Youth Career Exploration and Alignment Opportunities

Taskforce Report

Nashville, TN
May 2023

Co-chaired by Metro Council
Member Thom Druffel and
Deputy Mayor Haywood

CAREER DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

Self-Exploration

Career Planning & Management

Career Exploration

Partnership

This report has been developed in close partnership with Nashville After Zone Alliance, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and over 20 representatives from various community organizations.

The Co-Chairs would like to thank all committee chairs for their input and leadership for this project:

1. *Anna Harutyunyan, Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA)- Governance Committee*
2. *Leesa LeClaire, Greater Nashville Hospitality Association- Partnerships Committee*
3. *Shohreh Daraei, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce- Partnerships Committee*
4. *Brian Lowenthal, Improving the Odds Lonnell - **Skills for Success***
5. *Lonnell Matthews, Juvenile Court Clerk- Bridge Strategies*
6. *Donovan Robertson, CCI Group- Finance and Metrics*

The Co-chairs want to thank Ellen Zinkiewicz for providing the final editing of this report.

Youth Career Exploration and Alignment Opportunities Task Force

In July 2022, Mayor John Cooper announced the formation of the Youth Career Exploration and Alignment Opportunities Task Force. The Task Force, in agreement with Mayor Cooper and in partnership with The Nashville Chamber of Commerce, the *Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA),* and the Nashville Public Library, was charged with developing a roadmap to expand youth career exploration and youth employment opportunities based on existing models and best practices.

 "We know that an early introduction to job opportunities can shape a positive path forward in young people's careers," said Mayor John Cooper. "Connecting young people to good-paying jobs in growing industries – like music and entertainment, tourism and hospitality, and healthcare -- is an essential way we can grow our economy in Nashville in a way that works for everyone. I'm grateful for the Task Force for finding new and creative ways to introduce career opportunities to Nashville's emerging professionals, which can also motivate students to achieve more while they are in school."

Nashville is facing significant economic growth, and it's historically low unemployment rate creates opportunities for young people. "Students see lifelong benefits from early opportunities to explore their interests, learn about potential careers and learn how to gain job experience, especially as they began to think about choosing a high school academy and career pathway," said Ralph Schulz, president and CEO of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce. "The Chamber is excited to be a part of this work, engaging businesses in hands-on learning opportunities for students and building upon the work-based learning continuum framework where in the middle school years, students are learning about work through industry and career exploration."

> **Mission: Provide a holistic equitable approach for youth career exploration and skill development that is sustainable and scalable that will act as a map for the next 10 years.**

With an initial mission to provide a holistic, equitable approach for youth career exploration and skill development that is sustainable and scalable and that will act as a map for the next ten years. The Task Force immediately identified a desire to also make recommendations that could be transformative for Nashville's young people. "We have a tremendous opportunity to create a business plan about youth career exploration and job skills," said Task Force Chair Councilmember Thom Druffel. "Due to the growing needs of jobs in Nashville, this is a great win-win. Our investment in our future workforce and leaders will provide growth in our communities and provide an excellent place for employers to find skilled staff."

The initial Task Force membership included elected officials as well as representatives from the Mayor's Office, Juvenile Court and other city agencies, area youth-serving organizations, higher education, State agencies, and employers. Members provided a wide range of expertise and perspectives.

Members of the Youth Career Employment and Alignment Opportunities Task Force include:
- Chair, Thom Druffel, Metro Nashville Council
- Vice-Chair, Brenda Haywood, Deputy Mayor of Community Engagement
- Katina Bass, Metro Action Commission
- Jennifer Bell, MNPS
- Herbert Brown, Turner Construction
- Darrell Caldwell, Why We Can't Wait
- Judge Sheila Calloway, Metro Nashville Juvenile Court
- LaTanya Channel, Mayor's Officer
- Deborah Crosby, MNPS
- Daryl Curry, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
- Shohreh Daraei, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
- Allie Duke, Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA)
- Tanya Evrenson, Metro Action Commission
- Jennifer Gamble, Metro Nashville Council
- Nate Garrett, Tennessee College of Applied Technology
- Lee Gray, Oasis Center
- La'Kishia Harris, Mayor's Office
- Anna Harutyunyan, Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA)
- Brenda Haywood, Mayor's Office
- Katie Hazelwood, Scarlett Family Foundation
- Jennifer Hill, Nashville Public Education Foundation
- Ray Holloman, Enterprise Disaster Recovery
- Dr. Shanna Jackson, Nashville State Community College
- Melissa Jagger, Alignment Nashville
- Troy Jenkins, State of Tennessee
- Mikah Kimble, Backfield in Motion
- Bob Kucher, PENCIL
- Leesa LeClaire, Greater Nashville Hospitality Association
- Brian Lowenthal, Improving the Odds
- Patricia Malone, Urban League of Middle Tennessee
- Lonnell Matthews, Juvenile Court Clerk
- Kenya McGruder, Urban League of Middle Tennessee
- Sam Petschulat, Central Labor Council of Nashville and Middle Tennessee
- Rachel Holly, BIT Nashville
- Donovan Robertson, CCI Group

- Marla Rye, Workforce Essentials
- Dewayne Scott, State of Tennessee
- Kristin Swaffer, Ascension St. Thomas Midtown
- Myra Taylor, MNPS
- Aylsa Vega, Oasis Center
- Makeda Watson, MNPS
- James Weaver, Waller Lansden
- Donna Whitehouse, Nashville State Community College
- Marcus Williams, MNPS Community Achieves
- Ellen Zinkiewicz, Community Volunteer

The Task Force collectively conducted a SWOT analysis looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats present in Nashville's youth employment ecosystem, reviewed national research identifying high impact practices and key elements of successful scaled models, as well as characteristics of youth employment programs in other cities. From this base of common knowledge, the Task Force identified key areas for discernment and created subcommittees to focus on each for the purpose of making targeted recommendations. These subcommittees included Coordination, Administration, and Case Management, High Quality Work Experiences, Public-Private Funding and Metrics, and Skills for Success. As the work progressed, the Task Force identified a fifth area that called for targeted focus and created a subcommittee to examine best practices in workforce strategies for disadvantaged young people, or Bridge Programs.

