

# POSITIVE DISRUPTION

The Promise of the Opportunity Reboot Model

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## Corporation for National and Community Service Social Innovation Fund

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SIF was a program that received funding from 2010 to 2016 from the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that engages millions of Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the nation's volunteer and service efforts. Using public and private resources to find and grow community-based nonprofits with evidence of results, SIF intermediaries received funding to award subgrants that focus on overcoming challenges in economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. Although CNCS made its last SIF intermediary awards in fiscal year 2016, SIF intermediaries will continue to administer their subgrant programs until their federal funding is exhausted.

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Youthprise was founded as a nonprofit philanthropic intermediary in 2010 by the McKnight Foundation. Youthprise's mission is to increase equity with and for Minnesota's Indigenous, Low-income, and Racially Diverse Youth. Today Youthprise is a resource to youth and youth-serving organizations and systems throughout Minnesota. Youthprise mobilizes and invests resources, advances knowledge and systems change to increase equity for Minnesota's youth.



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Search Institute is a nonprofit organization that partners with schools, youth programs, and other organizations to conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and equity. We seek to be an innovator by listening to young people and providing insight to create change in the lives of youth through those that work directly with young people.



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# Acknowledgements From Youthprise

This program began in 2015, when Youthprise secured funding from state and federal agencies to increase employment opportunities for young people across Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Office of Youth Development, Search Institute, and MENTOR Minnesota are key partners in the initiative.

Primary funding was provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service, who awarded Youthprise with a \$3 million Social Innovation Fund grant for three years. McKnight foundation provided essential dollars to underwrite the administrative capacity of Youthprise to carry out this project. Youthprise matched the amount with local funds and selected six organizations to implement the Opportunity Reboot model, which aims at increasing career pathways for opportunity youth in Minnesota. The six original partner organizations include:

- § Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, (Project name- Prior Crossing)
- § Guadalupe Alternative Programs (GAP),
- § MIGIZI Communications,
- § Northfield Healthy Community Initiative, (Project name- Tri-City Bridges to the Future)
- § Sauk Rapids-Rice School District/ Initiative Foundation, (Project name- Compass) and
- § SOAR Career Solutions (Project name- Opportunity Youth of Duluth).

Opportunity Reboot addresses the economic challenges confronting young people and is one solution to the persistent racial disparities in our state. While the Twin Cities ranks #1 among the largest 25 metro areas for the proportion of adults working, the Twin Cities ranks 23 out of 25 for the largest employment gap between White and Black residents.

A tremendous amount of people worked tirelessly, advocated, and showed-up to make this program possible. The Core Partners are Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Larry Eisenstadt and Kay Tracey; MENTOR Minnesota's Nicki Patnaude, Jess Anna Glover and Mai-Anh Kapanke; and our Training and Technical Assistance Consultant Dr. Rose Chu who provided technical support, training and consistent leadership through all 5 years of program implementation.

Youthprise's key staff who were instrumental in developing the compliance and administrative support for this federally funded project include: Vice President Marcus Pope, Program Director Melissa Mitchell, and Grants and Compliance Officer Maurice Nins, along with our finance and administration teams.

We want to highlight special recognition for the McKnight Foundation and staff the primary funder for Opportunity Reboot matching funds. These vital funds and partnership enabled the leveraging of public dollars and is a great example of how private philanthropy can increase the capacity of local intermediaries and communities to increase access to resources to expand positive outcomes.

Core to this and all Youthprise work is being able to lead this work with youth voice being centered, a critical component for Youthprise and this project's success. We recognize brilliant youth from Irreducible Grace Foundation who participated in the selection process for our subgrantees. Their preparation, passion and input were critical in selecting a strong cohort of partners ready to co-create Opportunity Reboot and make it into the successful project it is today.

# Acknowledgements From Search Institute

Search Institute is grateful to Youthprise for inviting us to be a thought partner and the evaluation lead in this groundbreaking and innovative work aimed at enriching the community-based supports available to young people who are, too often, forgotten. Their vision both for this project, and a Minnesota where all young people have equitable futures is inspiring and motivating. Joined by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and MENTOR Minnesota, Youthprise has moved the needle on behalf of opportunity youth across the state. It is a rare opportunity to be part of such a dynamic team that leads with a mission and clear focus on what really matters: investing in young people to reduce disparities. Bearing witness to the impact of our collaboration has been an incredible experience.

The support, flexibility, and patience of the leaders and staff at each of the community partners made this project, and the evaluation, possible. The evaluation efforts of this project changed as we met practical and federal funding realities. These partners met each request with an openness to new ideas, a willingness to engage in collective and creative problem-solving, and a commitment to seeing the work through. Our relationship with these community partners was defined by transparency, mutual respect, and shared learning, as we negotiated the need for evaluation rigor with the realities of the program and the young people they served. Unremittingly, these community partners do the really hard and important work on behalf of, and in partnership with, opportunity youth. For this, we are deeply indebted to them.

Without a doubt, the best part of this collaboration was the opportunities our team had to listen to, and learn side-by-side from, the young people in the community programs. Through the evaluation efforts, they entrusted us with their stories, sharing both their hard truths and dreams for the future. There is simply no greater gift. The responsibility of sharing their personal narratives and experiences was the touchstone for the execution of this high-quality evaluation.

