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Lessons for Building Programs to Promote Postsecondary Success Among Opportunity Youth

Urban Institute Opportunity Works Implementation and Evaluation Findings

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Back on Track

- Three phases:
  - **Enriched preparation**
  - **Postsecondary/career bridging**
  - First-year support
- Framework originally documented in 2014
  - New version will be released soon
- Received a Social Innovation Fund grant for replication in seven locations
  - Boston, Hartford, New Orleans, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Santa Clara County, South King County (Seattle)

Research Methods

- Data sources
  - Quarterly calls with sites
  - Logic model development
  - Semi-annual convenings
  - **Two-day site visits (fall 2016)**
    - Interviews, focus groups, observations
- Developed detailed site summaries
- Synthesized information
- Used the original Back on Track model as a framework for evaluation

Focusing on Four Areas

- ✓ Moving partnerships to service delivery
- ✓ Building postsecondary bridging opportunities
- ✓ Targeting, recruitment, and retention
- ✓ Data and tracking

Moving Partnerships to Service Delivery

- Backbones: Often non-profit intermediaries, although also higher education institutions and workforce investment boards
- Backbones had formal contracts or MOUs with primary partners for service delivery
  - Also an array of secondary partners for supportive services, referral, political support, or financial support
- Some backbones selected partners through competitive bidding & others leveraged existing relationships
- Useful to have a postsecondary partner at the table

Building Postsecondary Bridging Opportunities

- Help OY develop an orientation toward college & a college identity
- Help students develop career & education plans
- Identify career pathways that will lead to family-sustaining wages, career growth, & satisfaction
- Offer college preparatory or college simulation classes
- Create supported dual enrollment opportunities
- Create warm transitions to college
- Provide continued support to students after they enroll
- Create earn-and-learn or other work experience opportunities

Examples of Postsecondary Bridging

- Philadelphia:
  - Problem: Gap in meaningful bridging from high school completion programs into postsecondary
    - Lacking college skills and confidence, navigation, retention support
  - Supplemental classes with 2 hours of English instruction and 2 hours of college readiness per week embedded in high school completion program
    - Navigation and coaching
    - College visits and exposure
    - College application and testing support
  - Warm transition to college
  - Tuition support for their first college experience

Examples of Postsecondary Bridging

- Boston:
  - Problem: Gap in the "door and navigation" within youth pathways in the city, especially youth ages 20-24
  - Connection Center
    - Caring adult staff members making meaningful connections with youth
      - Navigation to other needed supportive services
    - Links to postsecondary & training providers (reserved seats)
      - Two- and four-year colleges
      - Industry-based credential training programs (pharmacy technician, plumbing, carpentry, construction, culinary, banking, IT, etc.)
      - Apprenticeships leading to unionized employment

Staffing Considerations

- Staff are the primary financial investment
- Titles reflect roles:
  - "Advisor," "advocate," "coach," "navigator," "development," "instructor," "recruitment," or "retention"
- Pairing with youth:
  - Staff paired directly with youth
  - Staff paired by needs
- "Caseloads" generally range from 20-32, but may vary within sites based on intensity of work with youth in different stages
- Some sites are more explicit than others in making staff reflective of & relatable to the youth they are serving

Targeting

- "Disconnected" youth, but the definition varies

Type of Disconnection	Description
High School	▪ Dropped out of high school before receiving diploma ▪ May or may not be enrolled in a high school equivalency program or alternative high school
Postsecondary Pathway	▪ Finished high school or GED, but has not connected to a postsecondary career pathway ▪ Does not have postsecondary career goals or aspirations ▪ Enrolled in a college or other postsecondary program but dropped out or stopped out before completing
Employment	▪ Unemployed ▪ Underemployed ▪ Employed full-time, but with no opportunity for advancement and/or no clear career pathway
Other Challenges	▪ Justice involved (e.g. on parole, arrested but not detained, in custody) ▪ Pregnant or parenting ▪ Homeless ▪ Emerging from the foster care system

Targeting

	Age Range	Race/Ethnicity	Education Completed	Prioritized Characteristics
Bos.	20-24	None specified	High school diploma or equivalent	None specified
Hart.	16-24	None specified	High school diploma or equivalent; small proportion without	Young men of color
NOLA	16-24	None specified	Track dependent: completed 2-3 sections of HiSET; 5-8th-grade level on TABE; high school diploma or completed HiSET	None specified
Philly	16-21	None specified	On a good high school equivalency completion track	None specified
SF	17-24	Latino & African-American	Do not have a high school diploma or equivalency	Justice involved; majority men
SCC	16-24	None specified	Do not have a high school diploma or equivalency	Pregnant & parenting, homeless, foster care, justice involved
SKC	16-21	None specified	Completed 2nd GED test or are 6-9 months from attaining high school diploma	None specified

