

# *A Call for Connection*

**Bridging the Divide for  
New Orleans Children & Youth**



**YOUTHSHIFT**

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## *A Spotlight on New Orleans Youth*



**Name:** George Barnes  
**Age:** 12  
**School:** Adinkra Nola  
**Future Goals:** Engineer/  
Entrepreneur



**Name:** Dante Hills  
**Age:** 18  
**School:** G.W. Carver  
Collegiate Academy  
**Future Goals:** Philosopher  
and Poverty Champion in  
New Orleans



**Name:** Shawn Kelly  
**Age:** 20  
**School:** Loyola University  
**Future Goals:** Masters of  
Public Administration to work  
on policy change impacting  
communities of color



**Name:** Ja'Brielle J. Manuel  
**Age:** 21  
**School:** University of  
New Orleans  
**Future Goals:** Social Worker  
to advocate with and for K-12  
students

# Connection

**Connection.** *It's a vital part of raising a child into a confident and successful individual.*

**Connection.** *It's needed across a community – between neighborhoods, schools, government and community organizations – to achieve the large-scale changes needed for ALL New Orleans children and youth to thrive.*

**Connection.** *It's often missing between the dozens of disconnected initiatives doing good work on behalf of our children and young people across the city.*

In 2011, a group of community leaders began discussing how to connect and work together more effectively for children and youth. Together, we are developing a common vision and set of strategies that has become YouthShift – a movement championed by organizations who work with and for the children and youth of New Orleans. YouthShift envisions a community in which all young people and their families are happy, healthy, secure and empowered. For the past three years, we have engaged more than 1,000 community leaders in collecting and analyzing data, setting priorities and informing plans about how to realize this vision.

One of the first steps YouthShift took was to gather input and identify the community-wide priorities we felt were most important for our children and youth. A group of 34 community leaders and 74 community survey respondents whittled 70 priorities down to a key list of 22 hopes we have for every child of New Orleans. The list was tested with more than 120 young people, and it represents a shared vision for our community. These hopes were grouped by the following six categories:



**Health & Well-Being**  
Physical, behavioral & social-emotional health



**Economic Stability**  
Sustainable careers & quality of life



**Learning**  
Cognitive, vocational & socio-emotional



**Space & Place**  
Physical environment



**Safety & Justice**  
Protection & fair treatment



**Youth Voice**  
Empowerment & opportunity to participate

The YouthShift “Call for Connection” documents the data we collected and the process we employed to create a community vision for children and youth in New Orleans. It outlines an approach and concrete action steps to make this vision a reality. Through extensive data collection, analysis and community engagement, we have identified three strategies and five approaches to better leverage the efforts of programs, organizations and collaboratives across the city to make this vision a reality. YouthShift seeks to leverage the city's wealth of programs serving children and youth to build a bridge for them to make their way to a happy, healthy and secure adulthood. By improving the way we work with and for young people, we believe we can bridge the gaps so many of our New Orleans youth face.

## **Strategy 1:** **Establish a Strong Foundation**

- 1)** Increase the meaningful engagement between leaders of children and youth-serving organizations, young people and parents themselves.
- 2)** Gather more information about the well-being of children and youth in our community and what efforts address the YouthShift priorities.

## **Strategy 2:** **Provide Improved Structure**

- 3)** Improve the quality of programs that serve children and youth in New Orleans by reinforcing the continued efforts of the K-12 school system, youth development programs, and early childhood sector to define, measure and support quality improvement on an ongoing basis.

## **Strategy 3:** **Maintain Strong Supports**

- 4)** Develop children and youth-centered public policies and strategies to ensure that young people come first in New Orleans.
- 5)** Identify and support an organization (or multiple organizations) to provide staffing, technical assistance, resources and expertise to help execute these goals.

We know that with collective effort, continuous community engagement and the right learning and accountability mechanisms, we can realize our shared vision. We hope you will join us in the YouthShift movement as we “shift” from planning into action and start fulfilling our promises to be better, smarter and more connected.

Sincerely,  
The YouthShift Steering Committee

# YOUTHSHIFT



# INTRODUCTION

## THE CLIMATE FOR NEW ORLEANS YOUTH

Throughout commemoration activities of the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, many lauded the achievements of New Orleans a decade into its recovery. According to The Data Center's *New Orleans Index at Ten*, New Orleans has recouped jobs lost to Katrina and the recession and employment has grown 5% over its 2008 level.<sup>1</sup> Entrepreneurship and venture capital funding has grown across the metro area, and public education continues to improve. Before the storm, only 30% of public school children attended a passing school, compared to the 88% now attending a passing school. Graduation rates have also risen from an appalling 54.4% in 2004 to 73% in 2014.

But, as President Obama pointed out in his Katrina Anniversary address, we know this is not the complete story.

***"You've made a lot of progress. That gives us hope. But it doesn't allow for complacency. It doesn't mean we can rest. Our work won't be done when almost 40 percent of children still live in poverty in this city."***

**President Obama  
Katrina Anniversary Address  
8/28/15**

Despite the fact that New Orleans has achieved economic success that many of its peer cities have not, the child poverty rate is 17% higher than the national average.<sup>2</sup> The New Orleans recovery continues to perpetuate many of the inequities that limited our city long before Hurricane Katrina. Those who may be most affected by these inequities are the city's low-income youth of color. Census data shows that 55% of New Orleans' black youth live in poverty.<sup>3</sup> A study by the Institute for Women and Ethnic Studies found in a survey of 527 youth that 48% reported knowing someone who has been murdered and 49% reported that they themselves are worried about being shot, stabbed, beaten or murdered.<sup>4</sup> Too many of our young people don't experience safety or opportunity. Yet, if you talk with New Orleans youth, they will tell you they are resilient, determined and capable... They just need opportunity.

*"We need to give people a chance... everyone has their own circumstance and context they carry with them."*

-Ja'Brielle



# THE BEGINNINGS OF YOUTHSHIFT

In early 2011, a group of non-profit leaders began discussing the challenges of working in youth development. They acknowledged that they had limited capacity: they could only serve so many young people, and the young people's needs were far greater than they could meet. While their organizations had different strengths and assets, these leaders agreed that they wanted to better connect the young people in their programs to the services they needed when they needed them. They found themselves sitting at the same tables again and again, having some of the same conversations about how best to serve these youth, but none of it seemed to be improving results for New Orleans' youth.

The question remained: could organizations develop a common vision and goals for the youth they were serving and then align their efforts with this vision to create greater impact?

Spurred on by early investment from Baptist Community Ministries (BCM), a large private foundation in the New Orleans area, a design team was formed to see what would happen if organizations came together using a collective impact framework. They named it "YouthShift" and aimed to "shift" to a collective approach to supporting the positive development of New Orleans youth.

## WHAT IS COLLECTIVE IMPACT?<sup>5</sup>

Collective Impact is a framework developed by Mark Kramer and John Kania in 2011 that codifies five things needed for community-wide systems change. These items include:

1. **Common Agenda:** All participants share a vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.
2. **Shared Measurement:** All participating organizations agree on the ways success will be measured and reported. A short list of common indicators is used for learning and improvement.
3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
4. **Continuous Communication:** All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
5. **Backbone Support:** An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.



*"Never give up! When you fail a project and you don't know what else to do, instead of stopping, you can talk to someone else. Don't give up on it. There is always a way to finish the job and solve the problem. You can always learn from your mistakes, no one is perfect."*

-George



Over the past decade, numerous task forces and committees have come together in the New Orleans region to tackle specific shared challenges. YouthShift built on the work of these earlier and existing efforts in order to achieve a research-informed assessment of where we are as a city in supporting children and youth ages 0-25, identify the key gaps, and develop a data-driven set of actions to address these gaps.

**YouthShift's Goal:** *To create an ecosystem of youth-serving organizations that can effectively and efficiently provide networked, coordinated, high quality services for children, youth and their families.*



"My voice wasn't being heard, and no one was there to stand up for me."

