

The Opportunity Youth Forum: Seizing the Moment to Advance a Movement

Snapshot: 2020 Aspen Forum for Community Solutions Opportunity Youth Forum

ABOUT THE OYF NETWORK

The OYF network is home to

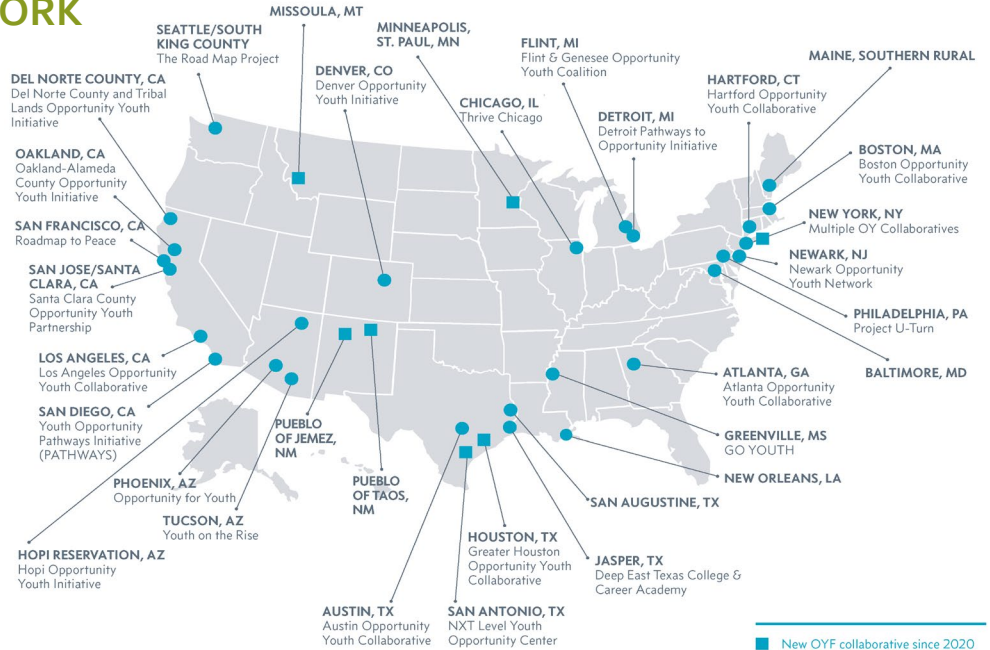
5.9 million

16 to 24-year-old youth

657,000 (11%) are opportunity youth, who are not in school and not working. Among OY:

- **24%** are disconnected from high school
- **67%** are disconnected from postsecondary education
- **9%** are disconnected from the workforce

Based on 2019 ACS data



■ New OYF collaborative since 2020

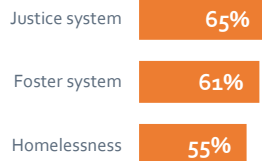
COLLABORATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

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



AREAS OF FOCUS

Collaboratives prioritized youth involved in or experiencing:



SIZE

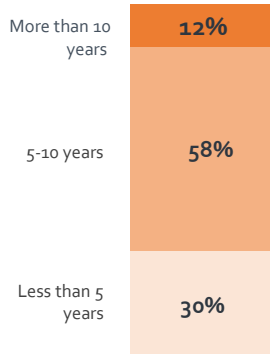
Most common partner: **Community Based Organizations**

Least common partner: **Government and higher education**

Network median: 19 partners
Range: 6-100 partners



TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

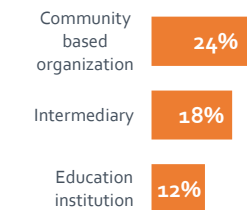


BACKBONE CHARACTERISTICS

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



TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS



Other organizations include:

- Workforce investment board
- Community foundation or funder
- Tribal agency
- Cross-organizational partnership



BUDGET

BACKBONE BUDGET

Network median: \$2.7M
Range: \$65,000 to \$125M

BUDGET DEDICATED TO OY

Network median: \$350,000
Range: \$0 to \$5.8M



STAFF

BACKBONE STAFFING

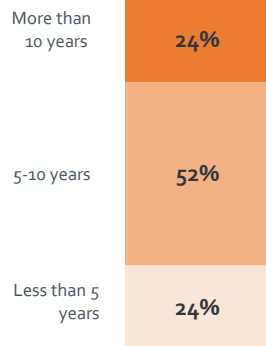
Network median: 21 FTEs
Range: 2 to 12,000 FTEs

