

# The Opportunity Youth Forum: Forging a National Network to Advance Equitable Systems Change

2019 Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Forum Annual Evaluation Summary

## ABOUT THE NETWORK

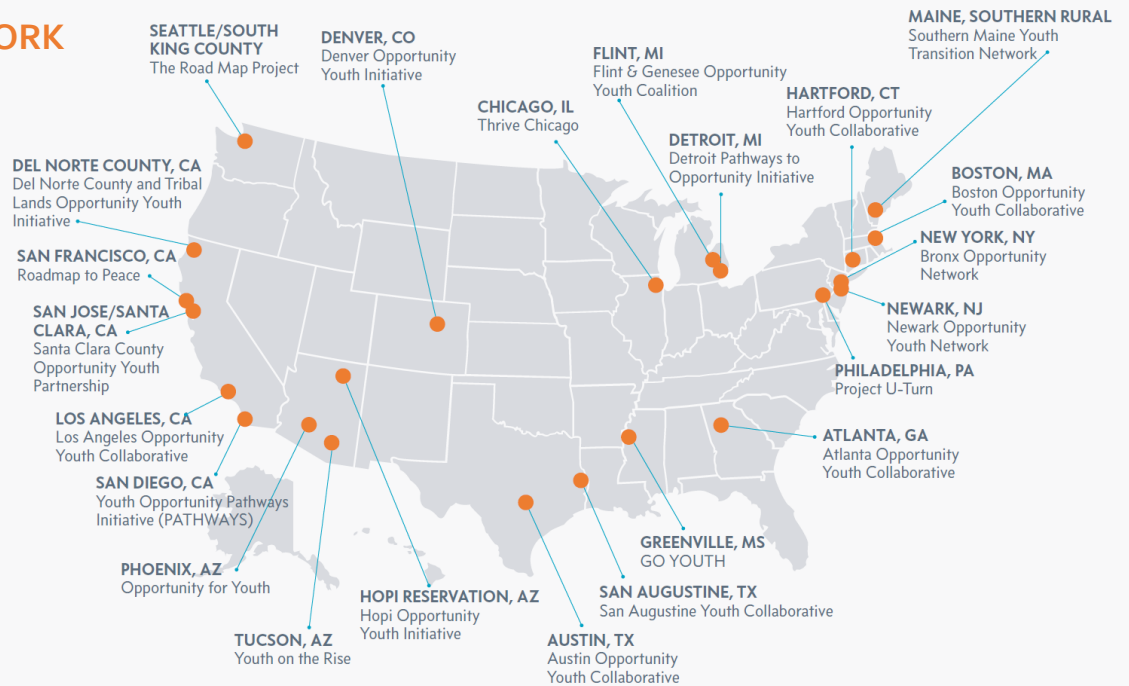
The Network is home to

**3.4 million**  
16 to 24-year-old youth

**12%** are disconnected from work and school

- High school disconnection rate: **14%**
- Postsecondary disconnection rate: **21%**
- Workforce disconnection rate: **11%**

\*All numbers based on 2017 ACS data

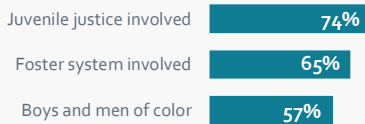


## COLLABORATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

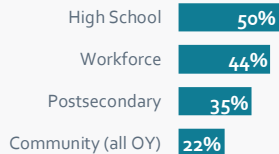


### AREAS OF FOCUS

Top groups prioritized include:



Collaboratives that have set targets against disconnection rates:



### SIZE



Most common partner: CBOs

Least common partner: Government



Network median: 29 partners  
Range: 1-81 partners



### TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

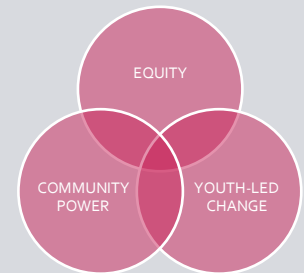


Network median: 7 years

## CORE VALUES

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

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



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

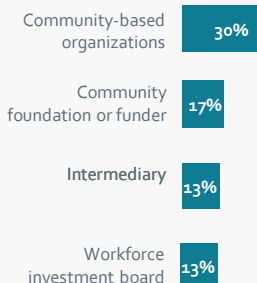
57% of collaboratives reported strong evidence that stakeholders discussed challenges that affect various racial, ethnic, gender, or age groups.

52% of collaboratives reported strong evidence that their membership reflects the diversity of the community.