An evaluation of this scope required the assembly of a richly talented and diverse team of collaborators. This included: Lacy Allen, Michelle Decker Gerrard, Eliel Gebru, Edith Gozali-Lee, Jennifer Griffin-Wiesner, Jill Johnson, Sera Kinoglu, Christine Lindberg, Nicole MartinRogers, Stephanie Nelson-Dusek, Christen Pentek, Nicole Perry, Stephanie Peterson, Eugene Roehlkepartain, Jessie Saul, Peter Scales, Mackenzie Steinberg, Theresa Sullivan, and Martin Van Boekel. The contributions of each of these people strengthened the evaluation and the utility of the study findings.

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# PREAMBLE

The implementation and evaluation of the Opportunity Reboot model took place under very different conditions than exist at the time when this report is being submitted.

In the early months of 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic reached Minnesota. This resulted not only in record job losses and an absence of new hires but the stark showcasing of long-standing disparities in access to health care and education among indigenous communities, communities of color, and low-income communities. All data included in this report were collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore the data on unemployment and other occupation- and education-relevant variables are likely to underestimate the current COVID-19-era state of affairs for opportunity youth in Minnesota. Early unemployment data and other indicators suggest that indigenous communities, communities of color, and opportunity youth have been hit hardest by this pandemic, in terms of physical and mental health, education equity and access, and unemployment (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Herold, 2020; Hooper et al., 2020).

These data were also collected prior to the death of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, who was killed during an arrest by a White Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020. Floyd's death sparked protests and an uprising to fight racial injustice across the Twin Cities (and, the country). In the Twin Cities, some of these protests resulted in violence, looting, and a strong US military presence on city streets. The space occupied by MIGIZI, one of the community partners in the Opportunity Reboot evaluation, was set on fire and burned down during these protests. Peaceful protests and an outpouring of community support were also abundant. The trauma of these events — George Floyd's death, the violence, the systemic racial injustices people of color experience daily — will, undoubtedly, impact the mental health and social-emotional needs of the youth served by our community partners and the Opportunity Reboot model in the days and months ahead.

The work of our community partners, and the promise of the Opportunity Reboot model, has never been more important. The challenges ahead of us are big and require a bold and concerted approach. We at Youthprise, Search Institute, and all of our partners remain committed to adaptive, inclusive, and responsive efforts to meet the needs of youth during this unprecedented time in history. Now more than ever we have to ensure that the opportunity youth in Minnesota know they are valued and have advocates in their lives.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of young people living in the margins of society – disconnected from work and school, or isolated from family – reflects one of the most pressing social inequities of our time. An estimated one in nine youth ages 16 to 24 are out of work and school in the United States (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2018). These opportunity youth often face a large range of complex issues, such as homelessness, chemical dependency, mental health issues, learning disabilities, and health disparities perpetrated by a range of systemic issues. Minnesota is not exempt from these same realities. More than 40,000 opportunity youth call Minnesota home (Lewis, 2019); the state that also bears the largest educational achievement gap in the nation for both racial and economic (Grunewald & Nath, 2019; Minnesota Compass, 2020; Nitardy et al., 2015).

These data are cause for alarm, and yet, *there is hope*. For many opportunity youth, these trajectories can be disrupted by surrounding them with a cohesive web of supports that not only provide access to important health, education, and employment resources but also spaces where these young adults' strengths are seen and leveraged. The Opportunity Reboot model is rooted in this sense of hope.

**Partners:** Youthprise, a philanthropic intermediary focused on increasing equity with and for Minnesota's indigenous, low-income, and racially diverse youth, received a grant from the Social Innovation Fund in 2015 to implement and evaluate the Opportunity Reboot model over 4 years. Youthprise contracted with Search Institute, a nonprofit applied research organization, to conduct the evaluation. Six Minnesota-based community partner organizations were selected in 2016 to integrate the Opportunity Reboot model into their program and execute a two-phase implementation and preliminary impact evaluation. These partners included: Opportunity Youth of Duluth, Compass, Tri-City Bridges to the Future, MIGIZI, Prior Crossing, and the Guadalupe Alternative Program. Figure 4 provides additional background information on these partners. The Opportunity Reboot model is rooted in this sense of hope.

**Program Summary:** Partnering with community-based organizations who provide wraparound supports, Youthprise developed a technical assistance and program enhancement model designed to leverage the existing capacity and strengths of community programs to more effectively create pathways to school, career, and life success for opportunity youth. They did this by expanding services and integrating an intentional, systemic focus on four model features that have been empirically linked to educational achievement and career development. These four core model features are:

- a) Positive mentoring relationships — including both relationships within and outside of community partner programs;
- b) Individualized goal supports;
- c) Coordinated career pathways supports; and,
- d) Impactful cross-sector partnerships.



The Opportunity Reboot model was designed to support opportunity youth: youth ages 14 to 24 who were either in foster care, the juvenile justice system, homeless, or disconnected from school and education. The target sample for the evaluation consisted of 418 youth. These are youth who participated between April 2017 (within 6 months prior to baseline data collection; i.e., when the model was fully rolled out to partners) and April 2018 (beginning of the endline survey data collection window). In total, 298 opportunity youth participated in the baseline youth survey, 236 participated at endline; 194 of these youth participated at both time points.

**Intended Outcomes:** The Opportunity Reboot model aimed to enhance program impact on critical short-term youth development outcomes (i.e., positive identity, social-emotional competencies, skills for systems navigation) and select intermediate outcomes (for participants age 18 or older) including securing living wage employment and stable or increasing wages for four quarters post-endline.

