

A Snapshot of the 2024 Opportunity Youth Forum

ABOUT THE OYF NETWORK



The OYF network is home to

7.7 million

16 to 24-year-olds

864,508 (11.2%) were opportunity youth who were not in school and not working in 2023.

Based on 2023 ACS data



COLLABORATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

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



AREAS OF FOCUS

Collaboratives prioritized the following young people:

Boys and young men of color	58%
Girls and young women of color	56%
Justice-involved youth	53%
Youth with or expecting children	42%
Foster youth/youth transitioning out of foster care	39%



SIZE

Network median: 13 partners
Range: 1-129 partners

79% of collaboratives included partners from at least three of the following sectors:

- Community-based organizations
- Government
- Higher education
- K-12 education

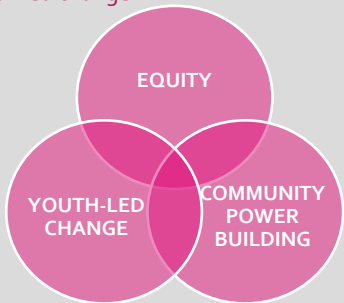


TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

More than 10 years	31%
5-10 years	36%
Less than 5 years	33%

CORE VALUES

Equity, youth-led change, and community power building are foundational to OYF. Youth-led change is at its highest level in six years with almost 80 percent of indicators at least somewhat evident across the network. Over three-quarters of collaboratives reported strong evidence in 2024 that collaborative planning included explicit acknowledgement of youth engagement and youth-led change.



Over the past several years, OYF collaboratives have begun to explore how **belonging, meaning, wellbeing, and purpose (BMWP)** can help counter the impacts of structurally racist systems for youth. In 2024, at least half of collaboratives:

- Explained BMWP concepts to collaborative members
- Discussed BMWP implementation or strategies with young people
- Supported programmatic improvements to center BMWP

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

Community-based organization	33%
Intermediary	31%
Education institution	11%

- Other organizations include:
- Community foundation or funder
 - Workforce investment board
 - Local or tribal government agency



BUDGET

BACKBONE ORGANIZATION BUDGET

Network median: \$3.5M
Range: \$0 to \$246M

BUDGET DEDICATED TO OY

Network median: \$1.1M
Range: \$0 to \$5.9M



STAFF

BACKBONE ORGANIZATION STAFFING

Network median: 21.5 FTEs
Range: 0 to 450 FTEs

STAFFING DEDICATED TO OY

Network median: 6.5 FTEs
Range: 0 to 30 FTEs



TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

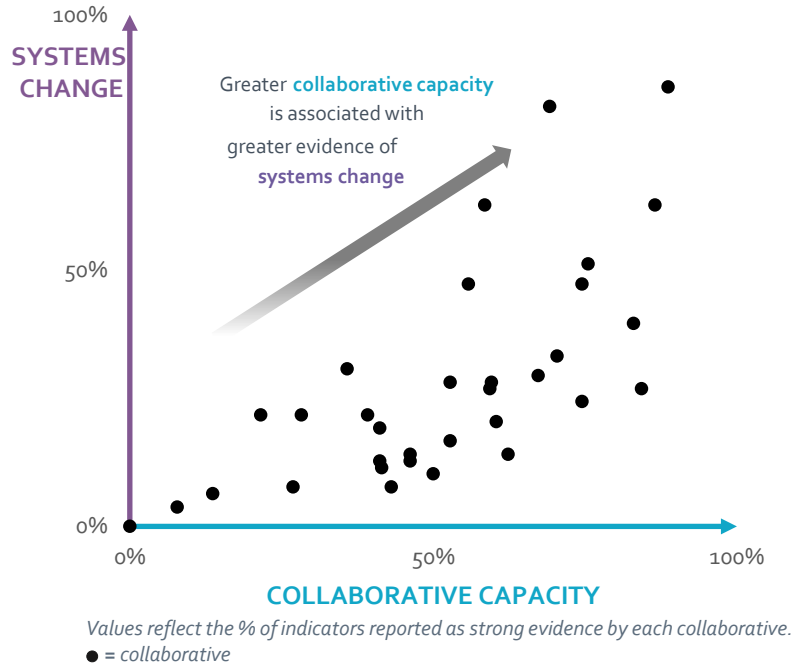
More than 10 years	36%
5-10 years	28%
Less than 5 years	36%