-Dante

## YOUTHSHIFT'S VISION

### TO BUILD A COMMUNITY THAT...

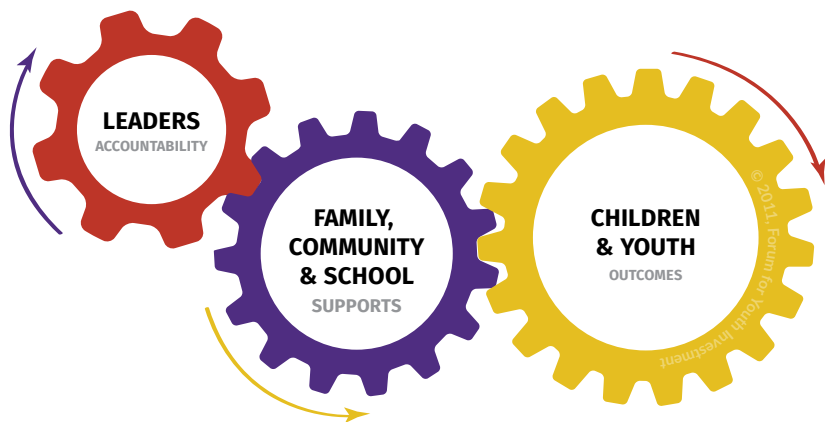
*Provides support for all children and youth in becoming academically and vocationally productive, socially and civically connected, and physically and emotionally healthy and safe; by*

*Ensuring that family, community and school supports are coordinated, accessible and of high quality; and by*

*Ensuring that leaders – from civic champions to service providers to youth and parents – are acting together in order to improve the supports required to accomplish the desired results.*

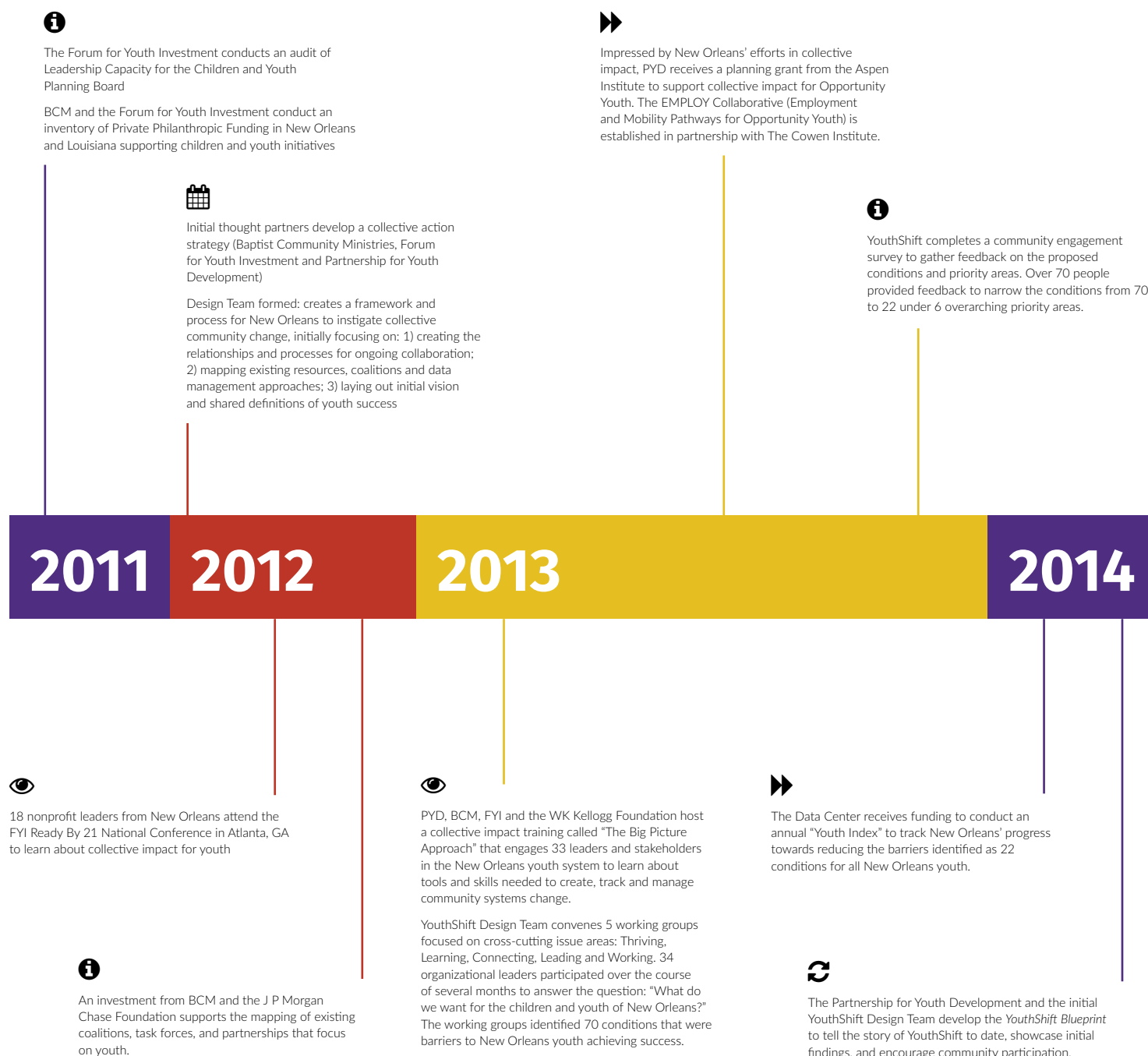
Since its inception, YouthShift has been informed by the work of the Forum for Youth Investment (the Forum) which offers research-based frameworks for achieving community change. Rooted in collective impact, the Forum's approach supports communities in developing common goals amongst stakeholders from different sectors, aligning work to achieve those goals, and identifying clear metrics of success and accountability mechanisms. By focusing on a community's leaders and "meeting them where they are," this approach seeks to change the way they do business and "help communities go farther faster with strategic connections, tools and resources."<sup>6</sup>

**TURNING THE FIRST GEAR  
MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE!**



Working from the Forum's framework, YouthShift has focused its initial efforts on engaging nonprofit and public sector leaders as a strategy for changing conditions and outcomes for New Orleans children and youth. We know that change cannot be created or sustained without an engaged community of youth and parents, and effective community engagement is key to understanding and successfully addressing issues that face our young people. The *Call for Connection* intentionally seeks to increase the engagement of community members throughout the next phase of YouthShift.

# YOUTHSHIFT: A HISTORY TO DATE



## KEY

**i** Information Collection

**📅** Planning & Design

**➡️** Momentum from YouthShift

**👁️** Developing Shared Vision

**🔄** Continuous Engagement





PYD and the Cowen Institute successfully grow EMPLOY, a collective impact initiative specifically focusing on Opportunity Youth and connection to successful job training and employment opportunities—a key issue identified by YouthShift research.



YouthShift members host the national Ready By 21 annual meeting in New Orleans with the Forum for Youth Investment. Over 60 New Orleans leaders attend.

The YouthShift Steering Committee releases *YouthShift 101: A Primer for Collective Action for New Orleans Youth* at the conference.



The Data Center releases the first annual Youth Index as a snapshot on the wellbeing of New Orleans children.



The Opportunity Youth Data Sharing Council is created by BCM and OY youth service providers to explore how program data can be better collected and shared—a key tenet of collective impact that YouthShift identified as a need. The Cowen Institute gets additional funding from The Aspen Institute, the federal Social Innovation Fund and Jobs for the Future to support EMPLOY.



YouthShift Steering Committee synthesizes data and community input and formulates recommendations as a "Call for Connection" for achieving its goals for New Orleans youth.



BCM and the Forum for Youth Investment launch a second Leadership Capacity Audit. It includes interviews with community leaders on strengths and weaknesses of the youth-serving ecosystem and surveys the membership of over 46 coalitions in New Orleans to understand their priorities.

# 2015



The Data Center releases their report on "New Orleans Kids, Working Parents, and Poverty" which articulates that 39% of young people in New Orleans live in poverty.



YouthShift begins to survey 400+ youth-serving organizations in New Orleans to develop a comprehensive listing that lists what programs do, who they serve, where they work, and how they measure success.



Volunteers from the workgroups design a YouthShift Steering Committee to complete additional outreach and strategic planning for addressing the Priorities and Conditions. 23 members are actively engaged representing 19 different organizations and perspectives.



CYPB, in partnership with Casey Family Programs, conducts strategic planning focused on how to provide the capacity for collective impact identified by YouthShift research.

BCM launches a pilot Youth Program Quality Initiative to define and measure program quality, an issue identified through YouthShift research.