**Prior Research:** Youthprize developed the Opportunity Reboot model in 2015, with further refinements in 2017 based on feedback from community partners. When funding was granted, the full Opportunity Reboot model was untested. However, the extant scientific literature had established preliminary or moderate empirical evidence that each of the model features, independently, had an impact on important youth outcomes. Each of the model features had also been established, in practice, as effective ways to support opportunity youth.

**Targeted Level of Evidence:** Using the standards set forth by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the overarching purpose of the preliminary impact evaluation was to strengthen the level of preliminary evidence and establish emerging moderate evidence that the Opportunity Reboot model positively impacted the lives of opportunity youth. Extant research had established preliminary or moderate evidence of the impact of each of the Opportunity Reboot model features on important youth development outcomes. Yet, evidence had not previously been established of how these features impact youth when: (a) implemented in concert via an enhancement model to existing programs; (b) with a multi-pronged system of technical assistance supports; and, (c) with opportunity youth residing in urban and rural regions of Minnesota. The data collection activities in the preliminary impact phase of the evaluation sought to attain this foundational level of evidence for the Opportunity Reboot model by demonstrating quantitative change in youths' self-report surveys, in the raw and compelling narratives participants openly shared, and in the employment and wage records maintained by the state of Minnesota.

**Evaluation Designs:** The evaluation examined both program implementation and program impact. The implementation evaluation was a descriptive, non-experimental design that employed mixed methods. It focused on how the Opportunity Reboot model was implemented, contributing to our understanding of contextual differences in how the model is realized on the ground across geographically diverse community partners who serve young people with complex needs. Implementation data were collected through youth and staff focus groups, structured interviews focused on fidelity to the Opportunity Reboot model (i.e., Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool), and staff surveys.

**The preliminary impact evaluation fused three evaluation designs:**

- 1) a single group non-experimental outcome design (which included baseline and endline youth surveys, n = 194; staff-reported surveys, n = 194);
- 2) qualitative impact interviews, n = 29; and,
- 3) a quasi-experimental design study of employment and wage attainment that leveraged data collected by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to compare Opportunity Reboot participants (n = 209) and non-participants (n = 241). Propensity score matching was used to generate a demographically-similar comparison group of opportunity youth from the state administrative database who did not participate in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model.

**Metrics and Instruments:** The implementation and preliminary impact research questions required the use of data from multiple sources using a variety of instruments. This included: (a) youth and staff focus groups using a semi-structured qualitative protocol; (b) the Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool which used Likert-type indicators of model fidelity and open-ended questions; (c) the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey which included metrics on youths' experiences of the Opportunity Reboot model features, youth short-term outcomes, program quality and satisfaction indicators, and selected youth-focused outputs named in the Opportunity Reboot logic model; (d) a staff-report survey on individual youth focused on implementation factors; (e) a staff survey on programming outputs aligned with the Opportunity Reboot logic model; and, (f) the Common Participant Profile, which captured detailed socio-demographic on Opportunity Reboot participants and was used by DEED to construct the comparison group for the quasi-experimental employment and wage attainment study.

**Analytic Approach:** Implementation data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Multiple regression models were used to analyze data in the single group non-experimental outcome evaluation. All qualitative data were analyzed using systematic inductive qualitative coding methods. Difference-in-difference statistical models tested for between-group differences in the quasi-experimental design study using propensity score matching methods.

**Research Questions:** The study was guided by 10 research questions.

#### **Implementation**

1. Was the Opportunity Reboot model implemented with fidelity?
2. What does participation and engagement in the Opportunity Reboot model look like for opportunity youth?
3. Did Opportunity Reboot program partners achieve output targets (named in the Opportunity Reboot logic model)?
4. How satisfied were Opportunity Reboot participants with their experiences and the overall quality of their programs?

#### **Preliminary Impact**

5. Did youth who participated in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model experience measurable and significant gains in short-term outcomes over the program year? Did all youth experience the benefits of program participation equally, or were program impacts experienced differentially by diverse demographic groups of youth?
6. Controlling for demographic, background, and implementation factors, what are the predictive associations between the youths' experiences of the Opportunity Reboot model features and their short-term outcomes?
7. In their own words, how did participants describe experiencing the features of the Opportunity Reboot model at their program sites?
8. In their own words, how did youth describe the impact of Opportunity Reboot on their lives?
9. What percent of youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were able to secure employment? How is this similar or different from the comparison group?
10. What percent of youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were able to secure living wage employment? How is this similar or different from the comparison group?

**Key Findings:** The implementation evaluation demonstrated that the Opportunity Reboot model was implemented with a high level of fidelity, and that there was a value-add of providing community partners with a multipronged system of support to promote model integration, the building of a learning community, and increasing fidelity to the model.

The preliminary impact evaluation of Opportunity Reboot built directly and iteratively on the implementation evaluation. This evaluation was motivated by two goals: to empirically link young people's experiences in the programs using the Opportunity Reboot enhancements to key short-term youth development outcomes; and, to test whether participants in Opportunity Reboot programs fare better than non-participants on select intermediate outcomes.