STAFFING DEDICATED TO OY

Network median: 3 FTEs
Range: 1 to 10 FTEs



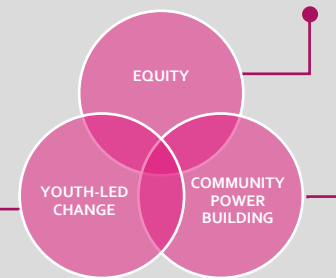
TIME FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH



CORE VALUES

Equity, youth-led change, and community power building are foundational to OYF. Collaboratives advanced in equity from 2019 to 2020, building on the national racial justice movement, while pandemic restrictions limited direct engagement – making youth-led change and community power building more challenging.

All collaboratives incorporated explicit acknowledgement of racial equity or other community-specific disparities in planning.



81% of collaboratives reported that their vision for opportunity youth work built the power of communities most impacted by the systems they sought to change.

Healing-centered organizing is an important component of youth-led change for OYF.

Most common healing-centered strategies:

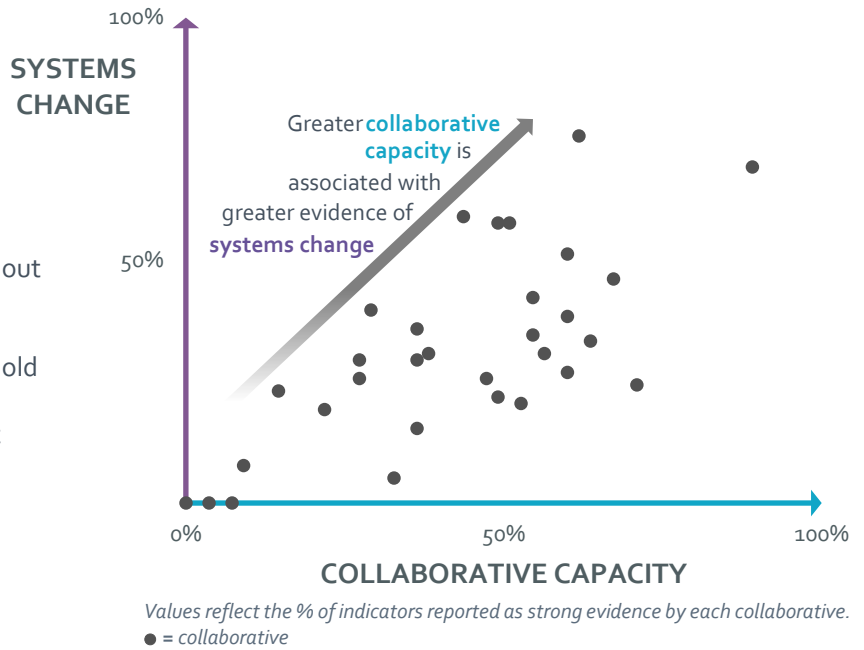
- **68%** of collaboratives provided training in youth organizing, advocacy, social justice or critical awareness
- **58%** of collaboratives regularly incorporated celebration and positive acknowledgement

ORGANIZING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

The 2020 evaluation examined two dimensions of communities in the OYF network:

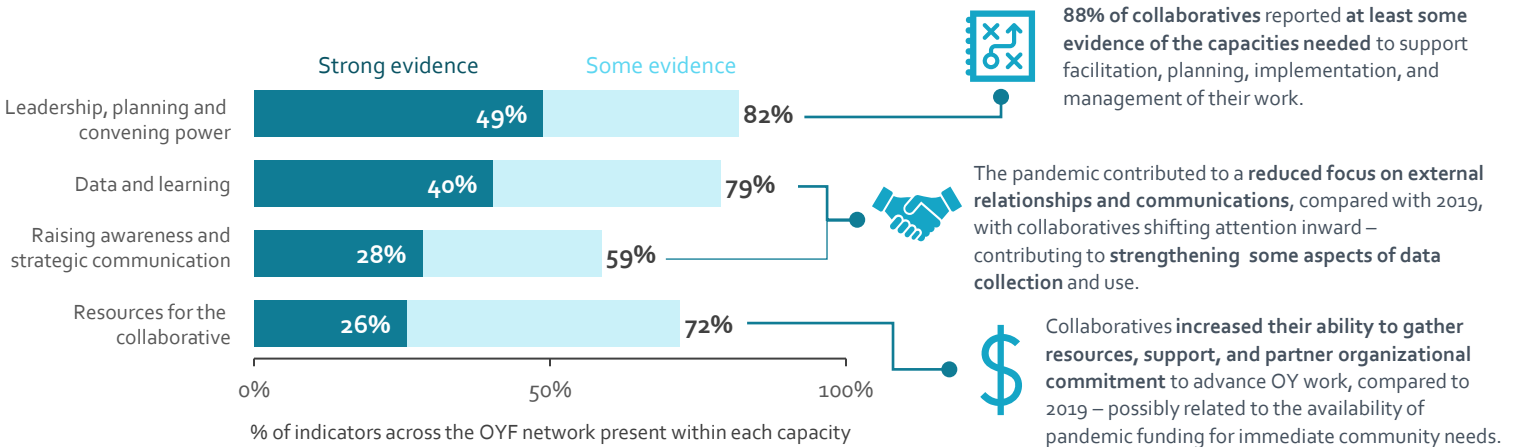
- 1) **Collaborative capacity:** the infrastructure and processes necessary for the collaborative to carry out its opportunity youth agenda
- 2) **Systems changes:** "shifts to the conditions that hold a problem in place"—in this case, disconnected pathways and inequitable conditions that prevent young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