BCM, the Forum for Youth Investment, and the Cowen Institute release two reports on funding youth-serving programs: *Accounting for Opportunity: A Fiscal Scan for Funding for New Orleans Opportunity Youth* and *Public Funding for Out-of-School Time in New Orleans*.




Orleans Parish Children and Youth Planning Board issue Board Resolution supporting YouthShift.



The Forum for Youth Investment works with YouthShift to conduct a Backbone Assessment Survey, assessing the health of collective impact backbone organizations in New Orleans.



YouthShift shares its goals and research findings with community members through a series of focus groups and community input events that are used to gather input on priorities and strategies.



# 1,049+

PARTICIPANTS IN YOUTHSIFT MEETINGS,  
OUTREACH EVENTS & FOCUS GROUPS

# 190+

CONTRIBUTING  
ORGANIZATIONS

# 566+

SURVEY  
PARTICIPANTS

# THE DATA

## INFORMATION COLLECTION RESULTS

One of the unique contributions of YouthShift has been its efforts to collect comprehensive data on programs, services, networks and coalitions focused on children and youth. Guided by a belief that our community needs a shared understanding of where we are, YouthShift committed early on to including diverse representation in its data gathering and sharing information with those who provide this data. We have been extensive in our survey distribution and conducted focus groups with parents, youth and staff of youth-serving organizations in an effort to hear from all perspectives. The following pages summarize the results of these data gathering efforts.

# IDENTIFYING PRIORITY AREAS FOR ALL YOUTH

Over the course of several months in the winter of 2013 and 2014, leaders from 25 youth-serving organizations met to identify and prioritize their shared goals for all youth in New Orleans. These discussions also identified local conditions or barriers that were making it difficult, if not impossible, for some young people to grow and thrive in the city. The group divided into five working groups with each focusing on a theme that captured the readiness conditions of children and youth: thriving, learning, connecting, leading and working. The working groups developed a list of 70 conditions that were then categorized into six areas. YouthShift surveyed youth-serving organizations to solicit feedback with a goal of identifying areas of consensus and disagreement. The survey input generated a revised set of 6 priorities and 22 local conditions that represent YouthShift's goals for each and every youth in New Orleans:

## ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH SHOULD...



### **Health & Well-Being** *Physical, behavioral & social-emotional health*

- Have access to primary care and/or behavioral health providers
- Have consistent access to healthy, nutritious food
- Have access to sexual and reproductive health education and services
- Be free from acute or chronic trauma



### **Economic Stability** *Sustainable careers & quality of life*

- Have the foundational and critical thinking skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce
- Have access to diverse high-quality postsecondary opportunities
- Be exposed and connected to career pathways



### **Learning** *Cognitive, vocational & socio-emotional*

- Have access to high quality early care and education programs
- Have learning opportunities that include arts, enrichment, culture and socio-emotional learning
- Be prepared to successfully transition between developmental stages
- Receive timely and appropriate intervention when they exhibit behaviors (chronic absence, truancy, behavioral incidents, etc.) that are predictors of negative academic outcomes
- Receive fair disciplinary treatment in schools



### **Space & Place** *Physical environment*

- Have access to safe spaces in which to play and exercise
- Have safe and stable housing
- Have adequate transportation options to get to work, after-school activities and school



### **Safety & Justice** *Protection & fair treatment*

- Be safe from direct and indirect forms of violence
- Be safe from abuse and neglect
- Be free from the impacts that over incarceration have on family stability, economic opportunity and the safety nets that support children



### **Youth Voice** *Empowerment & opportunity to participate*

- Be actively engaged and empowered to participate in decision making processes that affect them
- Be adequately supported to have a voice and be actively and equitably engaged
- Have opportunities to apply leadership skills in a positive way

## HOW CAN OTHER GROUPS USE THESE PRIORITIES AND CONDITIONS IN THEIR OWN WORK?

Recently, the Laureus Foundation's New Orleans Sport for Good coalition completed their own strategic planning process. In order to check their own goals and objectives against community-validated challenges, they used YouthShift's priorities and conditions. This alignment will ensure that the Sport for Good coalition's work not only furthers their own objectives but also helps contribute to the work of others working as a part of the YouthShift collective impact effort.

# NEW ORLEANS YOUTH INDEX

With the 6 priorities and 22 conditions identified and validated through community outreach, YouthShift turned to The Data Center for assistance in assessing how our city was performing against these priorities. Using trusted publicly available data sources, The Data Center has developed the New Orleans Youth Index 2015, a statistical snapshot of the well-being of New Orleans children and youth that provides baseline data. Future reports will indicate if and where YouthShift's collective efforts have been effective for New Orleans children and youth.

The Index is divided into the six YouthShift priority areas: Health and Wellbeing, Economic Stability, Learning, Space and Place, Safety and Justice, and Youth Voice. In selecting the indicators for the New Orleans Youth Index, The Data Center considered four major guidelines:

1. Indicators about how youth are doing, or youth well-being
2. Indicators that capture well-being across the age ranges from childhood to early adulthood
3. Indicators suggested by the Forum for Youth Investment's Ready by 21 dashboards
4. Indicators seen in other community youth well-being reports



*"I am active! Staying active keeps me healthy. I can't eat fast food every day and still be fast and strong. Being active makes me eat more vegetables and drink milk to make my bones strong."*

-George

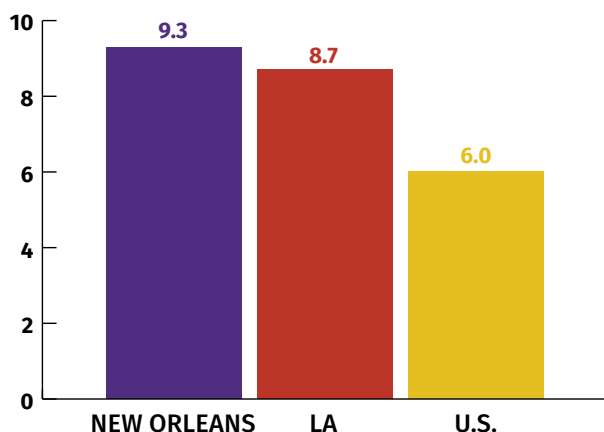
**The complete Youth Index report is available online at The Data Center's website: [www.datacenterresearch.org](http://www.datacenterresearch.org). Data snapshots are included here:**



## HEALTH & WELLBEING

YouthShift believes all children and youth should be in good physical, behavioral and social-emotional health. The Health and Wellbeing of New Orleans youth is measured across eight different metrics. These include immunizations, obesity and overweight, physical activity, infant mortality, low birth weight, birth to teen mothers, and alleged abuse and neglect. Youth, parents and community members all emphasized that the health and well-being of our young people is of paramount importance. Infant mortality is often used as an indicator for overall population health and well-being, and New Orleans has a higher incidence of infant mortality than Louisiana and the United States as a whole.

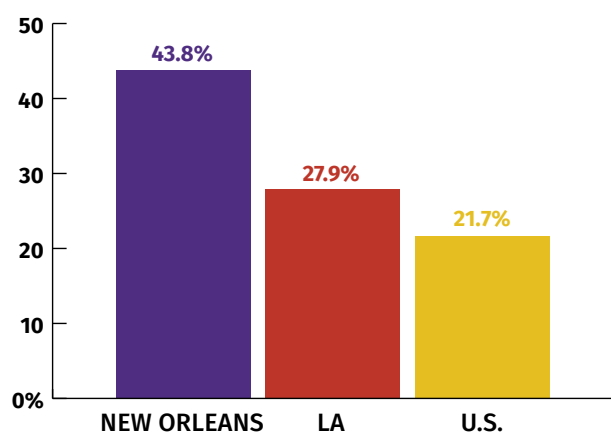
INFANT DEATHS, PER 1,000 BIRTHS, 2013



## ECONOMIC STABILITY

YouthShift's vision is that all children and their families should have sustainable careers and experience a high quality of life. A key tenet of this is family economic stability – the ability of parents to achieve and maintain employment to support their families and for children to meet key benchmarks that indicate future employment success. Metrics for this priority area are child poverty, kindergarten readiness, completed bachelor's degree or more, lack of high school diploma, youth unemployment, opportunity youth and parental employment status. One of the most striking statistics in this group is that 43.8% of children under 18 are living in poverty. New Orleans has a significantly higher rate of children under 18 living in poverty than Louisiana and the United States.