- § The strongest and most consistent empirical finding to emerge from this evaluation is that relationships matter. Opportunity youth who strengthen their relationships with program staff are more likely to show positive gains in their financial literacy, job-seeking skills, and resource identification skills.
- § When opportunity youth build strong relationships with other adults outside of the program that support their growth, they are more likely to show positive gains – over and above all of the other model features – on eight of the eleven short-term outcomes: future orientation, civic efficacy, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, financial literacy, job seeking skills, and resource identification skills. This is reinforced in the qualitative interview and focus group data where youth reveal through their personal stories and experiences the subtleties of what happened in these relationships that make them so powerful.
- § Regression models showed an association between the individualized goal-setting supports and the coordinated career pathways supports features of the Opportunity Reboot model on only one outcome: growth in job-seeking skills. This association was negative for the individualized goal-setting supports feature, and positive for career pathways supports. This negative association (which, interestingly, is seen across the regression models, although not significant) may be an artifact of the phenomenon that youth who require the most support setting goals have more urgent short-term needs than those captured by the targeted outcomes in this evaluation. Reassuringly, the experience of being in a program that provides career pathways supports was a strong positive predictor of job-seeking skills. The absence of significant empirical associations between individualized goal-setting supports, career pathways supports, and the short-term youth outcomes should not be interpreted as evidence that these features of the Opportunity Reboot model are unimportant. In fact, the impact narratives give voice to how critically important these features were to helping youth see new possibilities for themselves and propel their lives forward. Relationships are the entry point for many of these goal and career supports.
- § Opportunity Reboot participants were more likely than similar peers not participating in these programs to secure full-time employment over the period of a year, and to avoid the seasonal dip in employment often seen during Minnesota's winter months. This was particularly true for youth Youth of Color in the Opportunity Reboot group. While this finding holds promise, the data suggest very few opportunity youth (in the Opportunity Reboot and comparison groups) are securing living wage employment and – although their wages did increase over time – they still fall below the state-defined threshold to support the costs of stable housing, food, and other basic necessities in Minnesota.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the Opportunity Reboot model has strong preliminary evidence of impact on key developmental and employment outcomes for opportunity youth residing in Minnesota.

**Evaluation Updates:** In March 2017, the Corporation for National and Community Service Social Innovation Fund (SIF) approved Youthprise's SIF Evaluation Plan for an implementation evaluation. The original plan included three major phases: (a) developmental evaluation; (b) capacity building; and, (c) pilot testing for the forthcoming impact evaluation. This work was due to be completed in July 2018. The original plan was to incorporate and use the findings from the implementation evaluation to prepare a high-quality, contextually-informed Impact SIF Evaluation Plan, which was due to be submitted in July 2017. When SIF was defunded by the United States Congress, Youthprise worked closely with their SIF program officer to reimagine ways existing funds could be leveraged for maximum benefit. This resulted in three significant changes to the evaluation design: (1) Truncating the capacity-building phase of the implementation evaluation; (2) Streamlining research questions; and, (3) Adding more robust methods to test for preliminary impact. Additional detail on these changes can be found in Appendix A.

**Next Steps:** Youthprise continues to support and make improvements to the Opportunity Reboot model and is actively seeking sustainable funding streams to pay for the multi-pronged system of support required to implement the full model and expand it to other community partners. Additional research is needed with larger sample sizes and experimental evaluation designs to confirm preliminary impact findings.



Section 1

# Introduction

The number of young people living in the margins of society – disconnected from work and school, or isolated from family – reflects one of the most pressing social inequities of our time. An estimated one in nine youth ages 16 to 24 are out of work and school in the United States (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2018). This number is higher in rural areas, and among youth who identify as Latinx, Black, or male. Bridgeland and Mason-Elder (2012) characterize these youth who are at risk of not reaching their full potential as “opportunity youth — both because they are seeking opportunity and they present an opportunity to our nation if we invest in them” (p. 5).

These opportunity youth often face a large range of complex issues, such as homelessness, chemical dependency, mental health issues, learning disabilities, and health disparities (Grunewald & Nath, 2019; Minnesota Compass, 2020; Nitardy et al., 2015).

Between 2000 and 2030, the population of Minnesota’s Youth of Color (ages 10-19) is projected to grow from 16 to 27 percent (Minnesota Department of Health, 2012). In a national comparison of graduation rates, Minnesota ranks near the bottom for on-time graduation of Youth of Color (Minnesota Compass, 2017) and Youth of Color in Minnesota are less likely than their White peers to enroll in 4-year undergraduate colleges (Report of the Minnesota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2013).

**These inequities in opportunity and access undergird economic and employment disparities.** This, along with the changing demographics of Minnesota’s workforce, has exacerbated the unemployment gap between Whites and people of color. While Minnesota touts some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, Minnesota’s Black population has an unemployment rate that is roughly 13 percentage points higher than that of Minnesota’s non-Hispanic, White population (Minnesota Compass, 2018).

**These data are cause for alarm, and yet, *there is hope.*** For many opportunity youth, these trajectories can be disrupted by surrounding them with a cohesive web of supports that not only provide access to important health, education, and employment resources but also spaces where these young adults’ strengths are seen and leveraged. The motivating force behind Opportunity Reboot has been to enhance the odds that opportunity youth in Minnesota would have available to them the kind of programs and supports that would help them access, create, prepare for, and take advantage of the education and career opportunities that could radically shift their life trajectories.

The following section provides a detailed description of the Opportunity Reboot model and its four core features. It elaborates on the design used in the evaluation, and provides detailed descriptions of the community partners, and the opportunity youth who were the targeted beneficiaries of the program. The Introduction concludes by presenting the 10 research questions that were the focus of the evaluation, and briefly summarizes the contributions of the study to research and practice knowledge around promoting greater educational and employment equity for opportunity youth.

