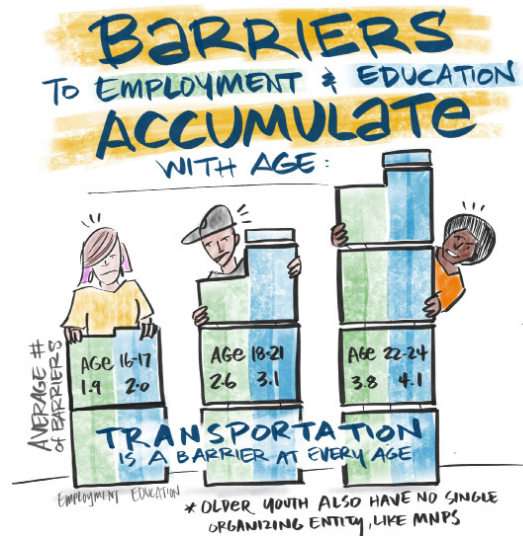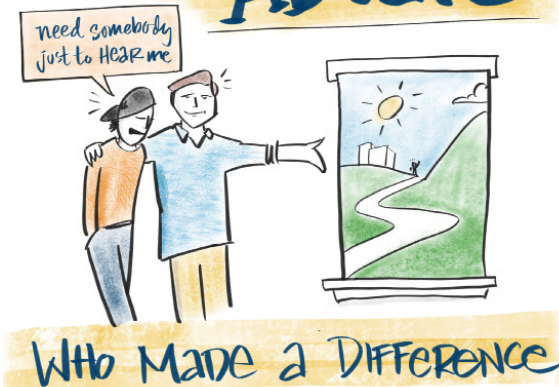
PRELIMINARY FINDING 4: Supportive and caring adults as facilitators are crucial to success for OY in Nashville.

In addition to identifying barriers that OY experience on their path to reconnection, respondents provided insight into the things that supported them as they sought to engage with education and employment. Generally, OY identified that the people in their lives (as well as their own internal factors) were critical support factors. These people included family members (e.g. siblings, parents, and grandparents) and peers (e.g. friends and significant others), but also clearly highlighted the role of other caring adults with influence in their lives, such as teachers, coaches, and even community workers and case managers. Future work should include and prioritize the role of these caring adults in equal measure with strategies targeted at system re-alignment or the improvement of community resources.

Opportunities for Improvement

The process of understanding where and how Nashville's Opportunity Youth are disconnected, and how this both relates to and differs from national trends and strategies, is just beginning. The stories and data that the OYC collected have begun to aid in understanding this landscape, but more must be done in order to fully understand how to address the challenge of reengagement. Working together, the OYC and YRT have identified eight opportunities for future exploration and focus. These opportunities are positioned in 3 interrelated priority areas (Leadership, Coordination of System Partners, and Strengthening System Alignment) that provide a framework for thinking critically about how to foster a stronger system of support for OY. The further exploration of these areas of work will ensure that youth voice is embedded in the fabric of our effort; that youth and adults co-construct coordinated systems of support for OY; and that partners work collectively to address the root causes of disconnection.

LEADERSHIP

Opportunity #1: Incorporate Youth Voice and Leadership
Create space for youth and adults to come together to co-construct systems, a strategy that will not only lead to effective systems, but also to the development of pipelines of engaged, diverse young leaders who can lead this work for future generations.
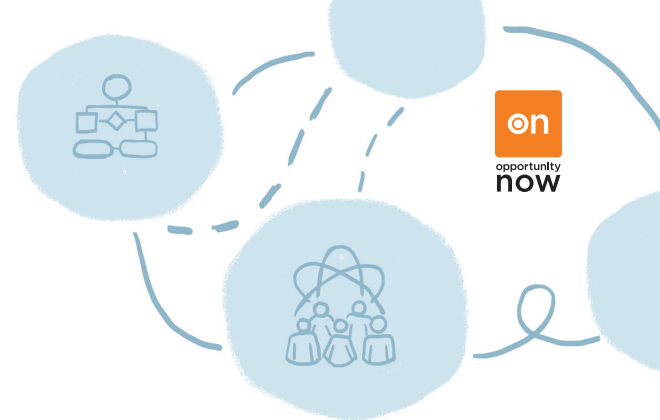
COORDINATION OF SYSTEM PARTNERS

Opportunity #2: Strengthen Support for Navigating Career Pathways

Create a career pathway system that has clear career trajectory options, entry points, transitions, strong supports, work experience, and other elements critical to the success of participants

Opportunity #3: Equip Providers for Effective Relationships

Develop communities of practice that will foster learning environments for providers to gain additional tools and advance their skills to build holistic, positive, and effective relationships with OY

Opportunity #4: Add a Focus on Financial Stability

Focus on financial literacy at key points in order to foster financial stability, the capacity for economic upward mobility, and well-being

Opportunity #5: Create Coordinated Access Points

Create a coordinated, multi-layered approach that will pull together digital and physical interventions, including transportation, to support young people in vulnerable populations in gaining access to needed resources

STRENGTHENING SYSTEM ALIGNMENT

Opportunity #6: Increase Outreach and Recruitment

Involve Opportunity Youth in the design of outreach and marketing strategies throughout the system of support in order to more effectively reach other OY

Opportunity #7: Align Prevention and Intervention Efforts

Develop strong and strategic alignment of efforts to help young people stay connected or reconnect to the support they need, enabling them to continue their education and to gain employment

Opportunity #8: Reach Potential Dropouts Early

Design strategies that focus on supportive services in the school system, stronger data collection on early indicators, more coordinated referral efforts for struggling students and dropouts, and infusion of workforce development in curriculum

LEADERSHIP

OPPORTUNITY #1: INCORPORATE YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP

Opportunity Youth stand on the outside of most institutional supports and are often marginalized in decision-making processes. Yet youth bring their experiences and their consequent understandings and insights, their creativity not tied to "how we've always done it," and their passion to make change for themselves, their family, their friends, and their community. OY are experts who have the right to represent their own interests, identify their challenges, and design solutions. Not having young people acting as leaders in these efforts reinforces structural inequity and perpetuates institutional patterns of disparity.

Opportunity Youth engagement must be a central pillar of any reengagement work. To be authentic, youth engagement must involve youth participating in partnerships designed to ensure that both young people and adults contribute to and learn from the experience and one another. Without reciprocal approaches to learning that are integrated and include both youth and adult learning needs, youth may appear to have decision-making roles but may in fact have little input and simply serve as tokens or symbols.

RECOMMENDATION: Create space for youth and adults to come together to co-construct systems, a strategy that will not only lead to effective systems, but also to the development of pipelines of engaged, diverse young leaders who can lead this work for future generations

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

- Create training opportunities that will build capacity of OY and organizational leaders to support young people in fulfilling leadership roles

  + Design trainings to build leadership capacity of OY in partnership with experts in youth leadership development

  + Design trainings with organizational leaders to build capacity of service providers to support youth as stakeholders

- Develop a network of youth leaders to foster youth-adult partnerships in collaborative efforts

  + Develop a convening structure to keep youth engaged in collaborative efforts

  + Create paid and/or scholarship opportunities for OY who invest their time in supporting reengagement efforts

  + Develop messaging campaigns with youth leaders that will communicate the how/what/why of youth leadership

COORDINATION OF SYSTEM PARTNERS

OPPORTUNITY #2: STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR NAVIGATING CAREER PATHWAYS

Opportunity Youth have a diverse range of career interests, but many of them have neither the awareness of career pathway options nor the opportunity to explore career possibilities. This is especially true for older OY. Forty percent of OY ages 22–24 surveyed reported that they lack knowledge of employment opportunities, and this was the barrier most reported for this age group. The lack of connection to institutions that provide information and opportunities limits the number of OY who enter a career pathway and gain the work experience needed to advance in these fields. Without a strong system of support to help OY navigate career pathway options, many young people are overwhelmed and discouraged by the process.