The larger Task Force also intentionally provided opportunities for young people themselves to provide insight into employment and workforce development from their own perspectives.

Executive Summary

Building on a successful history of partnership and robust, high quality, and holistic programming, the Task Force recommends that the city invest in a shared governance structure that leans into our history of collaboration while creating leadership for further enhancing opportunities for young people in our city. Best led by a new Office of Youth Career Development that would engage board-level leadership composed of volunteer stakeholders and employ high level staff for coordinating and convening existing and new government, non-profit, employer, and family partners. This intentional commitment to creating a system for youth career exploration and alignment for shared coordination, administration and case management that fits the local Nashville context will grow age appropriate work-related activities for the young people of our city through alignment of existing resources both public and private to achieve greater reach and impact.

Utilizing a lens of holistic well-being, the Youth Career Exploration and Alignment system will integrate Positive Youth Development and individual growth practices into coordinated program offerings for Nashville's young people. Led by the Office, the system of stakeholders and providers will focus on linking, supporting, and creating strategies that reflect the overall goal of developing youth to be competent, confident, caring, connected, and contributing citizens, emphasizing a holistic approach to the development of a healthy, happy young person who enjoys life, feels hope and optimism about the future, and possesses the support and skills necessary to successfully navigate the journey to a thriving adulthood.

Nashville's diversity means that the path to a thriving adulthood will not be one-size-fits-all, and will require multiple partners and strategies to create roadmaps to opportunity that create genuine access for all young people. Genuine access is particularly challenging for youth who experience social or academic setbacks or failure during schooling due to learning or other disabilities, family conditions or socio environmental disparities. As a result, disadvantaged youth usually have difficulty seeing a future where they are productive, contributing and successful adults. Understanding this, it is imperative that the pipeline being created from school to the workforce also identifies a safety net that catches students who stray away from that pipeline, altogether, and bridges them back to a position where future success can be achieved. This bridge strategy is where equity is necessary for a youth workforce framework to be successful and inclusive of all youth.

The greater Nashville community is already asking for strategies that elevate the needs of children and youth. The recommendations of this Task Force seek to create infrastructure where that work can live beyond any one Mayoral administration.

1. **Recommendation: Create a Shared Coordination, Administration and Case Management System for Youth Career Exploration and Alignment that Fits Local Context**

2. **Recommendation: Commit to a Focus on Quality that Utilizes a Holistic Well-Being Lens for Young People and Integrates Positive Youth Development and Growth Practices.**

3. **Recommendation: Commit to a Bridge Strategy to Appropriately Support Disadvantaged Youth**

4. **Recommendation: Invest in Data Infrastructure and Build a Culture of Data Driven Decisions**

Findings

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Nashville has a strong and diversified economic base with a wide range of robust and thriving industry sectors including health care, technology, hospitality, manufacturing, logistics, and skilled trades. In addition, the community is home to a deep and diverse post-secondary landscape with high quality training and education options ranging from short-term training programs to nationally-ranked graduate offerings, as well as both public and private institutions. Diverse options also exist to create affordable or low-cost pathways to post-secondary education and skills training including Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect through the Nashville campus of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology and Nashville State Community College, and the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds to support short-term training for those eligible.

Likewise, a variety of opportunities for young adults to engage in structured, entry-level employment such as internships, summer employment, and work-based learning already exist in the community. These opportunities are funded through a variety of existing sources and reach into various populations within the city.   Building on this economic base, the city has a long and robust history of employers partnering with schools and other intermediaries to improve educational and career outcomes for students. For example, there are currently over 800 employers partnering with MNPS' Academies of Nashville through coordination with the local non-profit Pencil. Nashville has an ecosystem of entities who serve in intermediary roles engaging employers, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, neighborhoods, parents, and young people for larger strategic purposes.

Despite the existence of this ecosystem, Nashville struggles with inconsistent execution and coordination of youth programming. In the past five years, investments in citywide summer employment and workforce models for young people have changed structure, administration, and even names with the frequent changes in Mayoral leadership and the local Workforce Board. City-funded strategies for engaging young people are coordinated through different Departments with different leadership. Administrative struggles are compounded by other structural issues including, but not limited to Nashville's geographic size, the gap between the capacity of the programs that currently exist and the number of young people in need of career-readiness and employment support, and the limited resources for physically connecting the neighborhoods where young people are and employers and programs.

Current Youth Employment Potential

Nashville's youth population of our target ages 10-24 is **127,229**[i]. Of that number, the total number of youths ages (16-24) is **82,026**.

In Tennessee, young people can work with limitations regarding tasks and hours beginning at age fourteen. Those restrictions ease at age sixteen, and are eliminated at age eighteen. (Tennessee's Child Labor Laws: https://www.tn.gov/workforce/employees/labor-laws/labor-laws-redirect/child-labor.html)

Davidson County data from Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

Age Range	Population	Source
Ages 10-14	38572	Census
Ages 15-24	88657	Census
Employment		
16-19	38.6%	Census
20-24	72.6%	Census

The Census currently identifies Davidson County's youth population in subsets of ages 10-14 and 15-24, which does not provide a clear link between employment restrictions and workforce engagement. However, it is clear that there are substantially fewer young people in the age group 10-14 than in their slightly older peer group. This "Demographic Cliff" related to a declining birthrate during the Great Recession (2008-2012) has been identified by post-secondary schools as a significant risk to higher education enrollment (Best Colleges 2023). The absence of potential entry level employees is also a risk for area employers both in the long-term and in the short-term.