# Opportunity Reboot Model

The Opportunity Reboot model is rooted in this sense of hope generated by applied positive youth development research. Partnering with community-based partners who provide wraparound supports, Youthprise – a Minnesota-based non-profit focused on reducing disparities with, and for, Minnesota youth by mobilizing and investing resources, advancing knowledge, and advocating for change – developed a technical assistance and program enhancement model designed to leverage the existing capacity and strengths of community programs to more effectively create pathways to school, career, and life success for opportunity youth. They did this by expanding services and integrating an intentional, systemic focus on four model features that have been empirically linked to educational achievement and career development. These four core model features are (see Figure 1)

- 1 **Positive mentoring relationships** — including both relationships within and outside of our community partner programs;
- 2 **Individualized goal supports;**
- 3 **Coordinated career pathways supports;** and,
- 4 **Impactful cross-sector partnerships.**

Six community partner organizations joined Youthprise in integrating the Opportunity Reboot model into their program (see Figure 2) and evaluating its implementation and preliminary impact. These organizations each have long histories of serving opportunity youth across the state of Minnesota.

Despite growing evidence of the critical need to link technical, academic, and social-emotional development to prepare youth to enter the workforce effectively (Aspen Institute, 2019), most intervention efforts targeting opportunity youth remain largely siloed, reflecting and perpetuating the implicit yet ultimately impractical assumption that youth will access different programs for different needs (VanDenBerg & Grealish, 1996). In reality, both for developmental and practical reasons, young people need access to programs and services that help them develop holistically, rather than having to navigate multiple systems. For this to be possible, programs in different sectors need shared sets of approaches, principles, and interventions through which they engage young people and set them on a path toward economic stability and independence. Improving the education and workforce prospects for opportunity youth currently disconnected from such systems depends on this type of collaborative approach.

Youthprise's Opportunity Reboot model was created as part of a larger strategy to build collaborative, community-based approaches to address educational and social obstacles that opportunity youth face. The model does this by explicitly attending to developing skills, mindsets, and opportunities holistically through youth-adult mentoring and integrated career pathways supports. The wraparound nature of the Opportunity Reboot model is posited to work because it inherently responds to the multiple and complex needs of opportunity youth (e.g., The White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012). The four features of the Opportunity Reboot model are designed to work in concert to provide opportunity youth with the full range of supports that they need to experience improved educational and career attainment. The Opportunity Reboot model was specifically designed to support opportunity youth: youth ages 14 to 24 who were either in foster care, the juvenile justice system, homeless, or disconnected from school and education.

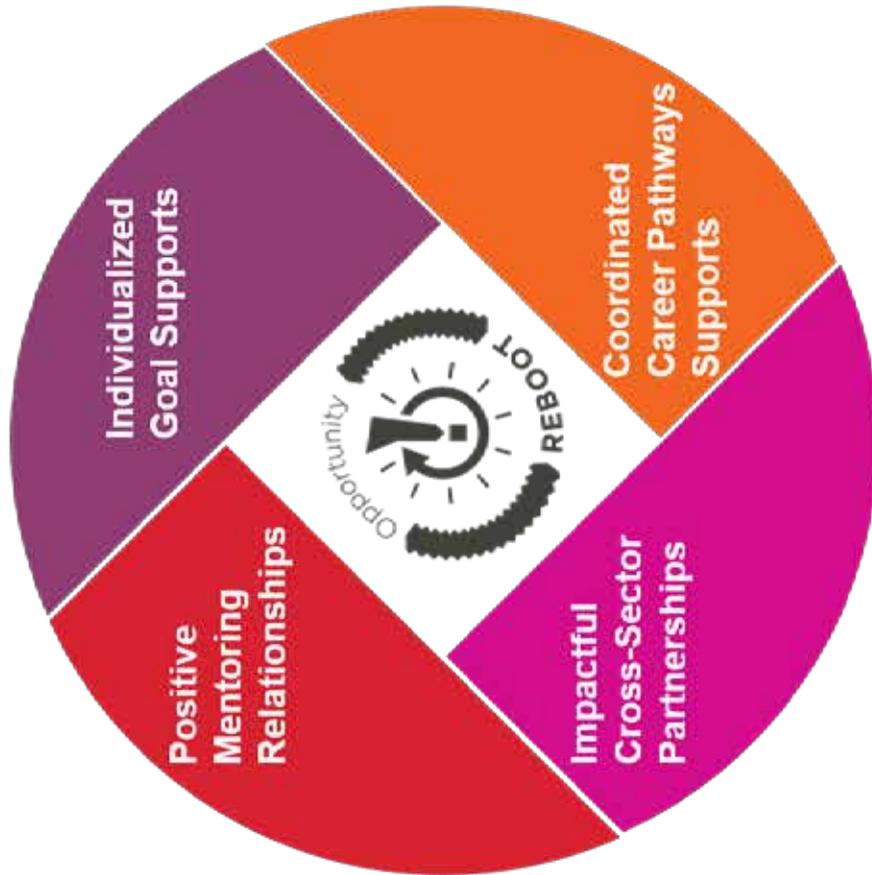
Because Opportunity Reboot is a program enhancement model, rather than a standalone program, a multipronged system of support was developed and delivered to assist partnering programs in integrating the Opportunity Reboot model into their day-to-day programming. This included: biweekly technical assistance calls; quarterly in-person convenings for partners to learn and share with one another; annual site visits; and access to two mentoring trainings provided by MENTOR Minnesota. These trainings were: Maximize Your Opportunity, which focused on helping youth identify and build strong mentoring relationships; and Maximize Your Impact, which focused on equipping adults with the skills and mindsets needed to be mentors.