> **"There are jobs that might pay a little more, but finding where to go isn't well known."** —Opportunity Youth

Additionally, the lack of knowledge of clear steps toward a career path that could lead to economic self-sufficiency has fostered a narrative amongst OY that the only options available to them are low skill, low barrier-to-entry positions that often do not pay living wages. The low unemployment rate indicates that in jobs where Opportunity Youth can easily be employed they are working. However, the number of OY with low median family

incomes points to underemployment. In fact, 36% of OY survey respondents indicated that they were employed but looking for a new or additional job, indicating that their current employment situation is unsuitable or unsustainable. The false choice of low-wage, low-skill jobs or nothing, the pressures of providing for their family's immediate needs versus pursuing an extended education, coupled with the lack of clear career pathways leading to higher wage, higher skill jobs have pushed many young people into a cycle of underemployment.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a career pathway system that has clear career trajectory options, entry points, transitions, strong supports, work experience, and other elements critical to the success of participants

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

- Define a shared vision and strategy for career pathway development for OY

  + Cooperate with regional and local career pathway efforts to create a step-by-step guide that is relevant and applicable for OY. Guide should be participant focused and highlight steps to build skills for entering and advancing through career pathways

  + Increase access to high quality occupational training programs

  + Design a career pathway system that prioritizes support services and career navigation assistance to facilitate transitions

- Develop stronger relationships with the employer community to create career-level employment for OY

  + Build relationships with employer community to foster engagement with secondary and post-secondary institutions to articulate core competencies and establish more "learn-to-work" and "work-to-learn" opportunities

- Evaluate models across the country

  + Research and evaluate innovative models that blend education, training, and work in ways that lead to career level employment

OPPORTUNITY #3: EQUIP PROVIDERS FOR EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

This research affirms that Opportunity Youth need and want to build strong relationships with peers and caring adults to help them wrestle with the complexity of the challenges they face. When asked to rank factors that facilitate success, "caring adults" was consistently in the top three rankings. The person who makes a difference may be a family member who pushes a young person to graduate or a teacher who is especially supportive, for example. Survey responses indicate that support from mentors (56%) and the presence of positive role models (51%) were critical facilitators of success.

> **"I went through a lot. Last year I got a DUI, my teacher there helped me stop smoking, or less. she got me on a path. I still talk to her."** —Opportunity Youth

Yet most OY are isolated from the traditional systems of support, such as school and work, that create opportunities for positive adult or peer interaction. This disconnection cuts OY off from the information, guidance, and support they need during this difficult and uncertain transition to adulthood. Unlike their connected peers, most OY do not have the same room for error or exploration because of this lack of a robust system of support.

With deeper connections to positive adult or peer mentors, OY can gain the social and emotional capabilities to navigate complex systems that would move them forward. This assistance is particularly relevant for OY who have experienced homelessness, been involved with the justice system, or have been victims of violence, abuse, or discrimination. The residual effects of trauma affect how young people process early setbacks, often feeding the dominant negative internal mental models compounding the systemic difficulties of reconnecting to education and employment.

Young people need providers who are able to build relationships and offer encouragement, support, and information beyond their particular and limited area of expertise in the system.

> RECOMMENDATION: Develop communities of practice that will foster learning environments for providers to gain additional tools and advance their skills to build holistic, positive, and effective relationships with OY

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

- Develop a set of training offerings accessible to service providers

   + Establish a menu of options including trainings on trauma-informed care, positive youth development, agency, and resiliency with training professionals

   + Establish communities of practice that will foster networks of support for improving engagement and retention of OY

- Develop training opportunities that support peer-to-peer engagement

   + Develop the quality standards for peer-to-peer engagement with training providers

   + Develop train-the-trainer opportunities for OY leaders with training providers

OPPORTUNITY #4: ADD A FOCUS ON FINANCIAL STABILITY

Disconnection has a residual effect on young people's financial future. The experiences young people gain during this crucial time in their lives are building blocks for financial stability and long-term economic upward mobility. For youth who are connected during the critical ages of 16 to 24, approximately fifteen years later the median family income was about $78,000, compared to about $44,000 for those who were disconnected for one year or more."[13] The impact of low wages and financial illiteracy ripples out. "The costs of disconnection accrue not just to those who experience it but also to entire communities and indeed to the society as a whole…this makes youth disconnection not only a 'youth' issue but also an issue of intergenerational poverty."[14]

Opportunity Youth, even if they are employed and especially if they are underemployed, are often focused on financial survival and covering life expenses like housing, food, and transportation. Survey respondents indicated that financial problems are a major barrier for them. Young people have reported that they not only need financial support to remove barriers to reconnection, but they also need help increasing their financial capability. The goal is

to assist young people by helping them learn and practice financial skills, develop positive habits, and access valuable tools and resources. This focus will help young people understand and manage their finances throughout their lifetime.

RECOMMENDATION: Focus on financial literacy at key points in order to foster financial stability, the capacity for economic upward mobility, and well-being

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

• Create systems of financial support to remove barriers for OY transitioning to post-secondary education

  + Align programs that provide direct financial assistance and counseling to OY to ensure young people have access to the support needed to transition to post-secondary education

  + Increase awareness of opportunities available through Nashville GRAD (Getting Results by Advancing Degrees)

> "If I stop working and going to school, I'm going to be broke. If you try to go to school and work, one of them isn't going to work out." —Opportunity Youth

• Advocate for policy changes to eliminate or minimize barriers for OY to enter and complete education

  + Advocate for changes in post-secondary education policies that are barriers to completion (i.e., FAFSA simplification and verification processes)

• Provide access to financial education that will improve the financial stability and economic upward mobility of OY

  + Develop with financial education leaders engaging, experiential curriculum to help OY develop financial goals and practice financial skills

OPPORTUNITY #5: CREATE COORDINATED ACCESS POINTS

Opportunity Youth have identified the need for transportation and the lack of knowledge of opportunities as roadblocks to reconnecting to education and employment. Survey respondents and focus group participants cited lack of knowledge of or access to resources as key barriers. Access to knowledge, opportunities, and support young people need is both digital and physical. However, the ecosystem of services targeting this population is a patchwork of disparate programs and assistance spread out all over the city. What exists is a mix of public, private, and non-profit efforts with limited coordination of services, major redundancies in service delivery, and no community of practice or data sharing to move disconnected individuals through the system toward reconnection.