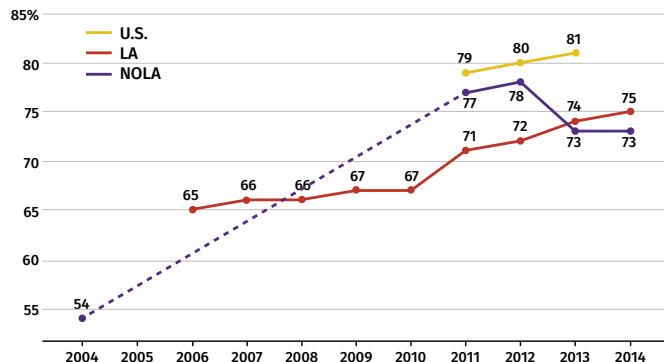
PERCENT OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 BELOW POVERTY LEVEL, 2014



## LEARNING

Educational attainment and success is a key predictor of employment success and essential in a knowledge-driven economy. YouthShift's vision is that all children and youth will receive cognitive, vocational and socio-emotional learning. The Data Center has identified the following indicators to measure how well New Orleans children and youth are doing in school: college enrollment, third grade English Language Scores, third through eighth English Language and Math scores, truancy and cohort graduation. While New Orleans public school students have shown impressive gains in high school graduation rates over the past decade, data shows they still lag behind Louisiana and national averages.

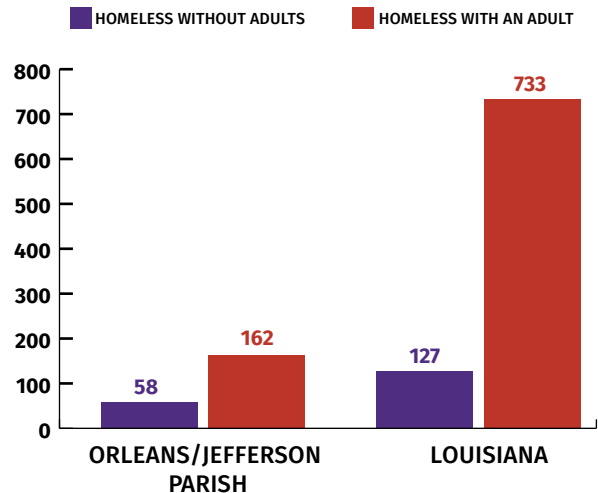
**HIGH SCHOOL 4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATES, AS OF SPRING OF YEAR FOUR**



## SPACE & PLACE

YouthShift's community engagement reiterated that one thing youth and parents value is safety – safe places to live, learn and play. YouthShift envisions all children and youth growing up in a safe physical environment. Having a stable housing situation is fundamental to this vision. The Data Center has identified youth homelessness as a reliable indicator to track how New Orleans is performing in this priority area.

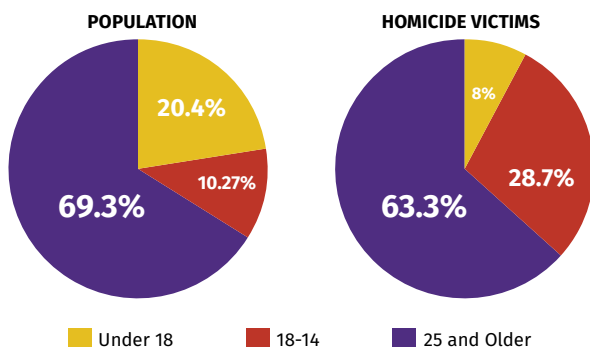
**HOMELESS YOUTH, 2014**



## SAFETY & JUSTICE

YouthShift believes that all children deserve protection and fair treatment by the institutions with which they interact. The Data Center has identified the following metrics to assess performance against this priority: child and youth homicide, percent of suspensions that were out of school, and percent of suspensions by race. New Orleans' homicide rate is a key concern to all of its citizens. The Data Center report shows that this is particularly impactful to young adults. When looking at the proportion of homicide by age group population, the 18-24 year old age group has a disproportionate share of homicide victims compared to its share of the population.

**SHARE OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS COMPARED TO SHARE OF POPULATION, NEW ORLEANS, 2014**



## YOUTH VOICE

Youth Voice, the participation of young people in decision-making processes that affect them, is a priority for YouthShift. Unfortunately, there is not currently any publicly available aggregate data for Youth Voice. YouthShift will attempt to better define and measure this priority going forward, to set a baseline and ensure that we are improving against it.



*"I have something to say, an opinion I want to voice, and I felt disconnected from my school and community because I wasn't listened to or taken seriously."*

-Ja'Brielle



*"1 in 5 students have seen or know someone who has been murdered. How do you think that makes us feel? How do you think that impact students' learning?"*

-Shawn

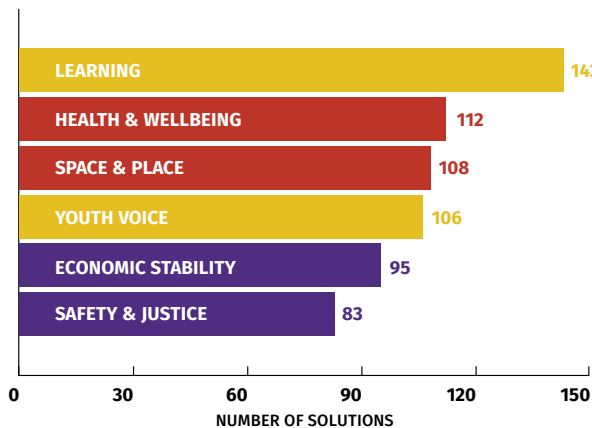
# SOLUTIONS MAPPING PROJECT

In an effort to better understand the different programs and interventions that are currently offered across New Orleans, the YouthShift Steering Committee designed and surveyed organizations on what “solutions” or activities they were currently conducting that aligned with a YouthShift priority area. A “solution” is defined as “any program, activity or initiative” operated by an organization. A single organization might offer multiple “solutions” (e.g. YMCA offering sports and leadership programming).

The survey aimed to gather information on the priority focus or local condition the solution addresses, the strategy it employs, the age group and/or sub-population(s) it serves, and where it was located. In addition, the survey also queried whether the intervention has measurable outcomes, how many youth a year it serves, whether it engages partners to serve youth, and if it is operating at capacity.

The survey was distributed online to hundreds of youth-serving organizations. As of August 2015, 188 responses were received.

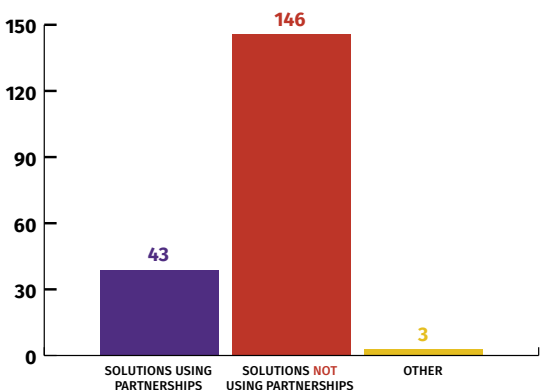
SOLUTIONS & PRIORITY AREAS



FINDINGS

The 6 YouthShift Priority areas were well represented across the 188 responses received to date.

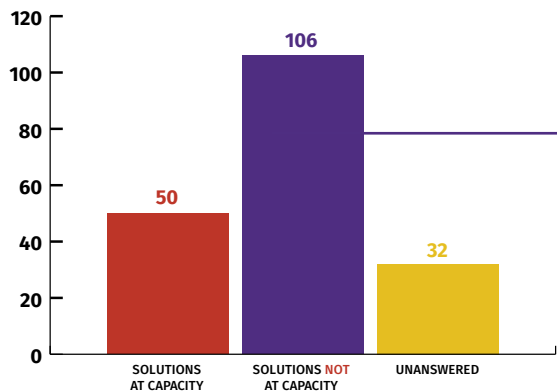
SOLUTIONS & PARTNERSHIPS



FINDINGS

The majority of respondents indicated that they do not partner with other organizations / programs to make their solution(s) function on a day-to-day basis. This is a key indicator that there is a lack of connection between the available resources for youth.