Recruitment

- Recruitment from:
  - Embedded programs
    - Within high school completion or reengagement programs
  - Outreach or referrals through community agencies and partner programs
    - Including the justice system
  - Direct outreach to youth
    - Connection center, flyers, social media, ads, door-knocking, tabling
- Challenges
  - Need a strong enriched preparation pipeline for youth to be ready for postsecondary bridging
  - Need strong postsecondary bridging opportunities once students finish enriched preparation

Retention Strategies

- Relationships
  - Develop a relationship of mutual accountability
  - Spend time with youth as needed
  - Include family members in some support discussions
- Communication
  - Text or call youth daily, weekly, or twice per month
  - Respond to youth texts and calls quickly, even beyond the scheduled work day/week
  - Meet with youth at least once per week
- Reinforcement
  - Give celebrations and awards (e.g., incentive gift cards) at key milestones and the end of the program
  - Provide incentives based on youth behaviors rather than outcomes (e.g., attending classes)

Retention Strategies

- Expectations
  - Set attendance and participation standards and follow up when youth do not meet them
- Barrier Remediation
  - Provide assistance obtaining part-time employment that does not conflict with program activities or school
  - Refer to needed community resources to remediate barriers
  - Transport youth personally
  - Provide specialized support for pregnant and parenting, justice involved, homeless, and youth in foster care

Data and Tracking

- Many sites had existing data systems among their collective impact partners
- Data collection and usage is developing at all of the Opportunity Works sites, and there have been notable gains since Opportunity Works started
- 4 sites built or are in the process of building new data systems
- 6 of the 7 sites use or are building Efforts-to-Outcomes (ETO) or Salesforce systems

Unique Data Collection Strategies at Some Sites

- Common intake forms
- Regularly updating baseline indicators
- MOUs to bring in other data – e.g., from K-12 systems
- Supplemental tracking in Excel

Common Data Limitations

- Measuring participant gains
- Tracking trauma
- Standardizing measures of service receipt across partners
- Quality assurance to ensure complete & consistent data

Data Usage

- There are varying levels of data sophistication among partners
- In New Orleans the backbone has given a lot of data technical assistance to partners
- At least 4 sites have monthly data-specific meetings with partners; others talk about data in monthly general meetings
- Sometimes it is hard to extract data in user-friendly formats
- Some systems were designed for compliance rather than case management or program improvement

Thank you!

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Enriched Preparation

Inputs

- Service delivery model
- Curricula
- Service delivery partners
- Technology & tracking systems
- Staff/Personnel
- Matching dollars
- Technical assistance
- Opportunity youth

Implementation Activities

Functional Activities

Activities necessary to set up & run the program, which feed back into inputs

- Local adaptation of Back on Track intervention(s)
- Develop procedures
- Identify and organize service delivery partners
- Identify funding sources
- Hire staff/initiate contracts
- Train staff
- Identify & reach out to youth
- Screen/enroll youth
- Determine & establish technology & tracking systems
- Monitor tracking system data to improve processes & services

Programmatic Activities

Service delivery activities to achieve outputs & outcomes

- Provide college- & career-ready curriculum & instruction
- Provide customized instruction & accelerate learning
- Create a college-going & career-ready culture
- Provide personalized guidance & support to develop student & support network (navigation)
- Transition youth to postsecondary bridging stage

Enrichment Outputs

Student-Level

- Program enrollment
- Program completion
- Participation in offered activities
- Completion of offered activities

Program-Level

- The climate supports professional norms & personal responsibility
- Staff continually use data to assess progress, customize learning, & enhance instructional strategies

Enrichment Outcomes

Short-Term Outcomes

Student Awareness/Agency Outcomes

- Students perceive themselves as potential college students
- Students develop a clear, realistic, & detailed postsecondary & career plan
- Students develop an understanding of how they learn best
- Students exhibit behaviors such as agency, persistence, & time management

Support System Outcomes

- Students have a sufficient care network

Medium-Term Outcomes

Confirmatory

- Students complete high school or equivalent

Exploratory

- Students do not experience subsequent arrests or incarceration

Long-Term Outcomes

- Students are not disconnected from work and education
- Students become employed
- Students are employed in quality jobs
- Students' earnings are higher than they would be otherwise

Contextual factors: Local labor market, service infrastructure for youth, juvenile justice system, availability of adult and postsecondary education and training options, policies affecting youth (e.g., GED changes, Pell Grant availability)

Postsecondary/Career Bridging

Inputs

- Service delivery model
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Implementation Activities

Functional Activities

Activities necessary to set up & run the program, which feed back into inputs

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Programmatic Activities

Service delivery activities to achieve outputs & outcomes

- Support dual enrollment & provide simulated college experience before enrollment
- Develop college knowledge & success strategies
- Provide personalized guidance & connection to best bets (navigation)
- Current students receive mentorship from program graduates
- Transition youth to college

Bridging Outputs

Student-Level

- Program enrollment
- Program completion
- Participation in offered activities
- Completion of offered activities

Program-Level

- Counselors & instructors continually use data to support & assess learning.