Over 20 reengagement programs in 17 cities across the country (e.g., Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Dayton, and Minneapolis) have developed community-based access points to increase engagement with youth and provide coordinated systems of support. These physical sites actually located in communities with

> **"I think there should be an information building with anything you want to know there. You can go to this building to find about jobs, they teach you how to do a resume, how to start a career. You know to go here when you don't know where to go."** —Opportunity Youth

high numbers of OY represent best practice for reaching vulnerable populations. One focus group participant posed the idea of a "one-stop shop" for resources for Opportunity Youth—an idea that generated agreement and excitement both among participants in focus group and among the OY Research Team. Others recommended better increasing teacher and school personnel knowledge of resources (since they are often the adults who have the most contact with OY) and beginning education about resources earlier (i.e., in middle school). Through technology interventions, data-sharing and data-driven goals, and connecting individuals to stronger systems of support, these collaborative efforts can increase participant engagement.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a coordinated, multi-layered approach that will pull together digital and physical interventions, including transportation, to support young people in vulnerable populations in gaining access to needed resources

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

- Develop physical access points in high need neighborhoods

  + Assess the current landscape of services in high need neighborhoods to determine the best fit for access points

  + Develop quality standards for access points that include best practices from other reengagement centers including robust coaching, training, and case management capacity to provide navigation support and persistence coaching

  + Create standards for access points to use peer-to-peer supports to strengthen relationship building, conduct outreach efforts, and to reflect community voice

  + Analyze the current intake and assessment tools of service providers to determine the feasibility of a coordinated system

  + Explore shared, cross-system data collection in order to identify inequitable outcomes and suggest where resources and attention are most needed

- Create youth-designed tech solutions for increasing the awareness of available resources and coordinating services

  + Survey available tech solutions to determine feasibility and fit for our city

  + Engage in conversations with United Way to discuss adaptations to the 211 system to support the needs of OY

- Develop transportation solutions that address the identified needs of OY

    + Work with the transportation authority to explore viable options for addressing transportation gaps

STRENGTHENING SYSTEM ALIGNMENT

OPPORTUNITY #6: INCREASE OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

Most Opportunity Youth have been involved with one or more individual service providers in the current reengagement system, but do not have an understanding of the system as a whole. When they are disconnected from organizational support, their lack of system awareness prevents them from taking next steps.

The lack of relevant and timely marketing and outreach exacerbates the problem. OY have made it really clear that marketing and outreach across the ecosystem is ineffective, lacking a relevant approach to raising the awareness of the opportunities available to young people. In survey responses, "lack of knowledge of opportunities" was the second-highest chosen education barrier, and the fourth-highest chosen employment barrier.

It is also important to note that OY are not a monolithic group when it comes to the need for outreach and recruitment strategies. Older OY indicate more challenges identifying potential opportunities than do younger OY, and there are differences between OY of different races and living in different zip codes. These disparities demands that we pay careful attention to the diversity of OY experiences in the development of outreach and recruitment efforts.
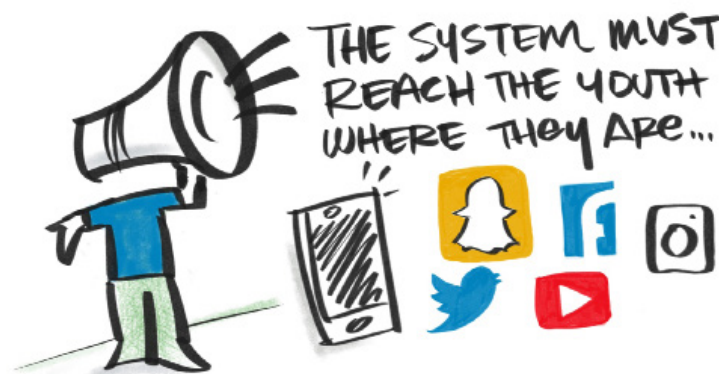
RECOMMENDATION: Involve Opportunity Youth in the design of outreach and marketing strategies throughout the system of support in order to more effectively reach other OY

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

- Create dynamic, targeted marketing strategies that help OY navigate the resources available.

    + Create best practices with OY for the development of marketing materials

+ Design a step-by-step guide with OY for how young people can access resources

+ Develop targeted outreach efforts with OY in high need communities in order to reach those and the various other diverse communities

• Develop streamlined referral and enrollment processes

+ Assess the feasibility of creating a shared database to support referrals to services that are the best fit for young people

• Develop outreach teams of OY to share resources and opportunities with other OY

+ Outline with partners the requirements of an outreach team

OPPORTUNITY #7: ALIGN PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION EFFORTS

Young people are vulnerable to disconnection at numerous points, including during high school, after graduation, early in college or post-secondary training, or even after achieving a degree or certificate. Any point along a young person's journey could be an opportunity to both prevent disconnection from happening and to intervene to help get young people quickly back on track.

However, Nashville's prevention and intervention systems were created and have evolved independently. This fragmentation keeps programs and services from building on the insights that could be gained from stronger collaborative efforts between prevention and intervention strategies.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop strong and strategic alignment of efforts to help young people stay connected or reconnect to the support they need, enabling them to continue their education and to gain employment

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

• Develop strategies for building outreach and referral networks for young people who are experiencing disconnection

+ Establish a strong partnership with the Metro Student Attendance Center to engage students who are chronically absent or who are no longer attending high school

+ Foster robust connections to social service agencies that address common needs among OY and support reconnection to education

• Create mechanisms to allow youth with experience of disconnection to inform the alignment of prevention and intervention efforts (See previous, Opportunity #1: Incorporate Youth Voice and Leadership.)

+ Create platforms, in partnership with MNPS and service providers, for youth to share their perspective

+ Create Peer-to-Peer Networks, in cooperation with partners, to strengthen the representation of youth voice

• Develop data sharing practices, in partnership with MNPS, that support the alignment of prevention and intervention efforts

+ Develop practices with providers that make the best use of the available data

+ Develop data sharing practices that focus on providing the external data that MNPS needs to align supports with community partners

OPPORTUNITY #8:
REACH POTENTIAL DROPOUTS EARLY

In 2017, approximately 1,800 young people dropped out of high school. This number is a decrease over the last 10 years, representing significant effort of MNPS and community-based organizations to pursue strategies that support young people. Despite the progress, specific populations and geographies are disproportionately represented in the dropout numbers. For example, in School Year 2017–2018, MNPS students who were English Language Learners and those with Limited English Proficiency dropped out at almost double the rate of native speakers. Students in zoned high schools in the MNPS system dropped out at higher rates than those in charter or specialty schools (excluding alternative learning centers). Additionally, the students who have and are dropping out often do so without any immediate connection to support services, leaving young people without clear options for taking next steps to reconnect to education or explore employment pathways.

Disconnection is an outcome years in the making. Research shows that youth who drop out have experienced significant academic, social and/or emotional difficulty, and poor attendance several years prior to their departure from school.[12] This information provides an opening for reaching potential dropouts early with the support they need. MNPS has invested significant resources into ensuring that students who show signs of disconnection are receiving the services needed to be successful. This recommendation affirms that work and calls for stronger

community partnerships with MNPS to ensure that the appropriate level of services is available.

RECOMMENDATION: Design strategies that focus on supportive services in the school system, stronger data collection on early indicators, more coordinated referral efforts for struggling students and dropouts, and infusion of workforce development in curriculum

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES:

• Create more robust workforce development and career exploration opportunities

Disconnection is an outcome years in the making.