All youth looking to enter the workforce require some type of preparation before they are ready to enter the workforce with a higher opportunity to succeed.   Some youth, however, have had more experience of trauma and adversity, and will therefore require a higher level of engagement when working on preparation for the workforce. The Task Force has identified disadvantaged youth as those that are justice-involved, English language learners, undocumented, aging out of foster care, physically disabled or mentally disabled.

English language learners – 28.14% of Metro Nashville Public Schools students are characterized as having limited English proficiency.

Scale of justice-involved youth – Metro's Juvenile Court averages 45 youth a day in custody in pre-trial housing. The average length of stay is 14 days. Below is a breakdown of the number of admissions to pre-trial housing per month in 2022.

January	146
February	133

March	129
April	144
May	146
June	108
July	109
August	125
September	177
October	149
November	148
December	129

Scale of youth aging out of foster care – Metro's Juvenile Court provided data for youth aging out of foster care in 2022 below. Disclaimer: this information is reported on working age youth, 15 years old – 19 years old.

Foster Care Data
Neglect and Dependency Youth: Born 2005-2008
Total in Custody 2022: **150**
Entered in 2022: **40**

Juvenile Justice Youth: Born 2004-2008
Total in Custody 2022: **49**
Entered in 2022: **37**

Out of Custody Youth: Born 2004-2008
Total Exited: **160**
Total Entered in 2022 and Exited 2022: **32**

359 total youth born 2004-2008 in custody in 2022

7742 Students with mental and/or physical disabilities in MNPS schools in 5th – 12th grades (roughly ages 10-21) in school year 2022-2023

Current Nashville Programs and Capacity

There are several models of youth career exploration and youth employment currently in Nashville. The first large-scale youth employment program receiving city funding, Opportunity NOW, was built to engage up to 10,000 youth and initiated by the Barry Administration in 2016. Opportunity NOW was administered by the Nashville Career Advancement Center, a division of the mayor's office tasked with workforce development. The initiative provided both a platform for private employers to recruit young workers and directly employed 2100 youth in its highest year (2019). In 2021, Opportunity NOW was moved under Metro Action Commission (MAC) and renamed POWER Youth (PY).

POWER Youth

In 2022, PY engaged 850 youth through its Experience Work program for 14–15-year-olds and Internships for high school youth as well as a STEAM camp for older children of Head Start families. PY also provides year-round employment opportunities for older youth ages 17-24 as the local provider for WIOA Youth funding. MAC is an agency of city government, receiving funding from various sources, including local and Federal government as well as private grants.

PY focuses on coordination, administration of funds, and case management.

MNPS Work-Based Learning

In August of 2021, Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) set out to establish a Work-Based Learning (WBL) program in partnership with the Academies of Nashville, career-focused small learning communities, or Academies, within the District's 12 zoned high schools. WBL allows participating students to earn high school credit while working and earning a wage. To date, 144 students have participated in the program working at fifteen area employers.

MNPS's role in youth employment is a mix of coordination (with employers), direct administration of funds and case management.

NAZA

The Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) is a city-wide coordinating system for out-of-school time programs. NAZA operates under a city department (Library) and provides funding to community agencies for afterschool and summer programs for grades 5-8th (10-14 year olds) through which programs focus on building multiple skills (most of which are future employability skills) and expose youth to career options. NAZA's funding opens 1270 slots in afterschool and 1100 slots in summer programs annually. In addition, NAZA provides technical support, centralized attendance management system, training and evaluation for program quality, a framework for skills development and tools and processes to measure the growth on those skills.

NAZA's main roles are coordination and administration. NAZA does not engage in case management.

Community-Based Organizations

In 2021, the Boys and Girls Club of Middle Tennessee (BGCMT) started industry clubs that run during the school year and summer. Students must be at least 13 to participate in their industry clubs. In the 2022-2023 school year, 245 youth ages 10-14 participated in the programs. Additionally, 86 youth ages 15-18 participate in Industry Clubs and the organization's Junior Staff program.

Other separate non-profits (like Backfield in Motion, Why We Can't Wait, etc.) engage with specific employers to create employment or career exploration opportunities for their beneficiary youth. In addition, POWER Youth and NAZA both utilize service delivery models

that fund community-based organizations to administer summer youth employment and after-school programming.

Community-based organizations largely perform case management and some coordination with employers.

The Village

Nashville also has recently been intentional about building organizational capacity among small, minority-led, grassroots community organizations. In 2021, The Village was formed as a public-private partnership between Metro Nashville Mayor's Office of Community Safety, the Center for Nonprofit Management (CNM), and grassroots community organizations working in the communities they serve.

The network of 150 community-based organizations was designed to grow and scale the capacities of minority-owned/led organizations and those who serve socially vulnerable populations. The Village builds and fosters a community that amplifies the voices and lived experiences of leaders of color. It also fills a gap in professional development and access to capacity-building resources for grassroots nonprofits serving the Nashville community.

Based on research by Sharkey et al., in their 2017 paper and subsequent book *An Uneasy Peace*(2019), the goal of the organizations within the is to have a positive impact on social cohesion, through crime prevention, neighborhood development, substance abuse support, job training, and activities for youth.

There is some overlap between the organizations that comprise The Village and the community-based organizations already identified as providing case management and some coordination with employers.

Summary of current youth employment agency functions by age group:

	10-14	15-18	19-24
Coordination	NAZA BGCMT	MNPS Power Youth	Power Youth
Administration	NAZA BGCMT	MNPS Power Youth	Power Youth
Case Management	BGCMT	MNPS Power Youth	Power Youth

Summary of youth ages 10-24 currently being served:

	10-14	15-18	19-24	
Power Youth			850	**850**
MNPS		200		200
NAZA	2,370			2,370

Benchmark Cities

Both New York City and Chicago have large, well established youth employment programs that operate at scale. New York City employed 100,000 young people in 2022, representing ten percent of its youth population. Chicago employed 20,000 young people during the same period. Both cities fund their programs with a diverse combination of private donations, city, State, and Federal funds with the Mayors themselves participating as needed in fund-raising and the cost per participant approximately $2400-$2500. Both cities' programs utilize a collective impact strategy and operate in conjunction with intermediary organizations whose jobs are to coordinate employment placement, job readiness skill building, and other wrap-around supports in targeted communities and populations. The city program hub convenes stakeholders, raises and coordinates funds, sets quality standards, provides wrap-around and auxiliary services like financial literacy and trauma-informed emotional supports where called for, and creates and implements citywide marketing for the programs.