Figure 2 depicts the Opportunity Reboot logic model, with seven major elements::

1. **Core Principles:** Three core principles undergirded all aspects of the Opportunity Reboot model. The work was culturally grounded, relationships-focused, and inclusive of youth voice.
2. **Inputs:** Resources needed to implement the model, including the multipronged system of support outlined above.
3. **Activities:** Planned activities, which in a program enhancement model, refer to the Opportunity Reboot model features, concepts, and strategies. For space reasons, the strategies are not listed in the graphic.
4. **Outputs:** Tangible and quantifiable services delivered as a result of implementing the Opportunity Reboot model.
5. **Short-Term Outcomes:** The Opportunity Reboot logic model names both youth- and organization-level short-term outcomes. The current evaluation focused only on the youth-level outcomes. There was a reasonable expectation that all identified youth short-term outcomes were malleable, and that quantitative change could be captured over the course of a 9-12 month period across diverse populations of young people. See Short-Term Outcomes in the Preliminary Impact section of the report for additional detail about how these outcomes were selected.
6. **Intermediate Outcomes:** Outcomes expected 12+ months after the start of program participation. Select intermediate outcomes are assessed in the employment and wage attainment study (see the Preliminary Impact section for additional detail).
7. **Longer Term Outcomes:** Outcomes expected 18+ months after the start of the program. These outcomes are not assessed in this evaluation.

This logic model was used as a guide for generating research questions.

Figure 1 Opportunity Reboot Model



**Positive Mentoring Relationships**

Programs integrate mentoring approaches into the roles of case managers, employment specialists, resource specialists, educators, professional mentors, apprenticeship supervisors, and employers. In these mentoring roles, adults provide a wide range of critical socioemotional, developmental, and instrumental support for opportunity youth.

**Individualized Goal Supports**

Programs create a responsive supports approach to working with opportunity youth. Typically embedded within mentoring, these programs work with youth to articulate their individualized needs and goals and then set about co-developing a plan of support. This approach is grounded in the idea of meeting youth “where they’re at,” without judgement and garnering buy-in or ownership (and, with time, self-efficacy and confidence) in getting the resources and supports required to do well in school, work, and community.

**Coordinated Career Pathways Supports**

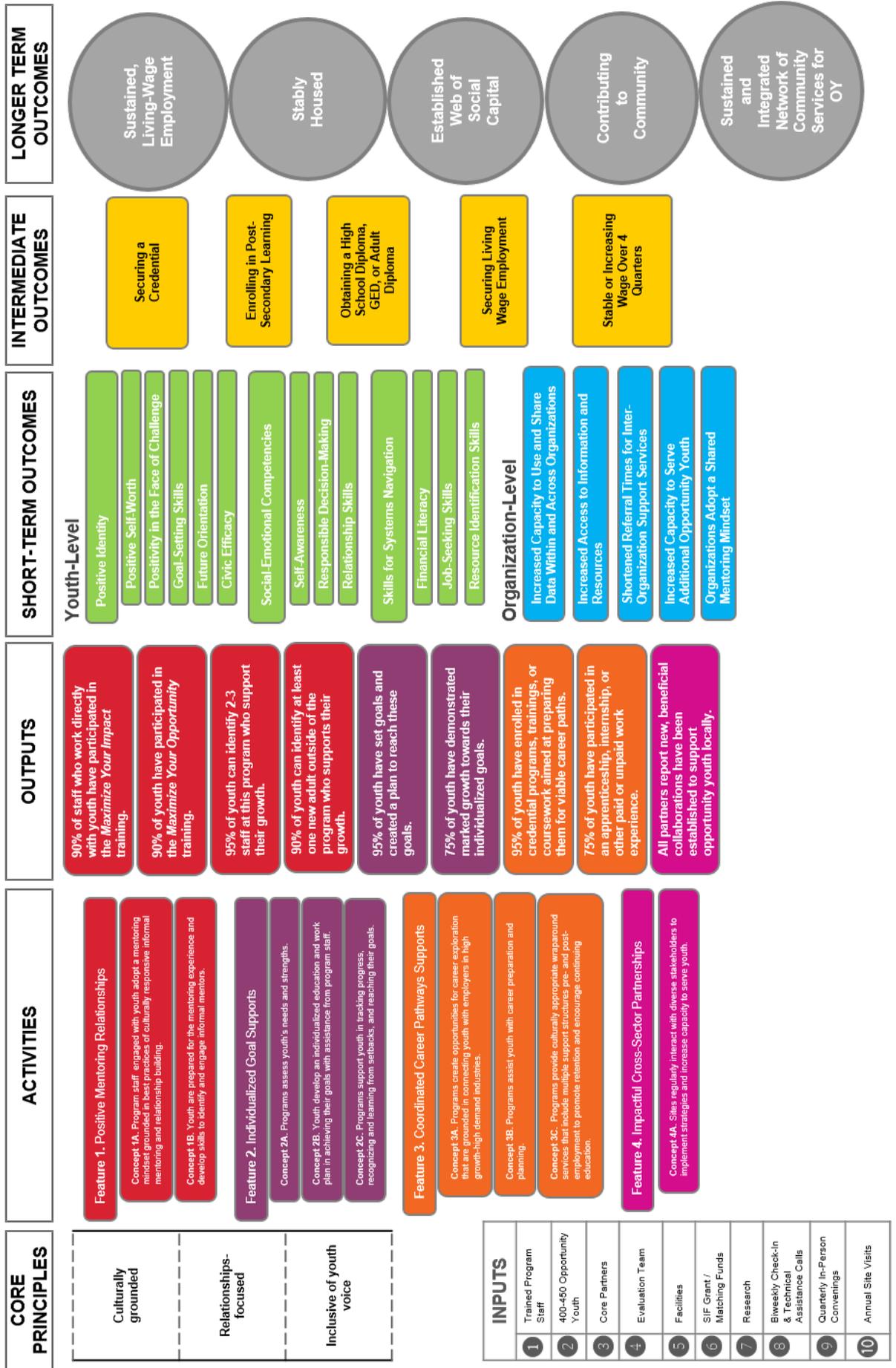
Program practices align with the following elements of the Career Pathways Framework (as defined by the U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2015)