+ Increase access to training and short-term credential opportunities in partnership with workforce development professionals

+ Embed workforce development and career exploration in Alternative Learning Centers and other degree completion programs

+ Advocate for training that will build the capacity of counselors to provide advanced college and career exploration

- Invest in support services professionals to strengthen prevention efforts

  + Advocate for the infrastructure, including funding, needed to provide a stronger system of support for students showing early indicators of disconnection.

  + Focus on Priority Schools; increasing access to additional supports for schools that are most adversely affected by disconnection

  + Assess existing community services and develop targeted community-based and family engagement supports for communities that have multiple barriers

- Establish a shared data framework that will inform practice

  + Create data collection practices that identify early indicators of disconnection and share relevant information with community partners

  + Build capacity of community partners to understand the data, make meaning of it, and determine areas of focus

  + Create a data-sharing pipeline that will inform best practice for supporting disconnected youth

Next Steps

THE EXISTENCE OF 9,000 YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NEITHER WORKING NOR IN SCHOOL IS ALARMING DATA THAT SHOULD PROPEL COMMUNITY LEADERS THAT ARE INTERESTED IN POLITICS, EDUCATION, ECONOMY, AND OVERALL COMMUNITY WELL-BEING TO BE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN REDUCING THIS NUMBER.

In addition, the disparities between racial and ethnic groups in OY numbers point to societal factors such as poverty and discrimination that illuminate the need to shift the conditions that are holding this problem in place. Without a concerted effort to build stronger systems of support for this population, our city will continue to perpetuate the conditions that have made youth disconnection a consistent and persistent challenge. The work of fostering connections to education and employment are complex, but through collective efforts our city can create paths that lead to a more equitable and inclusive community.

There is great work happening in Nashville to ensure that all young people have the support to transition successfully to adulthood. The Opportunity Youth Collaborative acknowledges these efforts and will pursue the steps necessary to advance this great work

through the implementation of the recommendations and strategies outlined in this report. The hope is that these recommendations will be a guide for how the city can shape a system of support for OY.

This six-month effort gave the OYC the space to listen to young people, use data to drive decisions, initiate youth-adult partnerships, and establish a framework that will foster an ecosystem for system change. The OYC believes that through a shared vision, and guiding framework, the OYC will be able build on the tremendous assets in our city. The OYC, supported by Opportunity NOW, will continue to convene to advance the recommendations outlined in this report. Also, in an effort to build a comprehensive system of support, Alignment Nashville has committed to exploring the formation of an Alignment A-Team focused on Dropout Prevention (Recommendations 4 & 5). The OYC and the A-team will work closely together to ensure that the overlapping threads and shared goals drive our desire to achieve population level change. This effort can maximize the resources extended and create long-term vision to scale and sustain this work.

With a commitment to reducing the number of Opportunity Youth in Nashville, the OYC will focus on key systemic shifts that lead to

more, higher quality, and sustainable pathways for Opportunity Youth. The OYC will be structured to advance the work outlined in the report by focusing on three fundamental systemic shifts:

1. Building and strengthening collaborative infrastructure,

2. Building diverse stakeholder commitment, and

3. Implementing and sustaining collective action among stakeholders.

We will seek to advance this work by pursuing the following steps:

• Develop youth leadership structure to increase youth-adult partnerships and embed youth leadership in the framework of our efforts

• Engage senior-level partners with the power to change organizational policies and practices, or to align financial or in-kind resources in support of the collaborative's work

• Explore funding options and leverage existing funding resources to move recommendations forward

• Establish a data and evaluation structure to assess impact on key systemic shifts and refine work system change effort

• Establish roles of working groups to support implementation of recommendations

• Work with partners to develop strategic alliances, finding common ground with organizations and initiatives to affect population level change

• Develop shared outcomes that will support collective measurement of youth outcomes

• Develop quality standards for OY engagement that will shape training options for providers

• Build and further relationships with employers, educational institutions, and training providers to outline career and educational pathway options that are accessible, facilitate guidance, and open doors for OY

We hope that individuals and organizations will find their role in this work and join the movement to reduce the number of OY in Nashville.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

DISCONNECTED YOUTH IN NASHVILLE

Category	Total Youth	Total Disconnected Youth	% of Total Youth who are Disconnected in Davidson Co. (Total Disconnected Youth/Total Youth)	% of Disconnected Youth Population in Davidson Co. (Total In Category/Total Disconnected Youth)
Overall				
Davidson County	83,346	9,116	10.9%	--
PUM District				
North	12,667	2,696	21.3%	29.5%
Central	18,120	2,215	12.2%	24.2%
East	17,385	1,967	11.3%	21.5%
Southwest*	23,272	1,146	4.9%	12.6%
Southeast	11,901	1,093	9.2%	11.9%
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	2,8365	5,197	18.3%	57.0%
White	39,951	2,630	6.6%	28.9%
Latino/a	8,949	987	11.0%	10.8%
Gender				
Female	43,077	5,193	12.1%	57.0%
Male	40,269	3,923	9.7%	43.0%
Age Group				
22-24	33,239	4,033	12.1%	44.2%
19-21	27,336	3,927	14.4%	43.1%
16-18*	22,771	1,157	5.1%	12.7%
Educational Attainment				
Less than HS Diploma	19,874	1,960	9.9%	21.5%
HS Diploma or Equivalent	21,154	5,054	23.9%	55.4%
Some College or College Degree	42,318	2,102	5%	23.1%

SOURCE: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey PUMS, 2014–2016 (3-year estimates)

*Unreliable data flag: Indicates the data may be unreliable because the coefficient of variance is greater than the 0.2 cutoff used for national work assessment.

Appendix 2

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES FOR SY17-18

High School	Dropout Rate (%)
Glencliff	6.0%
Hunter's Lane	4.8%
Pearl-Cohn	4.8%
Maplewood	4.5%
Cane Ridge	4.4%
Antioch	3.3%
John Overton	3.2%
McGavock	3.1%
Stratford	2.5%
Whites Creek	2.5%
Hillwood	2.0%
Hillsboro	1.6%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools, Dropout Counts, 2017-2018

Appendix 3

VIOLENT CRIME* CHARGES FOR YOUNG ADULTS AGES 16-24

Precinct	Violent Crime Charges	% of Total Charges
South	12,186	15.1%
Central	10,932	13.5%
Hermitage	10,838	13.4%
North	10,144	12.5%
East	9,713	12.0%
Madison	9,334	11.5%
Midtown Hills	7,037	8.7%
West	4,750	5.9%
Missing (no precinct)	5,946	7.3%
TOTAL	80,880	100%

Source: Metro Nashville Police Department, Juvenile Arrest Counts

*"Violent crime" is defined in this table as homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Appendix 4

DESIGNING THE RESEARCH

Similar to other cities who have conducted research with this population, Nashville sought to implement a mixed methods approach to understand better the local needs of young people. Methods included conducting a survey of youth in Davidson County (target n=500) and a series of focus groups (target n=100). The research questions that guided the project (listed below), were developed by the adult collaborative prior to engaging OY in the research process:

- How, when, and why do young people drop out of school and disengage with education and employment?