## BACKBONE CHARACTERISTICS



### TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS



Others include:

- Chambers of Commerce
- Partnerships
- Educational Institutions



### BUDGET

#### TOTAL BACKBONE

Network median: \$8.3M  
Range: \$130,000 to \$80M

#### OPPORTUNITY YOUTH-SPECIFIC

Network median: \$500,000  
Range: \$43,000 to \$4.3M



### STAFF

#### TOTAL BACKBONE

Network median: 22 FTEs  
Range: 2-200 FTEs

#### OPPORTUNITY YOUTH-SPECIFIC

Network median: 3 FTEs  
Range: 0.5-17 FTEs



### TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH



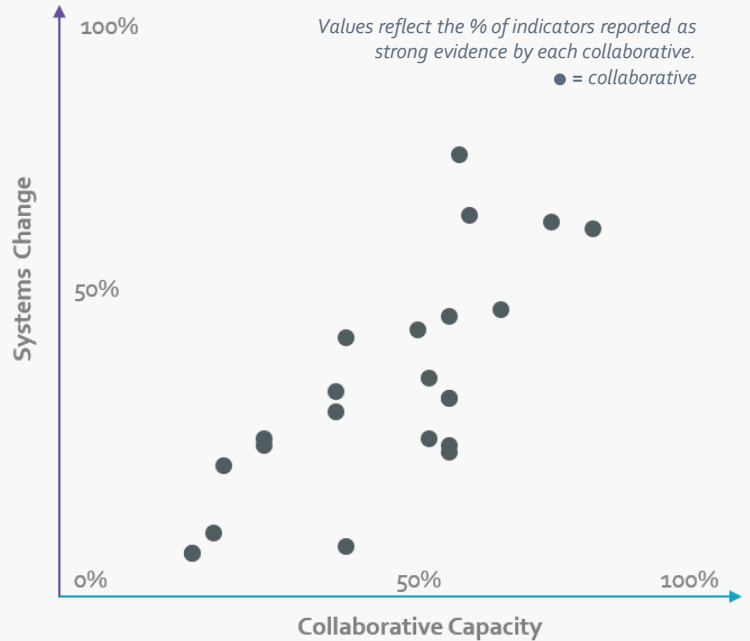
Network median: 6 years

# ORGANIZING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

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

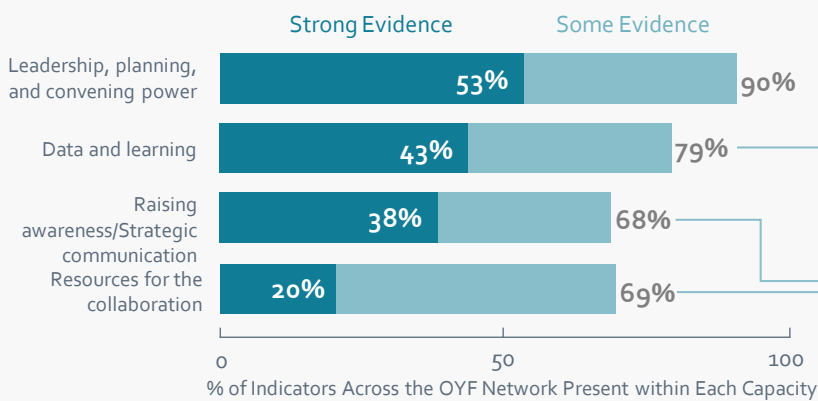
- 1) **Collaborative capacity** to carry out the opportunity youth agenda, and
- 2) **Systems and conditions necessary** to promote education and career outcomes for opportunity youth.

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



## COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY

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



Percent of collaboratives reporting strong evidence of each data use:

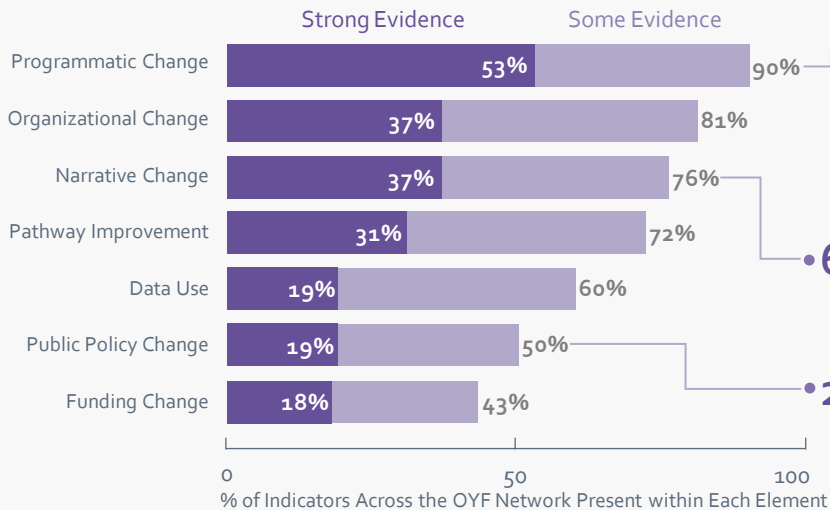
- ◆ 70% Understanding youth/their needs
- ◆ 61% Communicating the vision
- ◆ 57% Case making
- ◆ 52% Continuous improvement
- ◆ 22% Partner accountability
- ◆ 17% Assessing partnership health

• **65%** of collaboratives reached out to decision makers, public officials, and policymakers to build relationships in support of a policy change agenda.

• **\$** Partner organizations were more likely to provide personnel and in-kind support to the collaborative than financial support.

## SYSTEMS CHANGES

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



• **Partners changed how they deliver services**

- changing intake and referral processes
- integrating services to provide seamless programmatic experiences
- increasing communication among program staff

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

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

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