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



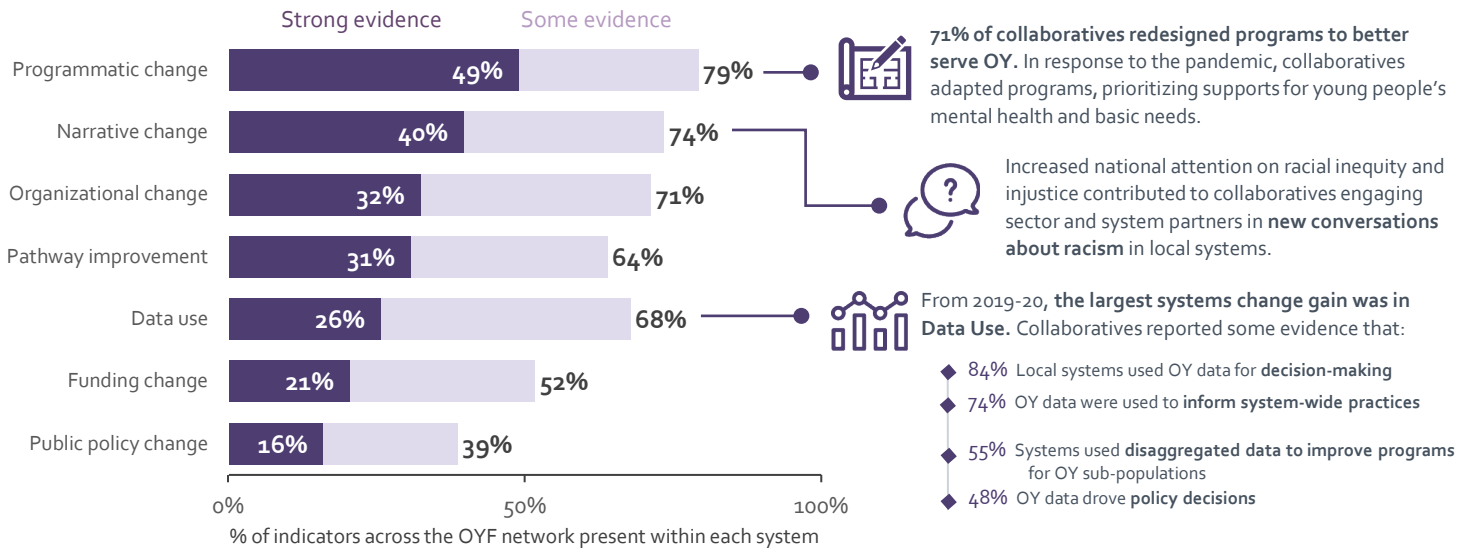
COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY

Remained strong in convening diverse members and promising in data use, with shifts in focus from external communication to internal capacity work, when comparing 2019 and 2020.



SYSTEMS CHANGES

Remained the most advanced in programmatic changes on behalf of opportunity youth, with an increased focus on narrative change and data use, when comparing 2019 and 2020.



Methods. Findings come from the 2020 OYF Self-Assessment. Thirty-three collaboratives answered questions about their collaborative capacity and systems changes. The Assessment included indicators grouped into four types of capacities and seven types of systems changes, assessed on a four-point scale.

For more information about the OYF network: <https://www.aspencommunitysolutions.org/opportunity-youth-forum/>