SOLUTIONS & CAPACITY



FREQUENT REASONS FOR NOT OPERATING AT CAPACITY

- Lack of staffing
- Lack of fiscal resources
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of physical space for expansion
- Competition for recruiting youth

FINDINGS

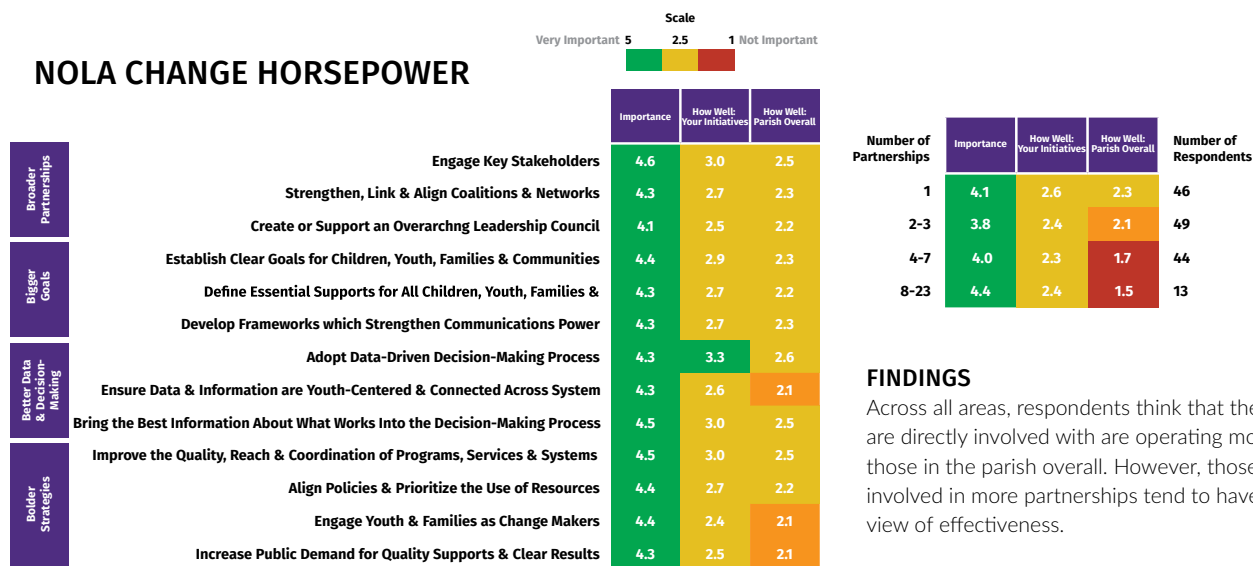
The majority of respondents indicated that that they are not operating at capacity for a number of reasons  
*\*Definition for capacity was not provided in the survey.*



# LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AUDIT

The Forum for Youth Investment developed a Leadership Capacity Audit that is based on their Change Horsepower Diagnostic tool. The audit includes two parts: a series of interviews with community leaders and an online survey that is widely distributed to youth-serving organizations. The Change Horsepower Diagnostic tool asks about the importance and effective execution of several standards regarding Broader Partnerships, Bigger Goals, Better Data and Information and Bolder Strategies.

For the New Orleans audit, an online survey about the four areas was distributed to over 600 individuals who participate in nearly 50 different collaboratives. The survey was open from July 20 to July 31, 2015. 242 people responded with 157 completing the entire survey. Also, 14 key leaders representing a range of public and private organizations from a cross sector of systems that support youth were identified and interviewed between July 1 and August 10, 2015. Prior to each interview, they were asked to complete a worksheet which asked about their perceptions of the importance of the four key areas, how well the areas were being executed in the initiatives in which they were currently involved, and how well the areas were being executed across the Parish.



## FINDINGS

Across all areas, respondents think that the initiatives they are directly involved with are operating more effectively than those in the parish overall. However, those respondents involved in more partnerships tend to have a more negative view of effectiveness.

## FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS:

### KEY STAKEHOLDERS MISSING FROM CURRENT TABLES

Several stakeholder groups were identified as missing from these efforts. These included youth, community members, faith based, mental health, health care and child welfare. Several participants highlighted challenges in how youth-serving organizations and schools engage with each other.

### NUMBER OF LEADERSHIP GROUPS DISSIPATING ENERGY

There was universal agreement that there are too many leadership tables, coalitions, networks and partnerships. This makes it hard to know what each is doing. There was a general feeling expressed by many that they did not see or hear about any tangible results from these groups working together.

### INTERMEDIARY FUNCTIONS HIGHLY DESIRED

All expressed a strong need for better coordination and other capacity-building intermediary functions, especially in the youth fields. These important intermediary functions include: 1) brokering relationships to facilitate collective action, 2) convening local organizations, 3) conducting research, 4) increasing program quality, 5) strengthening professional development, 6) demonstrating innovations in practice, 7) facilitating or supporting evaluation, 8) expanding and mobilizing resources, and 9) promoting sustainability.

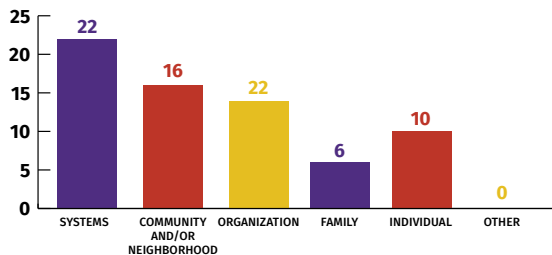
# “MOVING TRAINS” SURVEY

As a part of its community change planning process, The Forum for Youth Investment (the Forum) has developed a methodology for identifying the existing coalitions, task forces or partnerships that have built momentum on a specific youth-related issue. The Forum refers to these as “moving trains” – because it’s helpful to align with a train, or initiative, that’s already left the station and is picking up speed. The survey assesses the focus and scope of these initiatives and provides data to inform how existing and future work can align with these initiatives.

The Moving Trains survey first asked YouthShift Steering Committee members and other youth leaders in the city to identify “moving trains.” These queries generated a list of 42 different initiatives, ranging from Mayoral initiatives like NOLA for Life to those with national ties like United Way’s Success by 6. The survey was then emailed to a point of contact for each initiative.

The Forum received 24 responses. The charts below provide a summary of the survey results.

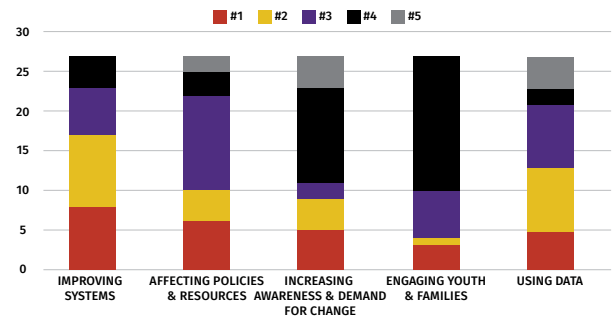
LEVEL OF CHANGE



## FINDINGS

Systems, community or neighborhood, and organization level change were the most commonly reported levels at which organizations or efforts are working to improve outcomes for children, youth and their families.

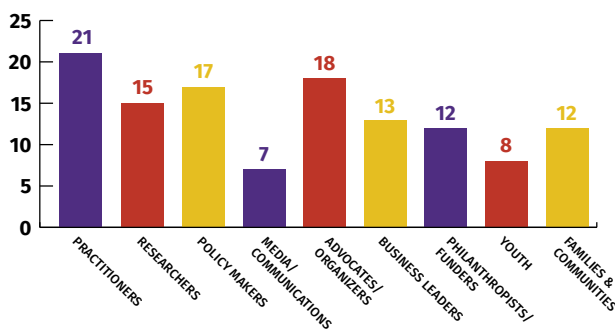
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## FINDINGS

The survey asked respondents to rank their change strategies from 1-5, with 1 as the highest priority. The red block represents the 1st priority, the yellow block represents the 2nd priority, and the purple block represents the 3rd priority. Improving systems, affecting policies and resources, and using data are the most popular strategies being used by respondents.