Similar to New York and Chicago, Boston offers central coordination of a distributed network of providers. In Boston, coordination services are divided between the city and a non-profit intermediary the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC). The PIC acts as a broker for private sector employment, connecting young people with jobs through private employers who pay the participants directly. The Boston PIC works with young people year-round to develop job-readiness skills through a partnership with the Boston Public Schools.

City	Population in 2021	Total Youth Employment Budget	Number of Youth Employed in 2022
New York City	8,468,000	$250,000,000	100,000
Chicago	2,697,000	$48,000,000	20,000
Denver	711,463	$2,000,000	200
Boston PIC (year round youth readiness and employment)	654,776	$3,563,000	3000
St. Louis	293,310	$4,200,000	500
Newark	307,220	4,500,000	1800

Review of Evidence/Literature

As evidenced by the structural decisions of cities that have successfully implemented robust, cost-effective, youth employment programs at scale, the most effective approaches to youth employment create strategic frameworks that lean into the strengths of multiple providers and stakeholders. Following the Federal Government's last large investment in summer youth employment in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009, the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) reviewed successful, large-scale youth employment initiatives in a variety of cities that were able to deliver high quality employment services to a significant percentage of the young people in their communities. Unlike a collection of independently operating employment programs, CLASP's analysis recognized that "A comprehensive youth employment delivery system pulls together the resources and funding streams – public, private, and foundation – in a strategic way and draws on the strength of public systems and community providers to create supported pathways that provide youth with the education, skills, and access to good jobs and successful careers." (CLASP 2010)

Similar to CLASP, the Wallace Foundation in their 2015 publication, "Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered about Building Afterschool Systems" reviewing city-based systems of after school programming for middle schools (including Nashville's NAZA) identified four building blocks necessary for the consistent delivery, high quality, and large scale that are hallmarks of systems of service. These practices are strong leadership from major players that goes beyond a single Mayoral Administration or school superintendent, coordination that fits the local context, effective use of data, and a comprehensive approach to quality (Wallace 2015). These building blocks in some ways mirror the structures identified by CLASP as vital for delivering high quality employment services at scale, which include the following:

- **A strong convening entity** to amass stakeholders, shape a community vision, maximize resource sharing, and hold systems accountable to that vision
- **An effective administrative agent** to work in partnership with the education system, other youth systems and community providers to assure that the vision of the convening entity is effectively implemented
- **A well-trained case management arm** which is responsible for engaging youth by identifying and meeting needs in the areas of education, employment, basic skills, and wrap-around supports
- **Strong partnerships across the systems that serve youth,** such as education, juvenile justice and child welfare systems to share resources and provide additional support to very vulnerable youth
- **High quality work experience and career exposure components** which provide hands-on exposure to the work place, instill appropriate work behaviors and ethics, and allow for exploration of various occupations and career options
  (CLASP 2010)

These two sets of guiding principles, along with lessons learned from other communities, and awareness of the strengths and opportunities present in the Nashville community provide a road map to expand workforce development, career exploration options and enhance access to high quality jobs for young people locally.

Recommendation: Create a Shared Coordination, Administration and Case Management System for Youth Career Exploration and Alignment that Fits Local Context

A citywide system for youth career exploration and alignment requires a governance model that allows for the convening of community stakeholders and cultivation of strong leadership across those stakeholder groups as well as relies on existing community assets. The system must also clarify, and where necessary create, administrative infrastructure that supports implementation of the vision of the community and its leadership. To that end, the Task Force recommends that the city invest in a shared governance structure that leans into our history of collaboration while creating leadership for further enhancing opportunities for young people in our city. Best led by a new Office of Youth Career Development that would have both board-level leadership composed of volunteer stakeholders and high level staff for coordinating and convening existing and new government, non-profit, employer, and family partners. The Office becomes a representative co-leadership executive body, creating opportunities for joint decision-making.

Because Nashville has a rich tapestry of youth serving programs and initiatives, and a wealth of assets that could be aligned to create large scale youth career opportunities for its youth, the Committee recommends that the roles of convening and administration be shared. Multiple entities working together in intentional ways could create a shared community vision,

coordinate fundraising and contracting, as well as provide high level administration, (like funds disbursement, compliance and results oversight, etc.), while delegating more day-to-day administration and case management to community partner organizations. Sharing the necessary roles also creates more equity in accessing the opportunities as niche providers and voices would not be excluded.

The new Office will operationalize the intentional coordination that the Committee recommends. The Office's task and mission will be youth career exploration and alignment, allowing for elements of administration and case management to remain with contracted and aligned community and government providers. This entity should be empowered to use a combination of tools to maximize engagement of existing programming, providers, employers, and other stakeholders throughout the city. These tools should include but not be limited to collective impact strategies, contracting and distribution of funds raised.

In the shared governance structure, the committee recommends the following distribution of roles and responsibilities with delegating one or few responsibilities to single organizations based on their existing expertise and assets to minimize the governance costs.