- Include a full range of education options, including apprenticeships, that show clear and non-duplicative progression
- Curriculum and instruction that makes work central to the learning process, and helps build work readiness skills in the educational process.
- Support and development for individual career plans and provide wraparound services to support education and career goals.
- Curriculum and training that is organized to address barriers to education and employment such as child care and work schedules.
- Promote increasing an individual’s educational attainment, job skills, and employment outcomes.

**Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships**

Successful implementation of the Opportunity Reboot model relies on a collective impact approach to building relationships with local community partners from different sectors. These partners will: (a) support provision of a wraparound suite of services; (b) enhance outreach, recruitment, and scaling; (c) provide access to education and employment opportunities; (d) braid limited funds and identify gaps; and, (e) further embed this work into the community.

Figure 2 Opportunity Reboot Logic Model



## Overview of Prior Research

Youthprise developed the Opportunity Reboot model in 2015, with further refinements in 2017 based on feedback from community partners. When funding was granted, the full Opportunity Reboot model was untested. However, the extant scientific literature had established preliminary or moderate empirical evidence that each of the model features, independently, had an impact on important youth outcomes. Each of the model features had also been established, in practice, as effective ways to support opportunity youth.

### Positive Mentoring Relationships

Positive mentoring relationships are a foundational element of the Opportunity Reboot model. Mentoring is integrated into the roles of case managers, employment specialists, resource specialists, educators, professional mentors, apprenticeship supervisors, and employers. In these mentoring roles, adults provide a wide range of critical socioemotional, developmental, and instrumental supports for opportunity youth (Center for Promise, 2015; Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005).

This feature was built on the broad research base showing that opportunity youth are more likely than their peers to be disconnected from key sources of social support, including parents, extended family, and teachers (Putnam, 2015).

Yet, we know that youth who have stable and high-quality social relationships are more likely to stay in school (Center for Promise, 2015; Sinclair et al., 2005), experience academic gains (Scales et al., 2019; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001), exhibit fewer behavior problems (Keating et al., 2002; Somers et al., 2008), demonstrate higher socioemotional competence (Roehlkepartain et al., 2017), and be resilient in the face of persistent challenges (Konopka, 1973; Werner & Smith, 2001).



Opportunity youth are less likely to experience the social capital represented by high-quality relationships and their associated resources (Scales, Boat, & Pekel, 2020), and research has also found that for some, such as youth from lower-income backgrounds, their relationships with key potential resources such as teachers worsens over time (Scales et al., 2019). Thus, the relational gap for opportunity youth presents a significant threat to their well-being and developmental trajectories.

Mentoring-based programs and interventions across the country have rallied to fill this void, including Big Brothers Big Sisters, MENTOR, and Check & Connect. In a recent study, opportunity youth who had a mentor were 20% more likely than opportunity youth without a mentor to plan to go to college, and 30% more likely to enroll or plan to enroll in postsecondary learning (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Mentoring relationships have the potential to increase opportunities for healthy development and more equitable outcomes among opportunity youth by providing youth with the confidence, access to resources, and ongoing support they need to achieve their potential (e.g., DuBois et al., 2011; Duncan-Andrade, 2010; Erickson et al., 2009; Schwartz et al., 2011).

For example, in a work-based mentoring program, youth who participated in the formal mentoring program were more likely than non-participants to believe school was directly relevant to work; mentored youth also exhibited higher levels of self-esteem (Symonds et al., 2011). Randomized control trials of the mentoring-based Check & Connect program also show the power of strong, supportive youth-adult relationships to re-engage at-risk youth in school (Sinclair et al., 2005; Sinclair et al., 1998). Studies of juvenile offender reentry programs with strong mentoring components have found that youth who participated in these programs had lower rates of recidivism (Bouffard & Bergseth, 2008; Drake & Barnoski, 2006). Relatedly, a mentoring and vocational development initiative to help transition violent young adult offenders to their community, The Boston Reentry Initiative, found that program participants had 30% lower rates of recidivism relative to non-participants (Braga et al., 2009).