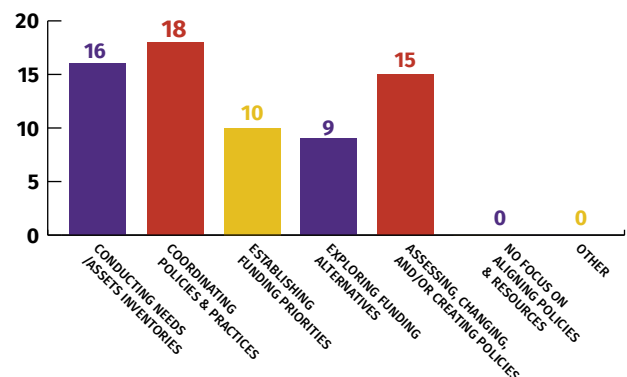
ACTIVELY ENGAGED ROLE-DEFINED GROUPS



## FINDINGS

Practitioners, Advocates and Organizers, and Policy Makers are the most frequently identified role-defined groups respondents engage with. Media and Youth were the lowest ranked groups engaged by respondents.

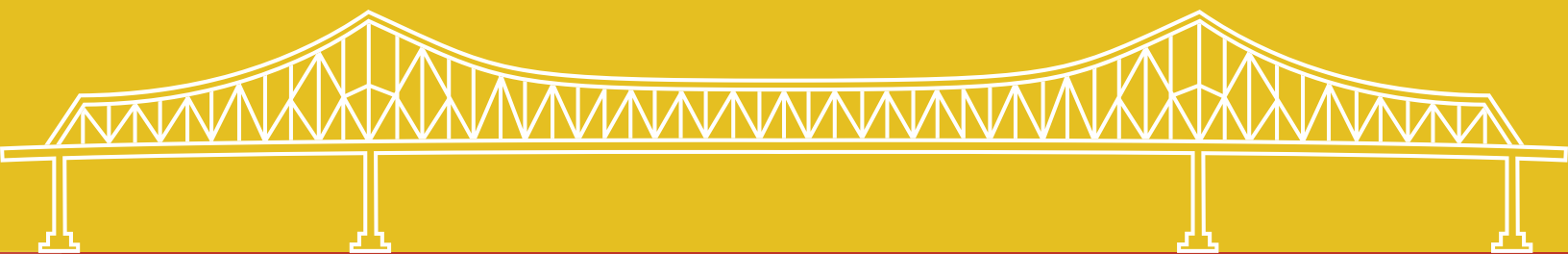
STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING POLICIES & RESOURCES



## FINDINGS

Respondents reported using all 5 strategy options with Policy Coordination, Conducting Needs or Asset Inventories, and Assessing, Changing, or Creating Policies being the most popular approaches.

# THE RECOMMENDATIONS WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO BRIDGE THE DIVIDE?



## DEVELOPING YOUTHSIFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the last several months, YouthShift has shared this data with a wide variety of youth programs, parent groups and community-based organizations for feedback and input. During the fall of 2015, YouthShift conducted over a dozen focus group meetings, hearing from over 125 youth and 62 organizations. These meetings occurred in small focus groups, in large community group settings, and in some cases, with host partners, such as the Urban League of Greater New Orleans, UNO's Upward Bound Office and The Net Charter School's Town Hall program.

# EMERGING THEMES FROM FEEDBACK SESSIONS

## 1. COMMON VISION

Community members surveyed want a common vision for young people and their families. YouthShift's goals and ideals resonated with them.

## 2. YOUTH & FAMILY VOICE

Young people, their families and youth workers want to be involved in decision-making for programs and collective impact initiatives. Many local organizations and initiatives, including YouthShift, have struggled to do this effectively. We must build capacity to effectively engage these voices directly. Also, while organizational leaders may come together frequently, collaboration and interaction among youth workers, parents and community members is less frequent. Several people commented that the "grassroots" needed to be just as involved in partnership efforts as the "grasstops," particularly because they are the ones working with youth on a day-to-day basis

## 3. BETTER INFORMATION

There is a lack of accessible, reliable and valid information about programming offered to youth and their families. Young people, their parents and the staff members who seek to help them all struggled to identify which resources were best to support their young people.

## 4. BETTER COLLABORATION

There are a wealth of partnerships and collaboration in our community, but many participants in those efforts feel there are just "too many meetings." As the survey results show, the impact of these collaborations is not being achieved. There is a need for more effective and efficient partnerships.

## 5. DEMANDING QUALITY

While the capacity to serve more youth is limited by resources, staffing and funding, there is a concern that youth-serving organizations should also focus on serving more youth better – taking steps to improve the quality of their programs. Youth workers were hungry to do things better, and while they felt partnerships and collaboration might help, many lamented their lack of time to seek opportunities out and work on their practice.

## 6. COORDINATING BODY

There is a strong desire for help across the field of organizations working with young people. Organizations do not have the staff or resources to collect and disseminate the information they crave, nor do they have the time to provide the training, coordination and policy development that is crucial to their success. Surveys and focus groups both indicated a need for one or more intermediary organizations to play this role.

While a number of different action steps, needs and gaps emerged – all worthy of addressing – YouthShift Steering Committee members aligned these recommendations against YouthShift's original charge:

## TO DEVELOP...

- A common vision of improving outcomes for young people;
- Recommendations for deeper organizational coordination; and
- Tools to help improve and align their supports and services

## FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGED:

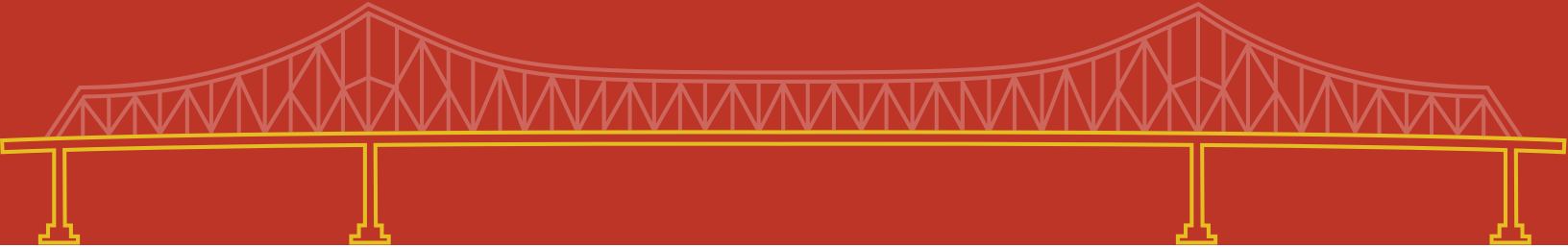
- 1** *Increase the meaningful engagement between leaders of children and youth-serving organizations, young people and parents themselves.*
- 2** *Gather more information about the well-being of children and youth in our community and what efforts there are to address the YouthShift priorities. Disseminate this information to the general public.*
- 3** *Improve the quality of programs that serve children and youth in New Orleans by reinforcing the continued efforts of the K-12 school system, youth development programs and early childhood sectors to define, measure and support quality improvement on an ongoing basis.*
- 4** *Develop children and youth-centered public policies and strategies to ensure that young people come first in New Orleans.*
- 5** *Identify and support an organization (or multiple organizations) to provide staffing, technical assistance, resources and expertise to help support organizations seeking to execute these goals.*

YouthShift also identified action steps for each recommendation. YouthShift invites all youth, parents and organizations that work with or on behalf of youth and their families to review these recommendations and contribute to our efforts in making them a reality. Collectively, we can ensure the ecosystem of youth-serving organizations effectively align, support, and improve outcomes for all of New Orleans children and youth.