Office of Youth Career Development:

1. Allocate city funds for programs and administration of those funds
2. Raise major corporate funds
3. Provide high level funds administration through community organizations or metro department contracts/MOUs
4. Set and monitor performance indicators across partners
5. Decide on budget sustainability mechanisms
6. Co-chair a steering committee/board (decision making)-contracted to one of the partners for actual facilitation
7. Provide high level outreach, advocacy and media involvement on the topic including communication and promotion
8. Provide high level employer engagement and commitment management
9. Provide high-level centralized coordination of youth employment opportunities and resources

Contracted partners (metro affiliated or non-profit):

1. Administer funds from government.
2. Raise additional funds as necessary to support youth employment.
3. Recruit, place and pay youth.
4. Provide training and mentorship for youth.
5. Hire and supervise staff as per the caseload.
6. Provide data collection and analysis tools, platforms and services (including attendance, surveys on youth skills and experiences, and other performance data (outcomes and outputs)

7. Provide trainings for adults on youth skills.
8. Manage employer engagement and relationships.
9. Operate a centralized youth hiring system (online) through an existing platform.
10. Facilitate/co-lead/participate in steering committee/board as invited.
11. Manage regular communication on schedules and other admin and case issues with youth and employers.

Business partners/employers:

1. Commit to opening certain # of youth employment opportunities for the school year and summer.
2. Directly pay and train older youth of ages 18 and up for industry-available long-term positions
3. Partner with the government on paid work experience for youth experiencing barriers.
4. Coordinate opportunities and schedules with government.
5. Attend/be represented in committees/boards as invited.
6. Provide feedback/debrief about the employment experience with youth.
7. Donate funds through Community Foundation for employee slots filled through government funding.

The Committee has also identified the following critical elements for an effective coordinating system to best ensure impact and scale:

1. Highly experienced leadership (both at the board and executive level) and adequate staffing to develop and implement long-term successful strategies.
2. A mandate to employ a collective impact approach that aligns existing assets and resources to achieve greater reach and impact.
3. Flexible infrastructure that can create or connect structures for fund-raising, contracting, and hiring that allow the system as a whole to remain nimble.
4. Sustainable public/local funding and private support of the system irrespective of political/administration changes.
5. Data and metrics- shared outcomes, tools, data collection and data-sharing
6. Organizational capacity, systems, policies and procedures to ensure proper coordination and administration of an agency for youth employment at a scale.
7. Partnership building space with employers, non-profits, other government agencies, and funders.
8. Infrastructure to directly fundraise locally, statewide, and federally.
9. Commitment to prioritize youth employment, especially while strategizing staffing and fundraising.
10. Ability and willingness to creatively use existing city assets in achieving systemic goals.

Recommendation: Commit to a Focus on Quality that Utilizes a Holistic Well-Being Lens for Young People and Integrates Positive Youth Development and Growth Practices.

Per the University of New Hampshire, "Well-being is a state of thriving influenced by both an individual's wellness and the communities to which they belong." (https://www.unh.edu/health/wellbeing-wheel) This holistic lens that seeks to assess the emotional, spiritual, social, physical, occupational, intellectual, financial, and environmental health of the individual creates focus on the value of a holistic view of high quality experiences and relationships in the lives of young people. The approach also recognizes that youth development takes place across the ecological spectrum, of the individual, the family, organizational, and societal contexts in which young people live. To become successful, work-ready adults, young people may need skills, supports, and relationships in a variety of different areas that may or may not be obviously connected to simply getting a job.
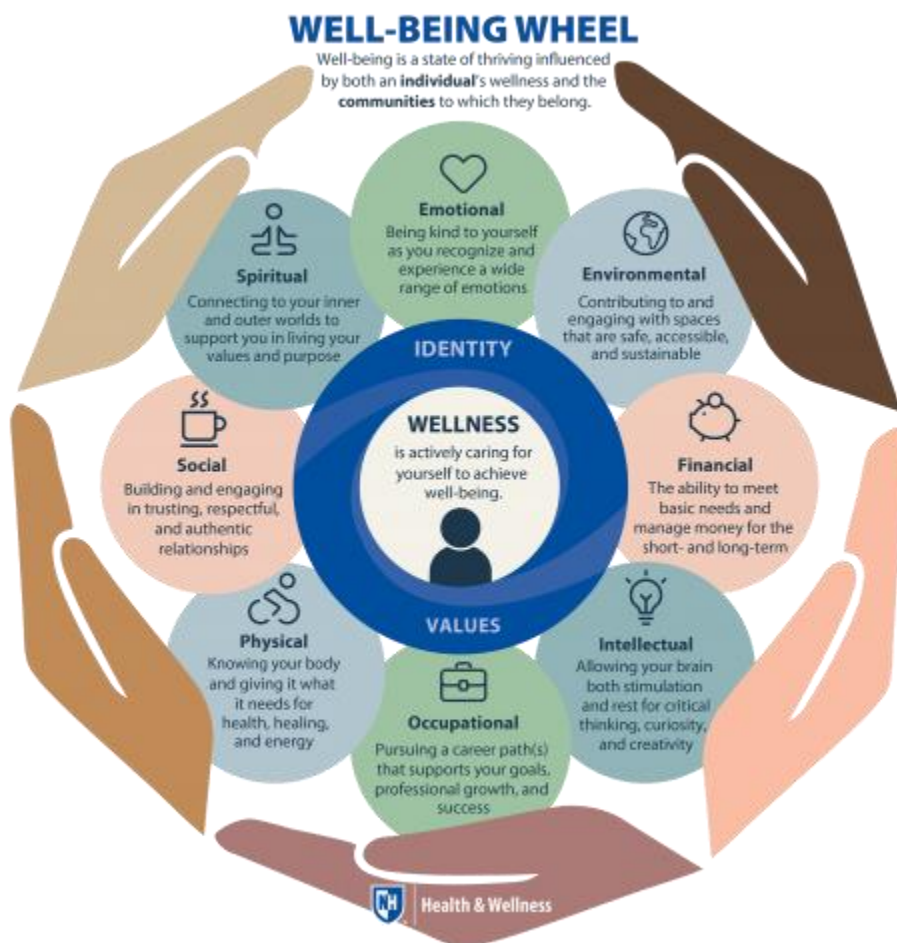
The National Wellness Institute says, "focusing on wellness in our lives builds resilience and enables us to thrive amidst life's challenges." (https://nationalwellness.org/resources/six-dimensions-of-wellness/). The transition from adolescence to adulthood is the most complex

and layered life-cycle process. It involves setting goals and making numerous decisions that may enhance an individual's opportunities and options, and ultimately their trajectory in life. Integrating awareness of and services and supports to build comprehensive wellness throughout the youth career exploration and alignment system best prepares young people for that complex transition.