- How, when, and why do young people choose to reengage with education and employment?

- What are the barriers to reengagement?

- What are strategies that could facilitate reengagement?

- How are systems working together to support reengagement, and where might there be misconnections or barriers that keep young people from re-engaging?

While adult partners provided the overall structure for the research and facilitated group planning sessions, the YRT were encouraged to contribute to the content, structure, language, and data collection methods. To orient the YRT to this topic, the research project began with a series of exercises aimed at helping the YRT understand the key characteristics of complex systems, including how contextual factors (i.e. social, economic, cultural) influence the systems and structures with which they engage and interact with one another. The YRT explored the landscape of systems and services designed to support the young adult and Opportunity Youth population, as well as the barriers and facilitators they themselves had experienced while navigating systems and services.

System mapping

Using an ecological framework that encouraged youth researchers to think about the nested levels of systems that influence OY, the YRT reflected on facilitators to reengagement, or "what helps" OY, and barriers to reengagement, or "what hurts" OY. These barriers and facilitators were mapped and organized by category. This activity gave the researchers a space to reflect on their own experiences and the experiences of their peers and provided a framework for the kinds of barriers and facilitators that should be explored throughout the research process. Many of these concepts informed both the survey and the focus group. See Appendix 5 for completed System Maps.

Journey mapping

The research team also constructed journey maps that reflected the experiences of OY across 6 phases of Reengagement (Appendix 6). These maps reflected the experience of local providers as well as the steps OY take to move from disconnection to reconnection. Journey mapping enabled the YRT to step into the phases of reengagement, building deep empathy with the individuals attempting to utilize the system, and be inspired to disrupt what is not working. This tool created space to embrace the complexity of this system so that both youth and adults could understand better how the paths of

different people in different scenarios reveal gaps or assets. Researchers developed profiles of diverse young people at risk of or experiencing disconnection from education and employment and mapped their "journeys" through these systems.
(See Appendix 7a & 7b for completed Journey Maps.)

The YRT met with and presented their maps to the OYC members, allowing the maps to provide a framework to explore the experiences of youth and young adults experiencing disconnection.

After establishing an understanding of the complexity and context of the challenges facing OY, the YRT collaborated with adult consultants to develop the questions and the structure for collecting data for both the survey and the focus groups. Brainstorming sessions allowed OY Researchers to identify items to be included in both data collection protocols, and versions of these protocols went through several iterations of review and revision with the YRT. These protocols included:

- Demographics and experiences related to disconnection;

- Barriers to achieving education and employment goals;

- Facilitators to achieving education and employment goals; and

- Types of resources utilized in the community.

Data Collection

Using a convenience sampling strategy for both the survey and focus groups, participants were recruited in several ways.

OY Researchers compiled a list of locations in Nashville with which they were familiar, and that were popular among this population. The YRT then travelled in groups to these locations to collect survey data.

OY Researchers were incentivized to invite young people in their personal circles to complete the surveys, outside of group data collection activities.

Opportunity NOW partnered with partner agencies to invite young people receiving services to participate in both the survey and focus group.

To ensure that a diversity of experiences and responses were represented in the data, in addition to convenience sampling, focus group recruitment efforts targeted young people who represented certain groups identified as likely to overlap with the Opportunity Youth population (i.e., young people aging out of foster care, young people with involvement in the justice system, etc.). Survey respondents were compensated with a $5 gift card for completing the survey, and focus group participants were given $25 gift cards.

Members of the YRT were trained in consent processes and focus group facilitation and collected a large majority of the survey and focus group data. Elevate Consulting, the local evaluation and research partner, analyzed the survey and focus group data. Subsequently, the YRT reviewed these analyses and provided critical context and interpretation. The YRT developed key findings, which they presented to and discussed with the adult collaborative, and which serve as the foundation for the findings and recommendations presented later in this report.

