The OYF network is home to 7.5 million 16 to 24-year-olds. 970,086 (13%) were opportunity youth who were not in school and not working in 2021.

Based on 2021 ACS data

Collaborative Characteristics

Collaboratives vary in focus area, size, and experience, adapting to meet the unique needs of their communities.

- **Areas of Focus**
  - Youth involved in the justice system: 33%
  - Boys and young men of color: 48%
  - Youth in the foster system: 43%
  - Youth experiencing homelessness: 48%
  - Girls and young women of color: 38%

- **Size**
  - Network median: 16 partners
  - Range: 5-119 partners
  - 83% of collaborators included partners from at least three of the following sectors:
    - higher-education
    - community-based organizations
    - government
    - K-12 education

- **Time Focusing on Opportunity Youth**
  - More than 10 years: 10%
  - 5-10 years: 58%
  - Less than 5 years: 33%

Backbone Characteristics

Backbone organizations are a critical component of the OYF network, providing a structure and team to coordinate the work of each collaborative.

- **Types of Organizations**
  - Intermediary: 33%
  - Community based organization: 30%
  - Education institution: 10%
  - Other organizations include:
    - Workforce investment board
    - Local or tribal government agency

- **Budget**
  - Backbone Budget: 13 FTEs
  - Backbone Staffing: 3 FTEs

- **Staff**
  - Backbone Staffing: 0 to 20 FTEs
  - Backbone Budget: $4.2M

- **Time Focusing on Opportunity Youth**
  - More than 10 years: 23%
  - 5-10 years: 35%
  - Less than 5 years: 43%

Core Values

Equity, youth-led change, and community power building are foundational to OYF. In 2022, collaboratives reported more frequently using equity-centered practices like explicitly naming racial equity, disaggregating data, and having collaborative members reflect their communities than they did in 2019. Reported indicators of youth-led change increased to their highest levels in four years in 2022.

Over the past two years, OYF collaboratives have begun to explore how belonging, meaning, wellbeing, and purpose can help counter the impacts of structurally racist systems for youth. In 2022, at least half of all collaboratives:
- Explained these concepts to collaborative members
- Discussed with young people strategies to advance belonging, meaning, wellbeing, and purpose
- Supported programmatic improvements to center belonging, meaning, wellbeing, and purpose
Organizing for Systems Change

The 2022 evaluation examined two dimensions of communities in the OYF network:

1) **Collaborative capacity**: the infrastructure and processes necessary for the collaborative to carry out its opportunity youth agenda.

2) **Systems changes**: "shifts to the conditions that hold a problem in place"—in this case, disconnected pathways and inequitable conditions that prevent young people from achieving education and employment outcomes.


Collaborative Capacity

After dipping in 2020 and rebounding in 2021, in 2022 collaborative capacity remained steady. Collaborative’s leadership capacities grew in 2022, re-emerging as the most present capacity—though data also remained high.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Strong evidence</th>
<th>Some evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership, planning and convening power</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data and learning</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising awareness and strategic communication</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for the collaborative</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each capacity

97% of collaboratives included representatives from the sectors and systems necessary to achieve their goals and had active involvement of members from across organizational roles.

Partners support grew in 2022, through in-kind and financial support for collaboratives and backbones.

- 87% of collaboratives reported that partners committed in-kind supports to the backbone
- 92% reported that partners dedicated personnel to support the collaborative’s goals

Systems Changes

From 2019 to 2022, systems change in the OYF network has held steady, even as new collaboratives joined the network. Programmatic change has remained the most prominent type of change collaboratives report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Strong evidence</th>
<th>Some evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic change</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational change</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative change</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data use</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathway improvement</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding change</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public policy change</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of indicators across the OYF network present within each system

92% of collaboratives solicited opportunity youth’s recommendations to inform program and pathway design.

Over the past few years, collaboratives reported advancing policies that:

- Removed barriers to educational attainment
- Improved coordination across systems
- Created funding streams for pilots and established programs
- Increased funding for jobs, education, childcare, and housing support

Methods. Findings come from the 2022 OYF Self-Assessment. Forty collaboratives 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.

For more information about the Aspen Institute’s OYF network: [https://www.aspencommunitysolutions.org/opportunity-youth-forum/](https://www.aspencommunitysolutions.org/opportunity-youth-forum/)