ORGANIZING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

The 2024 evaluation examined two dimensions of communities in the OYF network:

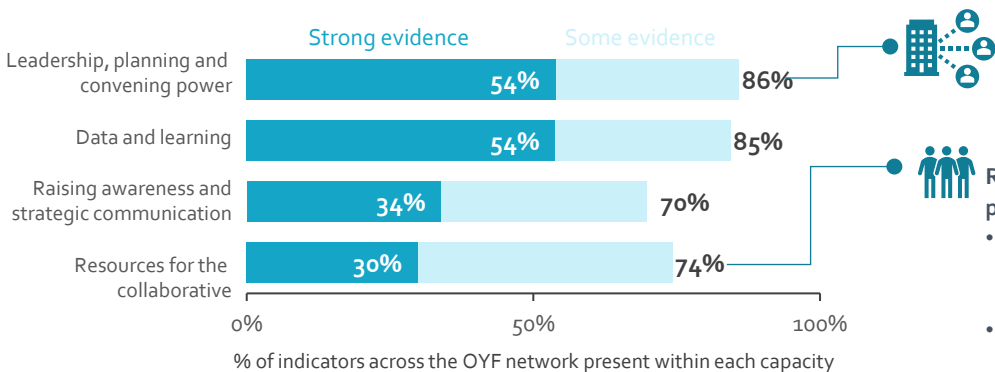
- 1) **Collaborative capacity:** the infrastructure and processes necessary for the collaborative to carry out its opportunity youth agenda
- 2) **Systems changes:** “shifts to the conditions that hold a problem in place”—in this case, disconnected pathways and inequitable conditions that prevent young people from achieving education and employment outcomes

*FSG, *Water of Systems Change*:
https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change



COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY

Collaborative capacity is at its highest level across the network in six years. One type of capacity – data and learning – is also at its highest level in six years.



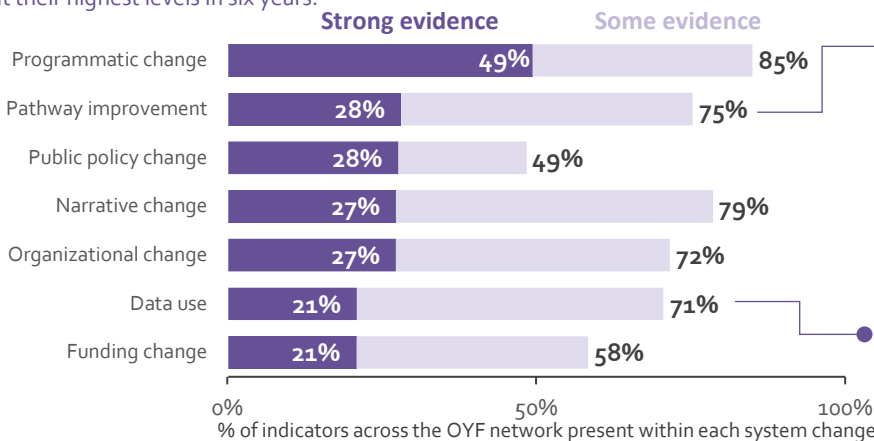
97% of collaboratives included representatives from the sectors and systems necessary to achieve its goals (e.g., higher education, workforce, juvenile justice, foster care).

Resources for the collaborative increased by 10 percentage points from 2019 to 2024.

- 92% of collaboratives reported at least some of their partners formally dedicated personnel to support the collaborative's goals.
- 86% of collaboratives reported at least some of their partner organizations committed in-kind supports to the backbone.

SYSTEMS CHANGES

Systems change (at the “some” evidence level) is at its highest level across the network in six years. Two types of systems change – public policy changes (strong evidence) and pathway improvements (some evidence) – are at their highest levels in six years.



Pathways improvement increased by eight percentage points from 2023 to 2024.

- 91% of collaboratives reported evidence of OY-related systems communicating within each other.
- 73% of collaboratives reported services and organizations from different systems were co-located.



88% of collaboratives reported that partners used data to inform continuous quality improvements within their programs serving OY.

Methods. Findings come from the 2024 OYF Self-Assessment. Thirty-six collaboratives responded to 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/>