As part of implementing a comprehensive system, a Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach examines youth development from a strengths-based, rather than a deficit-based, lens. This strength-based focus begins with the premise that all youth have strengths and assets upon which to capitalize and enhance through supports, opportunities, programs, and services. In Nashville, the highest quality youth development programs have committed to including five key elements:

1. Promoting a sense of physical, social, and emotional safety
2. Encouraging relationship building
3. Fostering meaningful youth participation
4. Providing opportunities to build purpose
5. Engaging youth in learning experiences that build valuable and healthy life skills

Positive Youth Development recognizes young people as having agency within their own lives and seeks to engage them as partners in the kinds of opportunities, services, and supports offered to them as a group as well as to them as individuals.   This approach is highly adaptable because it does not mandate a particular program or curriculum, but rather a set of practices designed to achieve one or more positive outcomes.

Comprehensive wellness and an ecological perspective may require that service providers be empowered to create a partnership with parents and families to best serve their children. This more intense level service may not be necessary for all of the young people touched by the Career Exploration and Alignment System, but where necessary, the system should support evidence-based practices for engaging the whole family such as home visits. Not only does a home visit allow a youth service provider to better understand a youth's home life and how it impacts their performance, but it has the potential to bridge any gaps in a culture that may be hindering a youth.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/topic/home-visiting) studies have found home visiting impacts on child development, school readiness, family economic self-sufficiency, maternal health, reductions in child maltreatment, child health, positive parenting practices, juvenile delinquency, family violence, and crime.

Benefits include:
- Forming close partnerships between parents and youth service providers.

- Sets the tone for positive communication throughout engagement.
- Reassures the youth that the service provider cares about his/her welfare.
- Helps to bridge any cultural differences that may hinder development.

Several local youth service providers already utilize home visiting as part of their overall theories of change. Why We Can't Wait is a great example of a youth service provider that utilizes home visits regularly in their work and should be a resource for sharing this best practice with others engaging disadvantaged youth. Part of the work of the coordinating system should include developing indicators for when more intensive services are required, identifying best practices for implementation, and strengthening provider partnerships with juvenile court, and other primary agencies that work with disadvantaged youth.

Just as young people need a comprehensive approach to well-being to best equip them with the resilience needed to navigate the transition from child to employed young adult, individuals need skills and competencies in order to flourish. Nashville's Vision for Holistic Youth Development developed in a community partnership of over 25 organizations (led by NAZA and Vanderbilt) has identified individual and community growth practices that children and youth need to thrive in their ecosystems. These practices were identified through a Nashville-wide community process that included public, private, and university stakeholders along with young people and their caregivers in 2019. These individual practices have also been integrated into NAZA procurements and professional development opportunities for service providers throughout the Nashville community since their development. The process for development and the consistency of roll-out means that not only are these skills and competencies evidence based, locally vetted, and widely distributed, they also represent a building block for a common vocabulary and definition of necessary building blocks for young people in Nashville. Importantly, many of these practices are logically connected to the experience of entry-level employment. Practices such as Curiosity, Learning, and Growth Mindset, Communication, and Life Skills such as financial literacy are clearly practices that employed young people may be developing as part of finding and keeping a job as well as receiving a paycheck. These and other practices outlined in the holistic vision also overlap with areas of skill-building already integrated into many of Nashville's existing youth career exploration and employment programs such as Power Youth and Work-based Learning.

A consistent theme in an ecological view of wellness, Positive Youth Development, and Nashville's vision for holistic youth development is the engagement of the community as a whole in the goal of developing youth to be competent, confident, caring, connected, and contributing citizens. For the purposes of the Youth Career Exploration and Alignment System, that community may manifest itself as family members, teachers, employers, youth workers, or simply engaged adults in the community who are committed to helping young people navigate the journey to a thriving adulthood. Therefore, the System must create or enhance systems for building a common understanding of PYD, Wellness, and Holistic Youth Development among all stakeholders to assure consistency of implementation.

NASHVILLE'S —VISION—
FOR HOLISTIC YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

INDIVIDUAL
GROWTH PRACTICES

Individuals need skills & competencies to thrive in education, work & life. These practices are pathways to continuous improvement throughout our lives from childhood to adulthood. We categorize these practices in three ways: **Cultivate**, **Connect** & **Grow**.

CULTIVATE
MINDSETS

Identity and Self-Awareness
Learning to appreciate yourself, allowing all of the parts of your identity to co-exist, and gaining awareness of your culture, values, beliefs, and abilities.

Curiosity, Learning, and Growth Mindset
Exploring what makes you curious to develop your interest in learning and your belief that personal growth is a priority.

CONNECT
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Love, Self-Worth, and Confidence
Feeling like you deserve to be treated with dignity and respect by deeply knowing and acknowledging your own inherent value and abilities.

Emotional Intelligence and Self-Management
Reflecting upon your feelings, desires, thoughts, and behaviors, and acting on that reflection to improve cognition and interactions.

Empathy and Compassion
Considering the perspective of and feeling the emotions of another person, and desiring to care for and support others based on that knowledge.

Communication
Understanding others and being understood, while knowing that communication is inherently contextual and interpersonal.

GROW
COGNITIVE SKILLS

Literacy
Consuming, interpreting, and giving meaning to what you see and hear - including reading and comprehension skills, writing, and language skills.

Critical Thinking
Processing, analyzing, and making judgments about an issue.

Problem Solving and Resourcefulness
Identifying and finding solutions to difficult or complex issues, as well as utilizing available resources.