Bridging Outcomes

Short-Term Outcomes

Soft Skills for Success

- Students gain postsecondary & career navigation skills
- Students exhibit career-ready skills & behaviors

Access College/Career Coursework

- Students have access to postsecondary facilities
- Students enroll in credit-bearing courses appropriate to reinforcing essential skills

Subject Knowledge Gains

- Students demonstrate proficiency in key skills & subject areas

Support Systems

- Students have a sufficient care network
- Students build social networks supportive of postsecondary success

Medium-Term Outcomes

Confirmatory

- Students apply to training programs, including college
- Students enroll in training programs, including college
- Students earn college credits
- Students enroll for more than one semester
- Student enroll for more than one year
- Students earn college or industry-recognized credentials
- Students complete 12 credits of college work

Exploratory

- Students do not experience subsequent arrests or incarceration

Long-Term Outcomes

- Students are not disconnected from work and education
- Students become employed
- Students are employed in quality jobs
- Students' earnings are higher than they would be otherwise

Contextual factors: Local labor market, service infrastructure for youth, juvenile justice system, availability of adult and postsecondary education options, policies affecting youth (e.g., GED changes, Pell Grant availability)

Moving Partnerships to Service Delivery

Site	Role	Organization
Boston	Collective Impact	▪ Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative
	Backbone	▪ Boston Private Industry Council (subgrantee) (WIB) ▪ Boston Opportunity Agenda (Inter)
	Primary Partners	▪ X-Cel Education (CBO) ▪ Asian American Civic Association (CBO) ▪ College Bound Dorchester (CBO) ▪ Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (CBO) ▪ Jewish Vocational Services (CBO)
Hartford	Collective Impact	▪ Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative
	Backbone	▪ Capital Workforce Partners (WIB)
	Primary Partners	▪ Blue Hills Civic Association (CBO) ▪ Our Piece of the Pie (CBO)
New Orleans	Collective Impact	▪ Employment and Mobility Pathways Linked for Opportunity Youth
	Backbone	▪ Cowen Institute at Tulane University (URO)
	Primary Partners	▪ Youth Empowerment Project (CBO) ▪ ACE Program at Delgado Community College (PS) ▪ Earn and Learn Career Pathways Program (URO) ▪ Bard Early College of New Orleans (PS)

CBO=community-based org., Inter=intermediary, K12=K-12 education provider, PS=postsecondary institution, URO=university research org., WIB=workforce org.

Moving Partnerships to Service Delivery

Site	Role	Organization
Philadelphia	Collective Impact	▪ Project U-Turn
	Backbone	▪ Philadelphia Youth Network (Inter)
	Primary Partners	▪ Center for Literacy E^3 Center (CBO) ▪ Communities in Schools of Philadelphia, Inc. E^3 Center (CBO) ▪ Congreso de Latinos Unidos E^3 Center (CBO) ▪ JEVS Human Services E^3 Center (CBO) ▪ Community College of Philadelphia (PS)
San Francisco	Collective Impact	▪ Roadmap to Peace
	Backbone	▪ Bay Area Community Resources (CBO)
	Primary Partners	▪ Black to the Future (Inter) ▪ Communities in Harmony Advocating for Learning and Kids (CBO) ▪ Five Keys Charter School (K12)

CBO=community-based org., Inter=intermediary, K12=K-12 education provider, PS=postsecondary institution, URO=university research org., WIB=workforce org.

Moving Partnerships to Service Delivery

Site	Role	Organization
Santa Clara County	Collective Impact	▪ Opportunity Youth Partnership
	Backbone	▪ Kids in Common (Inter)
	Primary Partners	▪ Opportunity Youth Academies of the Santa Clara County Office of Education (K12) ▪ Conservation Corps (CBO) ▪ Fresh Lifelines for Youth (CBO) ▪ Silicon Valley Community Foundation (CBO) ▪ ConXión To Community (CBO)
South King County	Collective Impact	▪ Road Map Project
	Backbone	▪ United Way of King County (subgrantee) (Inter) ▪ Community Center for Education Results (Inter)
	Primary Partners	▪ Seattle Education Access (CBO) ▪ Youth Source Renton (CBO) ▪ Seattle Interagency (CBO) ▪ iGrad (CBO) ▪ Highline Open Doors (CBO) ▪ Acceleration Academy (CBO)

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