

ACTION ROUNDTABLES: KEY TAKEAWAYS

2020



THE YES PROJECT
YOUNG. EMPLOYED. SUCCESSFUL.



INTRODUCTION & PROJECT OVERVIEW

The YES (Young, Employed, Successful) Project is a national campaign launched by America's Promise Alliance. The YES Project aims to support and grow our youth workforce so that every young person seeking a job can find a job. In its inaugural year, the YES Project collaborated with the Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions to identify and award four \$20,000 impact grants to diverse communities: Ancestral Lands Hopi (Hopi, AZ), Thrive Chicago (Chicago, IL), Capital Workforce Partners (Hartford, CT), and Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative (Los Angeles, CA). Using these grants, the communities hosted Action Roundtables with the goal of identifying and committing to next steps to improve employment outcomes for their young people. From this series of Action Roundtables, the YES Project pinpointed several key takeaways that enhance collective understanding about what it takes for communities to work together to connect young people to employment opportunities. These lessons will inform the YES Project's ongoing work, including its second series of Action Roundtables with new grantees.



Backbone organizations play a vital role in bringing together diverse stakeholders and serving as accountability catalysts for the broader community. Throughout the Action

Roundtables, the essential role that these grantees play in tearing down bureaucratic barriers to inspire action was evident. They all also serve as a form of accountability, holding policymakers to their promises and ensuring key players are working together. For example, the **Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative (LAOYC)** brought together cross-sector stakeholders, including those working in K-12, postsecondary, and workforce development, across a major metropolitan area for its roundtable. LAOYC works with 80 school districts, seven workforce development boards, and more than 30 postsecondary education institutions to promote strategies to increase success in youth employment through fostering connections, aligning policies, and promoting engagement. The Action Roundtable gathering was leveraged to advance the LA County Operational Agreement designed to support foster and transition age youth into employment opportunities.



To improve youth employment, we must listen to young people: An essential lesson from this work is that youth voice is central to ensuring that services and supports are created with their needs in mind. It's critical

that all communities find ways to partner with young people in improving pipelines to employment. **Thrive Chicago** demonstrated they value youth voice by following up with action when requests from young people for more job shadowing opportunities arose. Thrive Chicago then connected with employers to create day-in-the-life opportunities for young people to understand an array of career possibilities.



Key decision-makers need to be at the table to drive action. All four grantees have invested significant energy in establishing relationships with key players like local government officials

and hiring managers who make direct decisions that impact young people. Despite their best efforts, calendars and packed schedules proved to be obstacles to overcome as a number of key decision-makers were often missing during

the roundtables. In **Hopi**, for example, there are very few employment opportunities available for young people near the reservation, and community members expressed frustration with insufficient representation from tribal leaders in informing a collective strategy. While the gathering reflected meaningful conversation and substantive commitments by attendees, strengthening ties with tribal leaders remains a priority.



Relationship cultivation is key to driving action. Over the course of five months, the

Action Roundtable grantees identified and cultivated relationships with local stakeholders to directly advance youth employment efforts. For instance, **Capital Workforce Partners** secured Rep. Toni Walker (D-New Haven), House chair of the legislature's Appropriations Committee, to co-sponsor its event. Rep. Walker summed up the objectives of the roundtable well when she said, "My hope is that we can have a coalition that will build a vibrant and inclusive economy so there will be a job available for every young person who wants to work and be a productive member of our society." In addition to local stakeholders, Capital Workforce Partners applied a regional lens by convening organizations across the northeast region—Boston, Hartford, New York, and Philadelphia—to promote best practices and strategies that allow for successful programming.

These takeaways illustrate robust efforts across the country aimed at every young person being **ready, connected, and supported to navigate employment**. Visit AmericasPromise.org/yes to learn more and on how to help young people access career opportunities by expanding their network, giving advice on the job search and interview process, and providing support before, during, and after employment.



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