# STRATEGY 1:

## ESTABLISH A STRONG FOUNDATION

*Know the landscape, who is involved, what they are doing, and ensure all voices are heard*



**Increase the meaningful engagement between leaders of youth-serving organizations, young people and parents themselves.**

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS

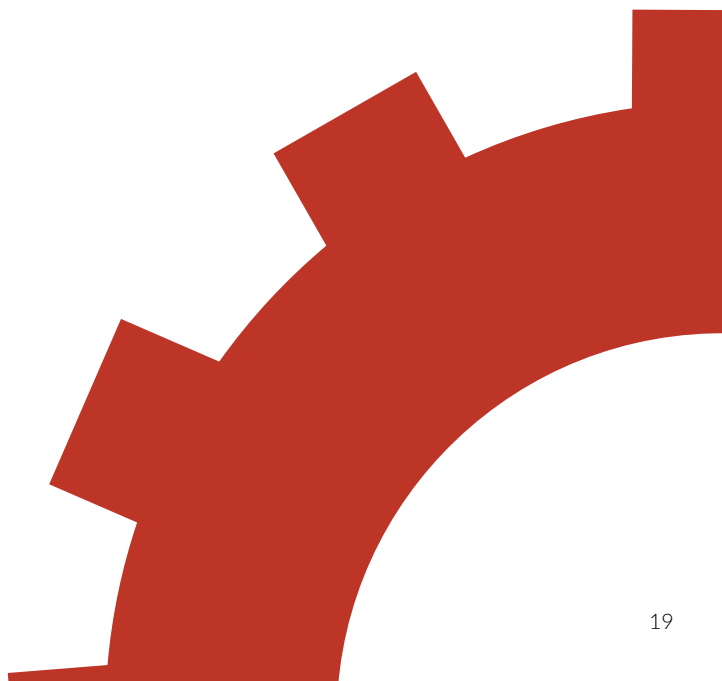
- Integrate youth and family voice across the city's existing committees and taskforces that benefit children and youth. Welcome participants in the governance and decision-making for these initiatives and ensure that those who are affected by programming and policies have legitimate voices and choices.
- Support citywide efforts to engage youth and parents in a structured, continuous and authentic way. For example, the New Orleans City Health Department is exploring ways to engage youth in a leadership program that would allow them to identify, develop and advocate for policies that directly affect them.
- Mobilize resources, both technical assistance and financial, to be used by organizations or coalitions seeking to authentically engage with youth and community members. For example, make funding available to offset barriers like renting space in locations convenient to working parents, provide childcare, or offer transportation to participants. Also, ensure organizations have the training and support they need to engage children, youth and parents authentically and effectively.
- Increase participation of groups, such as faith-based organizations, people of color, and parents and children, that YouthShift research suggests are under-represented in decision-making bodies for children and youth. These groups directly experience many of the challenges our children and youth face. They are important contributors to our neighborhoods and communities and their perspectives are essential to our success.
- Ensure that communications about programming are accessible and culturally competent.



**Increase what we know about the well-being of children and youth in our community and what efforts there are to address priorities outlined above. Disseminate this information to the general public.**

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS

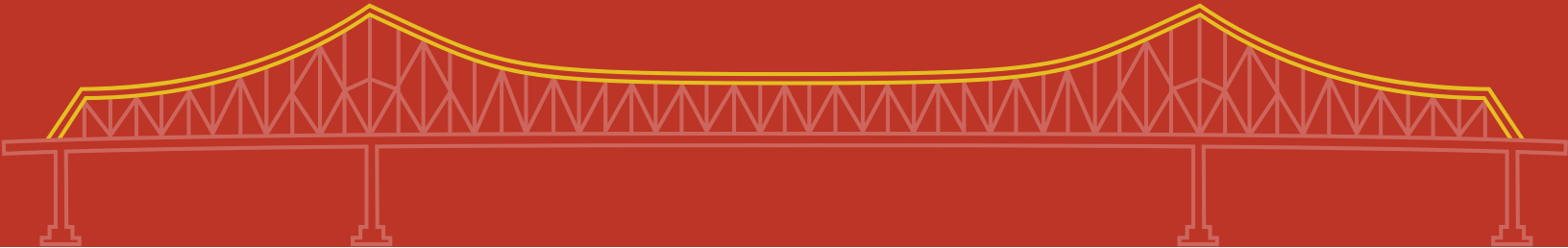
- Support The Data Center's annual Youth Index as well as other efforts to routinely collect and report on data that tracks outcomes for New Orleans youth. Use these reports as an indicator of how effectively YouthShift is contributing to improved outcomes for our young people.
- Using existing community resource guides, create a centralized and routinely updated information clearinghouse that houses information about youth-serving programs that includes types of services, target population(s), age groups served, geographic locations, program cost, referral/enrollment information and other information that young people, their families, and youth workers deem necessary. Create a platform that can be accessed by multiple audiences, sorted or browsed by topic, priority area, etc., and accessed via the Internet or mobile device.



## STRATEGY 2:

# PROVIDE IMPROVED STRUCTURE

*Ensure programs for children and youth are of highest quality*



**Improve the quality of programs that serve children and youth in New Orleans by reinforcing the continued efforts of the K-12 school system, youth development programs and early childhood sectors to define, measure and support quality improvement on an ongoing basis.**

#### **PROPOSED ACTION STEPS**

- Develop a culture of continuous quality improvement among children and youth serving organizations, informed by youth and parent feedback, through incentivized, non-punitive funding opportunities that reach a diversity of youth-serving programs.
- Increase the number of organizations participating in the New Orleans Youth Program Quality Initiative (NOLA-YPQI), a research-based quality improvement project for youth development programs currently being piloted by 15 organizations with financial assistance from Baptist Community Ministries.
- Support the efforts of the New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) to provide the professional development, technical assistance and peer support opportunities needed to increase the number of high-quality early childhood programs in the city.
- Leverage existing workgroups like the NOLA-YPQI Working Group and Opportunity Youth Data Sharing Council to engage youth-serving organizations, youth and parents in understanding, defining and using citywide program quality indicators for New Orleans programs.
- Create a professional development system for youth workers that augments staff skills and knowledge and builds capacity to meet program quality improvement goals. Collect, centralize and disseminate information on available opportunities and supports for program quality improvement.





## STRATEGY 3:

# MAINTAIN STRONG SUPPORTS

*Build the capacity, funding and policy supports to successfully and sustainably support all children and youth*



**Develop youth-centered public policies and strategies to ensure that young people come first in New Orleans.**

#### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS

- Identify an existing collaboration or organization that can lead efforts to map existing public policy initiatives and priorities and share findings so like-minded programs or initiatives can align for greater impact.
- Develop a campaign to nurture champions for New Orleans youth among local, state and federal government representatives and other influential leaders. Provide them with the necessary information to help inform and prioritize efforts for better outcomes for all New Orleans children.
- Routinely identify funding and policy barriers for young people and centralize information. For example, publications like the *Public Funding for Out-of-School Time in New Orleans* can be routinely updated and serve as a starting place for developing effective, collaborative policy campaigns.
- Assess the feasibility of a tax levy or millage to support high-quality, high-impact youth-focused programs in Orleans Parish based on best practices in peer cities.



**Identify and support an organization (or multiple organizations) to provide staffing, technical assistance, resources and expertise to help support organizations seeking to execute these goals.**

#### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS

- Identify national best practice examples of intermediary organizations that manage the functions needed to support the implementation of YouthShift's recommendations, including:
  - Providing technical assistance and training for youth and child workers and program staff to improve program quality on research-based domains like:
    - Providing a Safe environment
    - Providing a Supportive environment
    - Quality Interaction
    - Quality Engagement
    - Including Youth-Centered Policies and Practices
    - Holding High Expectations for Youth and Staff
    - Ensuring Access for families
- Regularly collecting and disseminating data on children and youth
- Convening and ensuring the coordination of collaboratives and organizations focused on improving youth outcomes and public policy
- Developing and implementing communication strategies to ensure that youth-serving organizations are aware of opportunities for alignment and coordination, including a biannual update on program activities and resource guides
- Mobilizing resources for organizations that work with and on behalf of youth. Pass through resources to partnering organizations and/or act as fiscal agent when necessary.
- Seek and vet commitments from a local organization(s) that can provide excellence in the six backbone functions critical to YouthShift's Collective Impact success: Guiding Vision and Strategy, Supporting Aligned Activities, Establishing Shared Measurement Practices, Building Public Will, Advancing Policy, and Mobilizing Funding for all children and youth serving organizations and agencies.

# NEXT STEPS: WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOUTHSIFT

In 2011, when YouthShift was first conceived, it was envisioned as a planning process that would result in a comprehensive strategy to align efforts to serve New Orleans youth and children. Over the past few years, it has evolved into a collective effort that has included information gathering and gap analysis to its list of deliverables. When asked what YouthShift is now, Steering Committee members answered with enthusiasm: "YouthShift is a movement!" "It's a vision for how we can change the way we do our work, how we change the status quo. The recommendations are the path forward to seeing this change happen." "If these recommendations become reality, we have no doubt we would start to see our hopes for New Orleans youth achieved."

New Orleans is a city very familiar with master plans. Since Katrina, we have seen plans for everything from neighborhood redevelopment to wetland restoration to school modernization. There have also been plans for improving outcomes for our youth. The YouthShift Steering Committee does NOT want these recommendations to be seen as another plan, released to fanfare, and promptly put on a shelf to collect dust.