Visioning, Goal Setting, and Planning
Envisioning a future and developing the steps needed to achieve it.

Initiative and Action
Taking action and following through on plans to achieve a goal - including managing and adapting to setbacks and challenges, as well as embracing opportunities.

Life Skills
Practicing skills that may seem unaffiliated with academic or career success, but are consequential to personal success and stability - including home economics skills, skills related to maintaining a healthy body, and financial literacy.

The transition into employment is particularly challenging for youth who experience social or academic setbacks or failure during schooling due to learning or other disabilities, family conditions or socio environmental disparities. As a result, these "disadvantaged youth" usually have difficulty seeing a future where they are productive, contributing and successful adults.

Understanding this, it is imperative that while building a framework to create a pipeline for youth to transition from school to the workforce, the system identify a safety net that catches students who stray away from the pipeline, altogether, and bridges them back to a position where future success can be achieved. This bridge strategy is where equity is necessary for a youth workforce framework to be successful and inclusive of all youth. Just as cracks in pavement are usually the result of underlying structural issues, cracks in society are the result of underlying institutional issues embedded in our communities. Nashville can no longer allow disadvantaged youth to fall through these cracks. The bridge strategy should help fill in gaps, so that disadvantaged youth have the resources and supports to overcome challenges that they face.

Disadvantaged youth (DY) experience challenges that, in most cases, derive from learning disabilities, attention deficit, and emotional-behavioral disabilities. Furthermore, DY often lack family, social support, and role models and have little understanding of the process of transition to the world of work. Consequently, these students become transparent to the world around them and easily drop out of school. Eventually, they are pushed to the margins of society with long-term consequences in their adult lives. This population is assumed to not have future aspirations or plans. They are often boxed in and stereotyped, to the point where their only hope is that they possess the resilience required to persevere through all the hurdles that society places in front of them.

These youth exhibit unmotivated or disengaged behavior, truancy, inappropriate classroom behavior, and lack of basic vocational qualifications. They are regularly absent from school report having low academic achievements, low quality of life, social-anxiety problems, and in some cases involvement in criminal behavior. In many cases, disadvantaged youth can be traced back to seven identifiers: physical health and development, emotional health and well-being, social connectedness and participation, level of family support, education and skill acquisition, protection from others, and avoidance of risky behaviors.

All youth looking to enter the workforce require some type of preparation before they are ready to enter the workforce with a higher opportunity to succeed. Referencing the Successful Pathways to Employment for youth at Risk (SUPER) program model, used in Israel, the following are skills that should be required to teach to disadvantaged youth looking to enter the workforce:

1. **Knowledge** and understanding of concepts related to the working world and employability. The YAR participants acquire knowledge through lessons, meetings with employees, workplace visits, and especially through ongoing work experiences.
2. **Self- and occupational identity**, which we conceptualized as participants developing a clear perspective of their current abilities, strengths, and desired future identities and learning skills related to self-advocacy and self-determination necessary to strengthen and act out such identities.
3. **Future orientation**, which refers to the participants developing aspirations and addressing fears regarding adult lives through exposure to career planning, including higher education, professional education, and graduate studies.
4. **Work experience**, which includes students' participation in school and out-of-school duties, their development of performance skills and adherence to behavioral norms at school, and their experience of paid work in the labor market accompanied by ongoing feedback.

The more trauma and adversity youth may face, the more they will require a higher level of engagement when working on preparation for the workforce. So before soft and hard skills are delivered to disadvantaged youth with higher risk levels, social emotional learning must be delivered through a lens of well-being and trauma-informed care.

Recommendation: Invest in Data Infrastructure and Build a Culture of Data Driven Decisions

The Youth Career Exploration and Alignment System must be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the data stories relevant to Nashville's youth people and employment landscape. Therefore, the system must include infrastructure for collecting and analyzing the data points relevant to the population, the labor market, and other functions of community development tied to the success of young people.

In addition, the coordinating system should develop metrics that tie to both desired outcomes and benchmarks. By measuring specific outcomes in these categories, the committee can assess the success of the program and make necessary adjustments to ensure that the initiative is achieving its goals. Below are some examples of metrics:

Education:
- High school graduation rates
- Post-secondary enrollment rates
- Academic achievement, such as grade point average and test scores
- Student attendance rates
- Completion rates of job training programs

Employment:
- Employment rates

- Wage growth
- Job retention rates
- Number of job placements
- Completion rates of job training programs

Safety:
- Reduction in violent crime rates
- Reduction in juvenile delinquency rates
- Reduction in recidivism rates for youth in the justice system
- Perception of safety in the community
- Participation in extracurricular activities

Community Engagement:
- Youth involvement in community service activities
- Participation in civic engagement opportunities
- Perception of community involvement and engagement
- Volunteer rates among youth
- Youth involvement in developmental and enrichment activities

Measuring community economic development, community well-being, and hiring partner organization performance outcomes are critical components of evaluating the effectiveness of the Youth Career Exploration and Alignment system. Additional metrics that could be considered for these areas:

Community Economic Development:
- Job creation: Track the number of jobs created, including full-time, part-time, and temporary positions.
- Business development: Measure the number of new businesses created or expanded in the community.
- Economic impact: Assess the economic impact of the program on the local community, including changes in property values, tax revenue, and business activity.

Community Well-being:
- Mental health: Track changes in mental health outcomes, such as reductions in depression, anxiety, and stress.
- Physical health: Measure changes in physical health outcomes, such as reductions in chronic diseases or improvements in overall health and fitness.
- Civic engagement: Evaluate the impact of the program on civic engagement, including changes in voter turnout, community involvement, and volunteerism.

Hiring Partner Organization Performance Outcomes:
- Employee retention: Track the retention rates of youth placed with hiring partner organizations.
- Job performance: Measure the performance of youth in their jobs, including ratings from supervisors and feedback from coworkers.
- Employee advancement: Evaluate the number of youths who are promoted within their organization or who move on to higher-paying jobs in their field.