Appendix 5

TREND MAPPING
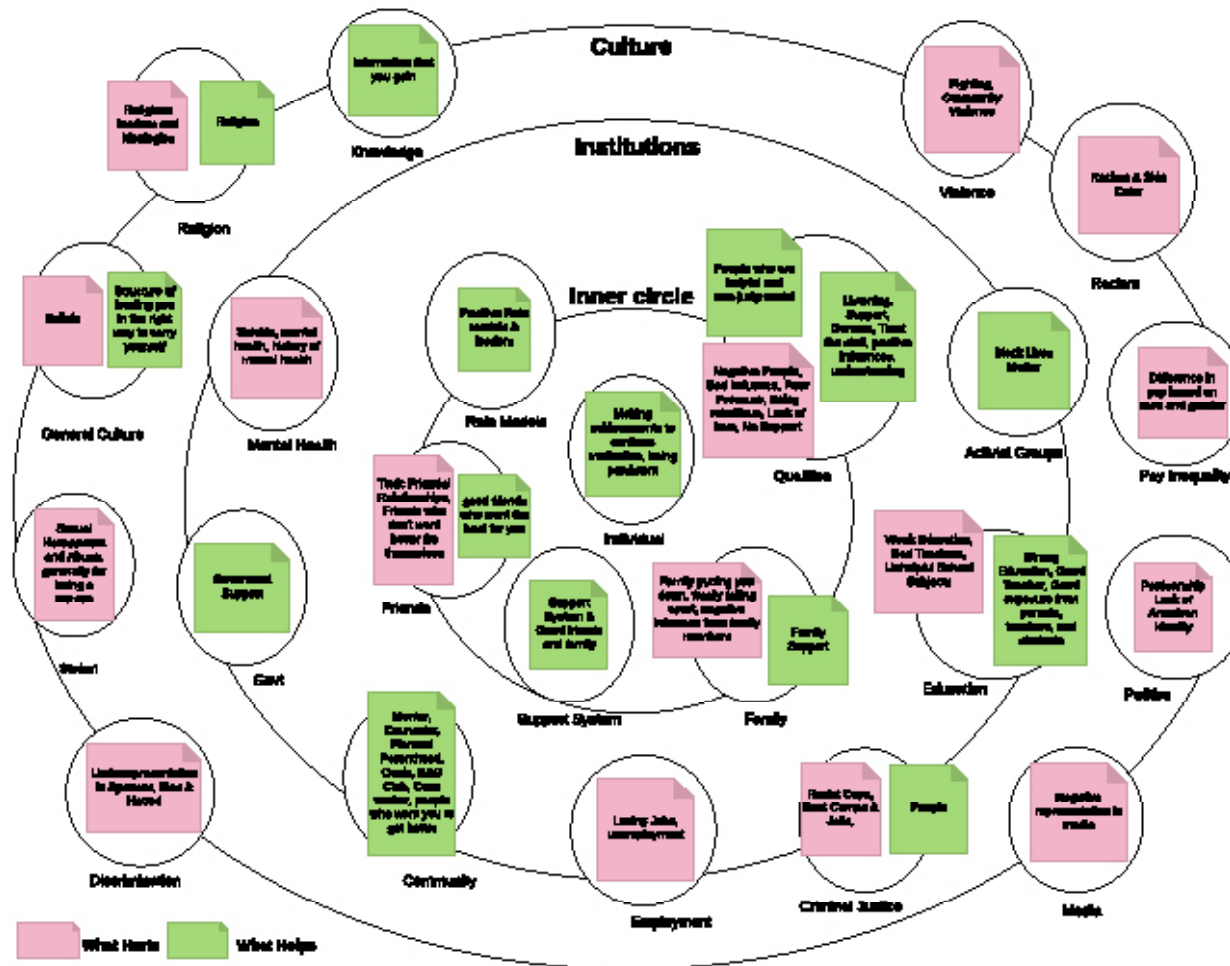
Appendix 6

PHASES OF REENGAGEMENT

| PHASES OF REENGAGEMENT (BOLD/CAPS are Provider phases, (Parentheses) are Young Person phases)		DISCONNECTION	OUTREACH/ ENGAGEMENT (Becoming Aware of Options)	ENTRY or REFERRAL (Getting Connected to a Program/ Organization)	ASSESSMENT (Choosing your Path)	PLACEMENT INTO SERVICES/ OPPORTUNITIES (Receiving services/ engaging in opportunities)	SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY (Reaching your goals and moving ahead)
PHASE DEFINITIONS		Status of young people (YP) who are out of school and out of work	The effort extended to inform YP of the resources available	Starting the engagement with a program or service that provides support	Process of determining the educational or employment path right for that YP	Participant begins educational or employment program services	Staying engaged and/or meeting the goals of a plan to reconnect to education and employment
QUESTIONS TO ASK FOR EACH PHASE For all phases, consider: What are YP… Thinking? Feeling? Seeing? Hearing? Saying? Experiencing?	Experiences of Young People	What does disconnection mean to YP? What are YP doing when they are disconnected? How do YP's relationships impact their decision making?	How do YP respond to outreach/ recruitment efforts? What do YP do with the information they receive?	What is the experience of YP accessing services? How do young people respond to working with multiple agencies?	How do YP experience choosing their path? What is YP's interaction like with the staff of the agency? How do YP feel about the assessments they receive?	How do YP connect to other services offered? Where do they look for help?	How do young people think about their future? What happens once they completed school or find a job?

PHASES OF REENGAGEMENT (BOLD/CAPS are Provider phases, (Parentheses) are Young Person phases)		DISCONNECTION	OUTREACH/ ENGAGEMENT (Becoming Aware of Options)	ENTRY or REFERRAL (Getting Connected to a Program/ Organization)	ASSESSMENT (Choosing your Path)	PLACEMENT INTO SERVICES/ OPPORTUNITIES (Receiving services/ engaging in opportunities)	SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY (Reaching your goals and moving ahead)
	Support/ Facilitators of Success	What does the support system for disconnected youth look like?	How do YP find support when they realize they need help? How do they receive information about services? Where do they go to learn about the resources available?	What supports do YP have to connect them to opportunities? How do YP get connected to the right opportunity? What support is provided to help YP navigate the entry process?	How do services help YP figure out what they want to do? What types of assessments are used to explore education and career opportunities?	What supports need to be in place for young people to engage in services? What services are offered to support employment onboarding? What services are offered for transitioning to post-secondary?	What helps YP stay connected to the services being offered? What supports do YP need? What supports do they receive?
	Pain Points/ Barriers	What is keeping YP from taking the next step? What happens when YP lose a job or drop out of school? What prevents them from talking about their situation?	What hurdles do YP have to overcome to receive information? What are the barriers to taking the next step to entry?	What challenges do YP face connecting to an organization or service? What happens if they don't like the people or service they're connected to? What happens when YP don't want to complete the paperwork? What barriers do they experience at this phase?	What makes it difficult for YP to engage in assessment process? What is frustrating or discouraging about these assessments?	What happens when young people experience failure? How do young people navigate services without support? What happens when young people don't like the services offered?	What happens when YP decide that the path they're on is not right for them?

PHASES OF REENGAGEMENT (BOLD/CAPS are Provider phases, (Parentheses) are Young Person phases)		DISCONNECTION	OUTREACH/ ENGAGEMENT (Becoming Aware of Options)	ENTRY or REFERRAL (Getting Connected to a Program/ Organization)	ASSESSMENT (Choosing your Path)	PLACEMENT INTO SERVICES/ OPPORTUNITIES (Receiving services/ engaging in opportunities)	SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY (Reaching your goals and moving ahead)
	Transition Process	How do YP move from being disconnected to receiving information about services?	How do YP move from receiving information to actually engaging with an organization?	How do YP move from engaging with an organization to determining their path?	How do YP move from determining their path to engaging in services?	How do YP move from engaging in services to staying engaged in connected?	How do YP stay connected to achieve their goals?
	Organizations/ Programs who can help	What organizations have outreach strategies that target disconnected youth? Where do YP go when they have experienced trauma?	What organizations are conducting outreach efforts? How do they know where to recruit? How are organizations communicating the resources that are available? How is the school system directing YP to opportunities?	What employment services are available for disconnected youth? What educational/ training services are available for disconnected youth? What organizations/ programs are providing dropout recovery? Do organizations have the capacity to take more YP?	What does the assessment process look like across organizations? What programs offer the assessments identified?	What types of employment opportunities do programs/ organizations/ institutions offer? What types of educational/training opportunities do programs/ organizations/ institutions offer?	What programs offer services to keep young people connected? What are these services?

| PHASES OF REENGAGEMENT (BOLD/CAPS are Provider phases, (Parentheses) are Young Person phases)		DISCONNECTION	OUTREACH/ENGAGEMENT (Becoming Aware of Options)	ENTRY or REFERRAL (Getting Connected to a Program/Organization)	ASSESSMENT (Choosing your Path)	PLACEMENT INTO SERVICES/OPPORTUNITIES (Receiving services/engaging in opportunities)	SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY (Reaching your goals and moving ahead)
	List of Organizations		Oasis Center 4:13 Strong MOB Monroe Harding (Youth Connections) Goodwill Centerstone (Career Connect) Crossroads Workforce Essentials Job Corp Youth CAN Salvation Army MNPS (ALCs, Alternative Ed) Launch Pad Room in the Inn	Oasis Center 4:13 Strong MOB Monroe Harding (Youth Connections) Goodwill Centerstone (Career Connect) Crossroads Workforce Essentials Job Corp Youth CAN Salvation Army Room in the Inn Juvenile Court (Probation)	Oasis Center 4:13 Strong MOB Monroe Harding (Youth Connections) Goodwill Centerstone (Career Connect) Crossroads Workforce Essentials Job Corp Youth CAN Salvation Army Room in the Inn	Oasis Center 4:13 Strong MOB Monroe Harding (Youth Connections) Goodwill Centerstone (Career Connect) Crossroads Workforce Essentials Job Corp Youth CAN Salvation Army Nashville State Community College Higher Education Institutions TCAT Nashville OIC Lincoln Tech TN Reconnect Room in the Inn	Oasis Center 4:13 Strong MOB Monroe Harding (Youth Connections) Goodwill Centerstone (Career Connect) Crossroads Workforce Essentials Job Corp Youth CAN Salvation Army Nashville State Community College Higher Education Institutions TCAT Financial Empowerment Center