To ensure that this movement continues, the Steering Committee has committed to taking the following next steps – shepherding YouthShift from bold ideas into action.

## The YouthShift Steering Committee will:

1. Continue working through 2016 to ensure that these recommendations are circulated and embraced and that at least one champion has committed to ensuring each action step is completed. YouthShift's original funder, Baptist Community Ministries, will fund the necessary staff support for these efforts.
2. "Walk the walk" of being more inclusionary of the youth and parents on whose behalf they work. Going forward, youth and parent members will be recruited and actively engaged in discussions and decision making.
3. Reconvene the focus groups who contributed to this report to share recommendations and solicit ideas for moving forward.
4. Cultivate a sustainable group of funders to support the implementation of these recommendations. Recognizing that collective impact requires the staffing and backbone support to be successful, the Steering Committee will prioritize funding for a support organization to provide the staffing and technical assistance required to implement these recommendations. This will ensure that the weight of these recommendations does not fall on the shoulders of already burdened non-profit, education and direct-service providers who work diligently to support our youth and children.

These are the commitments the YouthShift Steering Committee has offered. But, it won't be enough to achieve YouthShift's full potential. In order to do this, **WE NEED YOU!** We need **ALL** of New Orleans – teachers, staff members, parents, youth, business leaders, clergy members, city employees, elected officials and neighbors, too! We hope you will join us as we "shift" into action for New Orleans children and youth, ensuring all young people and their families are happy, healthy, secure and empowered.



# How to Get Involved

*YouthShift and the youth-serving organizations in New Orleans cannot accomplish their goals without the public's help. We encourage you to read the recommendations and join the movement in three ways:*

1

## *Be a Champion!*

Have your organization commit to all five recommendations and endorse the Call for Connection. Inform your team and boards, engage directly with the Steering Committee, educate other stakeholders, and learn more!

2

## *Be a Contributor!*

*Is your organization already working towards these priority outcomes?*

Let us know by emailing **[admin@nolayouthshift.org](mailto:admin@nolayouthshift.org)** so we can include your work in our efforts.

3

## *Be a Friend!*

Like YouthShift on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and visit our website [nolayouthshift.org](http://nolayouthshift.org) for updates and information regarding next steps and upcoming events.



## SOURCES

1. Plyer, A., Shrinath, N., & Mack, V. (2015). The New Orleans Index at Ten: Measuring Greater New Orleans' Progress toward Prosperity.
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*Photos courtesy of Michael Januzzi, KIDsmART, Liberty's Kitchen, and Zach Smith.*



# YouthShift Contributors to Date

504 Health Net  
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Agenda for Children  
All Souls Episcopal Church and Community Center  
Alliance for a Healthier Generation  
American Friends Service Committee  
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APEX Youth Center  
Arise Academy  
Arts Council New Orleans  
A's and Aces  
Ashe Cultural Arts Center  
ATD Fourth World Movement  
Backyard Gardener's Network  
Baptist Community Ministries  
Bard Early College in New Orleans  
Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge  
BeREAL/NET Charter High School  
Big Class  
Bike Easy  
Boy Scouts of America – Southeast Louisiana Council  
Boys and Girls Club of Southeastern Louisiana  
Boys Hope Girls Hope  
Boys Town  
BreakOUT!  
Brickman Nonprofit Solutions  
BridgeHouse  
Broad Community Connections  
Broadmoor Improvement Association  
Cafe Reconcile  
CASA New Orleans  
Catholic Charities  
CeaseFire New Orleans  
Center for Restorative Approaches  
Children Youth Planning Board  
Children's Bureau of New Orleans  
Christian Unity Baptist Church  
Citizens for One Greater New Orleans  
College Track New Orleans  
Communities in Schools  
Community Works  
COMPASS Health Initiatives  
Concordia, LLC  
Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse for GNO  
Covenant House  
Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives  
Crescent Care  
Crescent City Lights Youth Theater  
Crescent City Media Group/BMBI  
Crescent City Middle School Debate League  
CrimeStoppers GNO  
Crocker College Prep  
Delgado Accelerated Career Education  
Delgado Community College  
DiscoveryFEST Enrichment Program  
Each One Save One

Edible Schoolyard  
Educate Now!  
Ekhyah Youth Project  
Excel Family Health Center  
Families and Friends of Louisiana Incarcerated Children (FFLIC)  
Families Helping Families of Southeast Louisiana  
Family Services of Greater New Orleans  
FirstLine Schools  
FitLot  
Forum for Youth Investment  
Freret Neighborhood Center  
Girls and Boys Town  
Girls First  
Girls on the Run NOLA  
GNO, Inc  
GNODORC  
Greater New Orleans Foundation  
Grow Dat Youth Farm  
Healthy Start New Orleans  
Homer Plessy Community School  
Hope Stone NOLA  
Institute for Quality & Equity in Education at Loyola  
Institute for Women and Ethnic Studies  
Job1/YouthWorks  
JP Morgan Chase Foundation  
Junior Achievement of Greater New Orleans  
Justice & Beyond Coalition  
Juvenile Justice Project of LA  
KID SmART  
Kids ReTHINK  
Kingsley House  
Laureus USA  
Liberty's Kitchen  
Lighthouse Louisiana  
Limitless Vistas, Inc.  
Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations  
Louisiana Center for Children's Rights  
Louisiana Children's Museum  
Louisiana Department of Education  
Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities  
Louisiana Film Academy of Technology, Inc.  
Louisiana Green Corps  
Louisiana Public Health Institute  
Louisiana State University  
Loyola University  
LSU AgCenter Orleans Parish 4-H  
Macaroni Kid  
Make Music NOLA  
Mayor's Innovation Design Team  
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Coordination  
Mayor's Office Reentry Program  
Mercy Family Center  
Metropolitan Human Services District  
Mos Chukma Arts as Healing

Neighborhood Partnerships Network  
New Orleans Business Alliance  
New Orleans City Council  
New Orleans College Prep Academies  
New Orleans Dance Collective  
New Orleans District Attorney Office  
New Orleans Dream Center  
New Orleans Family Justice Center  
New Orleans Jazz Institute  
New Orleans Jewish Community Center  
New Orleans Kids Partnership  
New Orleans Museum of Art  
New Orleans Office of Workforce Development  
New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation  
New Orleans Public Library  
New Orleans Recreation Department  
New Orleans Video Access Center  
New Orleans Youth Works  
New Schools for New Orleans  
NOLA for LIFE  
NORD Foundation  
NORDC Executive Teen Council  
Orleans Parish Juvenile Court  
Orleans Parish School Board  
Orleans Public Education Network  
Our School at Blair Grocery  
PS Consulting, LLC  
Parkway Partners  
Partnership for Youth Development  
Place Matters  
Playworks New Orleans  
Press Street  
PRIDE Parent Group  
Project Butterfly NOLA  
Providence Community Housing  
Puentes New Orleans  
Recovery School District  
ReFresh Project  
Renew Charter Schools  
Roots of Music  
Ruth U. Fertel Community Health Center  
Save One Now, Inc  
Silence is Violence  
Southern Food and Beverage Museum  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Sprout NOLA  
Stage to Stage, Inc  
Stand Up For Each Other (SUFE0)  
Stanford University – CREDO  
Start the Adventure in Reading-STAIR  
swamplily, llc  
Swim 4 Success  
Teaching Responsible Earth Education (T.R.E.E.)  
The Cool Cooperative  
The Data Center  
The First Tee of Greater New Orleans  
The Net Charter School

The Network for Economic Opportunity  
The Verbena Group  
Tipitinas Foundation  
Total Community Action, Inc  
Trinity Christian Community  
Tulane City Center  
Tulane University  
Tulane University Drop-In Center  
United Way of Southeast Louisiana  
UNITY for the Homeless  
University of New Orleans  
Up2Us Sports  
Upward Bound  
Urban League of GNO  
Urban Strategies  
VAYLA New Orleans  
Vietnamese Initiatives in Economic Training (VIET)  
Volunteers of America, GNO  
WK Kellogg Foundation  
Young Aspirations/Young Artists, Inc.  
Young Audiences of LA  
Young Leadership Council  
Youth Connection  
Youth Empowerment Project  
Youth Rebuilding New Orleans  
Youth Run NOLA  
Youth Study Center  
YouthForce NOLA

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