By measuring these additional metrics, the System can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact on the community and its success in achieving its goals through coordinated efforts. These metrics can also help to identify areas for improvement and guide future program development. These metrics can also provide valuable feedback to stakeholders and demonstrate the positive impact of the program on the lives of youth in the community.

An integrated and robust focus on continuous program improvement, data stories, and individual and community performance metrics may facilitate access to additional resources. In addition to traditional funding sources, social impact investments offer a promising avenue for funding youth development programs. Social impact investments aim to create positive social outcomes while also generating a financial return for investors. Examples of social impact investment vehicles that could potentially fund a comprehensive system of youth career exploration and alignment include:

- Pay-for-Success Contracts: These contracts are agreements between governments, social service providers, and investors, in which investors provide upfront funding for social programs. If the program meets predetermined outcomes, the government repays the investor, often with a financial return.

- Career Bonds: Career bonds are a type of impact investment that provide funding for education or job training for youth. Investors purchase the bonds, which provide a return based on the earnings of the bond recipient once they enter the workforce.

- Social Impact Bonds: Similar to pay-for-success contracts, social impact bonds are financial agreements between governments, service providers, and investors. The investor provides upfront funding for a social program, and if the program meets predetermined outcomes, the government repays the investor with a financial return.

- Mission-Related Investments (MRIs): MRIs are investments made by foundations or other charitable organizations that align with their mission and values. These investments can be made in for-profit or non-profit organizations and can be used to fund youth development programs.

- Program-Related Investments (PRIs): PRIs are investments made by foundations or other charitable organizations to support social programs or initiatives. These investments are intended to be used for charitable purposes and can be used to fund youth development programs.

- Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs): DAFs are charitable giving accounts that allow individuals to donate money to a public charity and receive an immediate tax benefit. The funds can then be distributed to various charitable organizations, including youth development programs.

Only with a comprehensive commitment to creating a data-driven culture, does it truly become possible to explore all available funding options and create a diversified funding strategy to ensure the sustainability of the system that seeks to be transformative for Nashville's young people.

Key Readings

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Sharkey, P., Torrats-Espinosa, G., & Takyar, D. (2017). Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime. *American Sociological Review*, 82(6), 1214–1240. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122417736289

SWOT (Source: ESG Heather Justice, Director Career Readiness)

Strengths (Nashville)

- **Strong diversified industries** in healthcare, technology, hospitality, manufacturing, trades provide very diverse job-related training.
- **Deep and diverse educational institutions**. There are xX Universities with TCAT and Nashville State Community colleges that provide educational and skill training for most careers.
- **Public educational institutions provide low-cost options** for entry into career pathways. Tennessee provides free and low cost education at state universities with strong diverse options at Nashville State Community College and TCAT
- **Paid Internships** are accessible to students that would face financial barriers to participation. Utilization of WIOA funding made it possible for the district to reimburse employers for hiring students.
- **Strong long-standing relationships with employer partners** and coordinating partners. For example, there are over 800 work-based partners with the Academies of Nashville through Pencil with the opportunity for expansion.
- **Good intermediary partners.** NAZA, Power Youth, Youth Justice and MNPS have networks of non-profits
- **Current summer programing** exists with NAZA, Power You and MNPS.

Weaknesses

- **Inconsistent execution and coordination of youth programming**. Summer employment and workforce models have changed several times in the past 5 years through 4 administrations. NAZA for middle school managed out of the Libraries and Power Youth managed out of the Metro Action Commission for high schools are coordinated from different departments, MNPS coordinates XXX
- A large geographic area dispersed outside job and career locations for youth
- Limited transportation with no mass transit.
- Community business deserts.

Opportunities

- **Create processes to support justice-involved students so they can enter and complete paid work-based learning experiences in their field of interest.** A toolkit from the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) NYEC-Youth-with-Justice-Involvement-Toolkit.pdf advises institutions and local areas on how they can seek WIOA waivers to support justice-involved youth, including securing funding to increase reimbursements for employers providing on- the job training opportunities to justice-involved youth.

- Consider eliminating GPA, attendance and behavioral eligibility for MNPS requirements that limit students access to work-based learning. Paid work-based learning experience in their field of interest.
- Create processes to support undocumented students so they can enter and complete paid work-based learning. Many employers require interns to have work authorization in the US and to clear a background check. This can provide a significant barrier to participate in work-based learning and the labor market. The Denver Public Schools LAUNCH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM   Launch Internship | College and Career Ready (dpsk12.org) is an example of a program that supports undocumented students. The program compensates students through fellowship grants of up $1,300 for eligible students.

Threats

- Qualified workforce shortfalls can impact economic growth.
- Increasing gaps in opportunities and wealth for those in economically disadvantaged youth
- Increased incarceration rates for youth.

Summary of potential organizations meaningfully involved in coordination and administration of this work should include and not be limited to:

MNPS/MNPS STEAM Initiative with the following assets:
- Academies model
- WBL model, including in extended learning

Metro Action/ Power Youth with the following assets:
- Experience in youth employment administration and case management
- Youth employment public portal
- Payroll system
- Metrics/tools

NAZA with the following assets:
- Nashville's Vision for Holistic Youth Development/ Skills for success framework
- Salesforce centralized partner and attendance management system
- Focus on younger youth (10-14) to expose them to careers
- Capacity Building/trainings on Holistic Youth Development

Alignment Nashville with the following assets:
- Collective impact
- Facilitation of a committees and a community dialogue

Chamber of Commerce with the following assets:
- Regional workforce projection numbers
- Relationships with employers/businesses

PENCIL with the following assets:
- Salesforce database of business partner engagements and contacts

Junior Achievement with the following assets:
- Unique practical experiences
- Job role play curriculum and space (younger youth)
- Financial literacy curriculum and space (older youth)

Other organizations not listed here but having relevant expertise and assets.