Appendix 7a

JOURNEY MAPPING

Young Person #1: Cindy
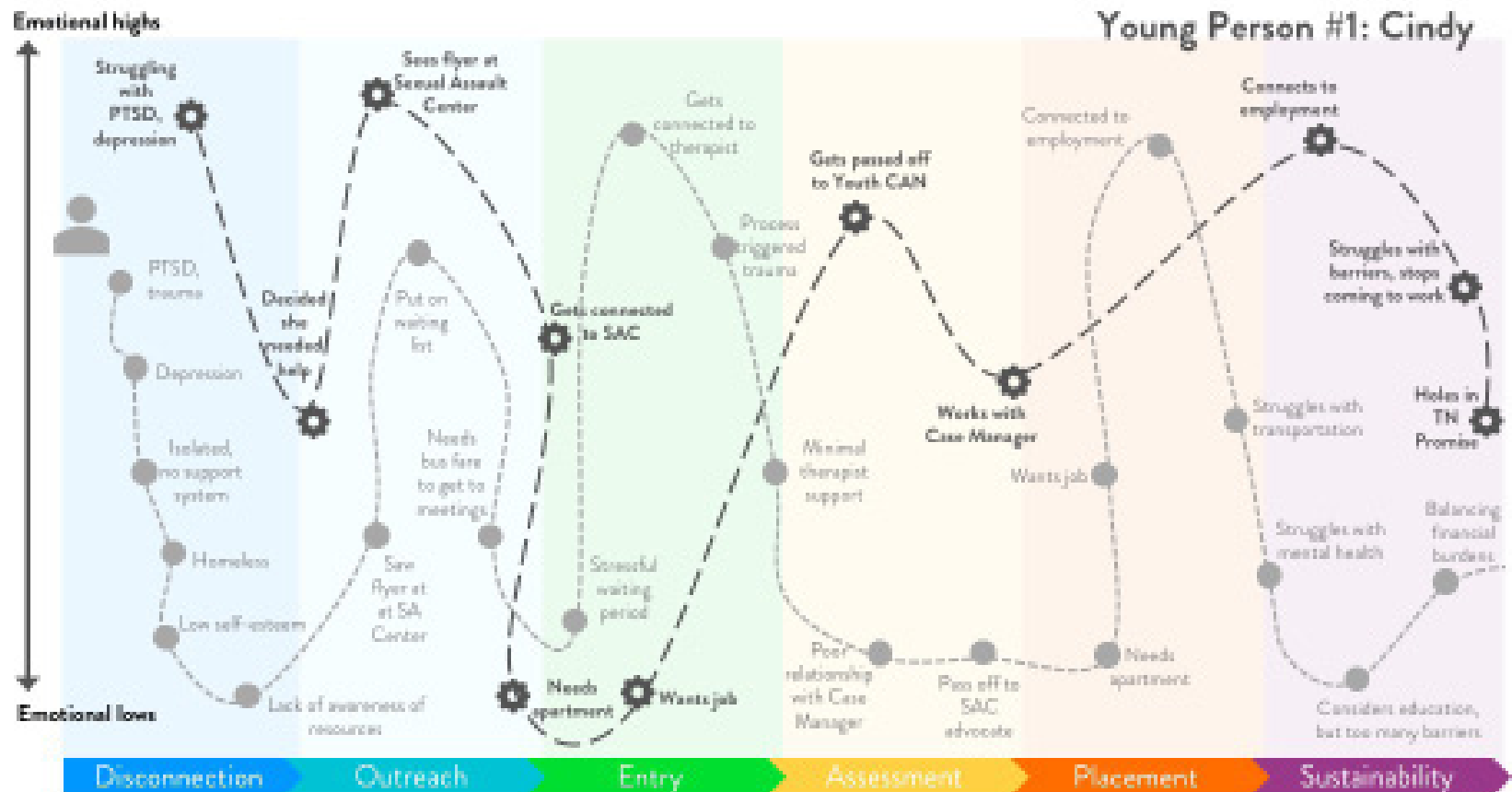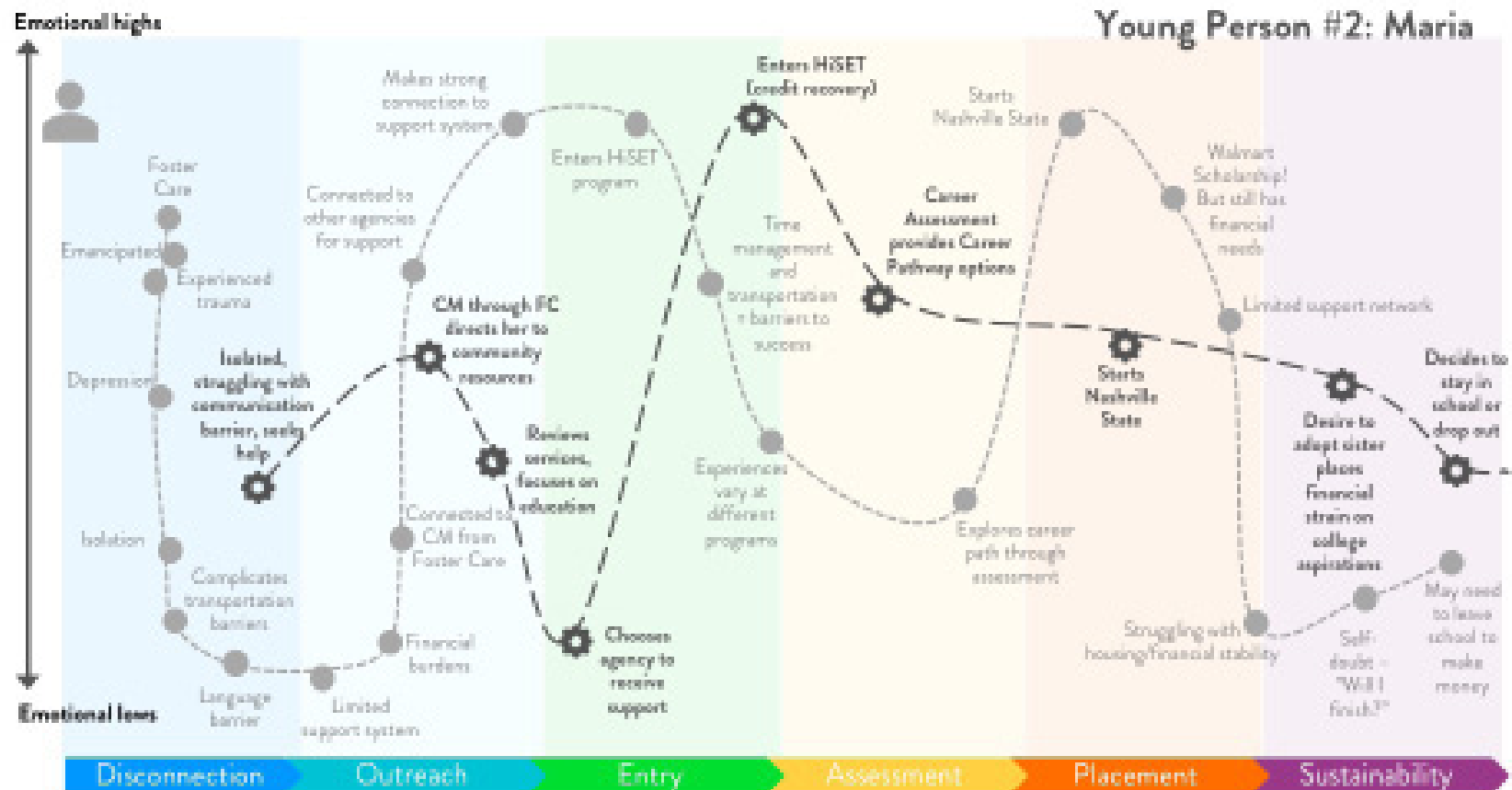
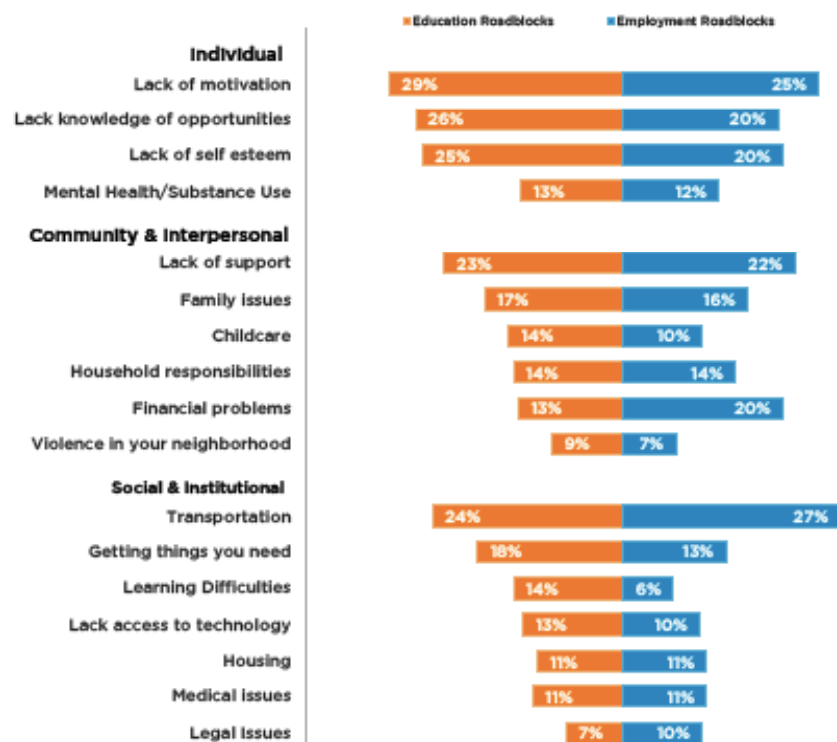# Appendix 7b

Appendix 8

SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS

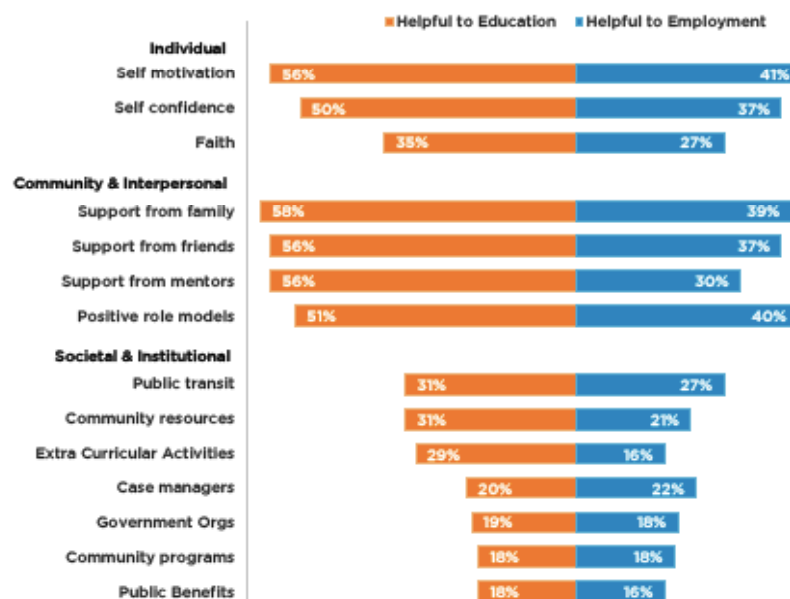| Demographic Category	Survey Total	Survey %	Focus Group Total	Focus Group %
All participants/respondents	358	100%	56	100%
Gender				
Missing/did not respond	*--*	*--*	*8*	*14%*
Male	141	57%	26	46%
Female	206	40%	19	34%
Nonbinary	7	2%	2	4%
Would rather not say	4	1%	1	2%
Race/Ethnicity				
Missing/did not respond	*18*	*5%*	*13*	*23%*
Black or African-American	190	53%	28	50%
White	89	25%	12	21%
Multiracial	29	8%	2	4%
Asian	16	4%	-	--
American Indian	11	3%	1	2%
Native Hawaiian	5	1%	-	--
Hispanic/Latinx				
Missing/did not respond	*10*	*3%*	*22*	*56%*
Yes	29	8%	13	33%
No	319	89%	4	10%
Sexual Orientation				
Missing/did not respond	*6*	*1%*	*26*	*46%*
Straight	273	76%	23	41%
Pan/Polysexual	9	3%	3	5%
Bisexual	42	12%	2	4%
Gay/lesbian	20	6%	1	2%
Would rather not say	8	8%	1	2%
Age				
Missing/did not respond	*--*	*--*	*24*	*43%*
16-17	151	42%	12	21%
18-21	157	44%	10	18%
22-24	50	14%	6	11%
25+	-	--	4	7%

Appendix 9

BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO REENGAGEMENT (SURVEY RESPONSES)

Roadblocks to Education and Employment

■ Education Roadblocks ■ Employment Roadblocks

Individual
- Lack of motivation — 29% / 25%
- Lack knowledge of opportunities — 26% / 20%
- Lack of self esteem — 25% / 20%
- Mental Health/Substance Use — 13% / 12%

Community & Interpersonal
- Lack of support — 23% / 22%
- Family issues — 17% / 16%
- Childcare — 14% / 10%
- Household responsibilities — 14% / 14%
- Financial problems — 13% / 20%
- Violence in your neighborhood — 9% / 7%

Social & Institutional
- Transportation — 24% / 27%
- Getting things you need — 18% / 13%
- Learning Difficulties — 14% / 6%
- Lack access to technology — 13% / 10%
- Housing — 11% / 11%
- Medical issues — 11% / 11%
- Legal Issues — 7% / 10%

What's Helpful for Education and Employment

■ Helpful to Education ■ Helpful to Employment

Individual
- Self motivation — 56% / 41%
- Self confidence — 50% / 37%
- Faith — 35% / 27%

Community & Interpersonal
- Support from family — 58% / 39%
- Support from friends — 56% / 37%
- Support from mentors — 56% / 30%
- Positive role models — 51% / 40%

Societal & Institutional
- Public transit — 31% / 27%
- Community resources — 31% / 21%
- Extra Curricular Activities — 29% / 16%
- Case managers — 20% / 22%
- Government Orgs — 19% / 18%
- Community programs — 18% / 18%
- Public Benefits — 18% / 16%

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For more information about this report email Rod DeVore at
Rodger.Devore@nashville.gov