To build on the demonstrated link between strong relationships and positive developmental outcomes, Operation Opportunity Reboot drew on the Developmental Relationships Framework constructed by Search Institute from extensive literature reviews, and qualitative and quantitative studies in the family, school, peer, and youth-serving organization contexts (Pekel et al., 2018). The framework outlines five major elements of relationships—express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities—and 20 actions adults and youth engage in to experience those relational strengths. Subsequent research using this framework has shown that youth with higher levels of developmental relationships with parents, teachers, peers, and adults in youth-serving organizations do better on a range of academic, psychological, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes (Pekel et al., 2018; Scales et al., 2019; Scales et al., 2020; Syvertsen et al., 2018). Opportunity Reboot partners were introduced to the framework, which was included in trainings showing how it could strengthen their focus on positive mentoring, and the framework informed both the quantitative items and qualitative protocols used in the evaluation study.

## Individualized Goal Supports

A second core feature of the Opportunity Reboot model is described as individualized goal supports. Goals and aspirations are assumed to be critical motivators for learning and work. Yet just having positive aspirations or fantasies rarely stimulates goal-directed action (Duckworth et al., 2013; Oettingen, 2012). Several factors are at work, including young people's default mental focus on short-term concerns or desires (Oyserman, 2013), the possible lack of knowledge about institutional systems, and how to access available resources.

Mentoring often links youth to additional culturally relevant resources and social capital that meet their needs (Oransky et al., 2013) and help them make progress towards their personal goals (Watson et al., 2016). Furthering the evidence for the importance of responsive adults in the goal-setting and attaining process, studies have positively associated youths' discussions of school and future plans with supportive adults with positive academic outcomes (Hill et al., 2004).

Through individualized goal-setting supports and mentoring, Opportunity Reboot participants are guided to shift from vague aspirations toward concrete goals based on their intrinsic interests and skills, including the long-term relevance of what they are being asked to do to pursue their own aspirations. By regularly monitoring their goals and learning, they increase their investment in their own progress toward their aspirations (Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2009).

## Coordinated Career Pathways Supports

The career pathways feature of the Opportunity Reboot model is based on a toolkit created by the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (Elsy et al., 2015). In the Opportunity Reboot model, these career pathways characteristics and key elements have been adapted as follows:

- § Create opportunities for career exploration that are grounded in connecting youth with employers in high growth–high demand industries.
- § Assist youth with career preparation and planning.
- § Provide culturally appropriate wraparound services that include multiple support structures pre- and post-employment to promote retention and encourage continuing education.

Programs implementing key career pathways elements have documented success producing educational and employment-based outcomes (Symonds et al., 2011).

For example, internal pre-/post-program metrics from the Guadalupe Alternative Programs (GAP) – a community partner in this project – found that, over the course of the program, 68% of YouthBuild participants who were English Language Learners increased one functional level on an assessment that measured basic skills and the English language/literacy. Although 97% of GAP YouthBuild participants entered the program deficient in high school credits, 98% earned enough credits for a high school diploma by the end of the year. Descriptive outcomes data from a recent Minnesota YouthBuild evaluation complemented these findings, showing that 91% of participants either completed high school or obtained a GED. Furthermore, of the 66% of enrollees with criminal offenses, only 5% recidivated within a 2-year period after program enrollment, compared to 27% in a similar cohort (Wiegand et al., 2015).



## Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships

Opportunity Reboot draws its approach to community collaboration from Jobs for the Future's partnership approach, with Opportunity Reboot Community Partners serving as intermediaries to coordinate employers, industry partners, community providers, and education/training providers in a "collective, place-based effort...to build high-quality employer-connected pathways" (Grobe et al., 2015, p. vii). One of the exemplars of this 'wraparound services' model is Homeboy Industries, which intentionally include mental health services, case management, workforce development, educational services, and more for their program participants (Delgado, 2012). Following a 5-year evaluation, it was found that 70% of individuals who completed the 18-month Homeboy program successfully stayed out of prison and secured employment; this is an inverse of the local recidivism statistics (Leap & Franke, 2008). Walter and Petr (2011) also found that promising wraparound services models are locally focused, context driven and include participant voice, choice, family teams, individualized services, natural supports, and collaboration between all the partners in the model.

Cross-sector partnerships have "nested identities" in which organizations and programs share information and resources, as they have overlapping goals, but not necessarily missions (Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016). Employees play multiple roles, as people who are developing organizational capacity, mentoring, and negotiating the organizational landscape with the youth (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Shah & Mediratta, 2008). Research based on the theory of intersectionality that opportunity youth, especially those who are simultaneously in multiple marginalized groups (e.g., by race, gender identity, economics, sexual orientation) face a matrix of systemic oppressions that can halt their opportunities and investments toward success (Crenshaw, 2013; Mattsson, 2014; McBride & Mazur, 2008). When successful at holding the individual most marginalized youth at the center of programming, cross-sector partnerships create an equally complex matrix of supports and resources for addressing the systems failures that stop many marginalized young people from succeeding.

Numerous models point out that wraparound services allow for staff and professional teaming, which opens space for conversation about systems change. This focus on change allows the community to identify and take steps toward addressing gaps in services to better meet the needs of opportunity youth (Walter & Petr, 2011).

Drawing on such scientific evidence, positive mentoring relationships, individualized goal supports, career pathways supports, and impactful cross-sector partnerships were identified as the cornerstone features of the Opportunity Reboot model. The innovation of this model is the consolidation of these activities into a single model and the provision of support to integrate these enhancements into existing programs.

## Evaluation Design

Youthprise partnered with Search Institute to conduct an independent evaluation of the Opportunity Reboot model, with funding support from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Social Innovation Fund and other funders. The Opportunity Reboot evaluation design included two phases: an implementation evaluation and a preliminary impact evaluation (see Figure 3).

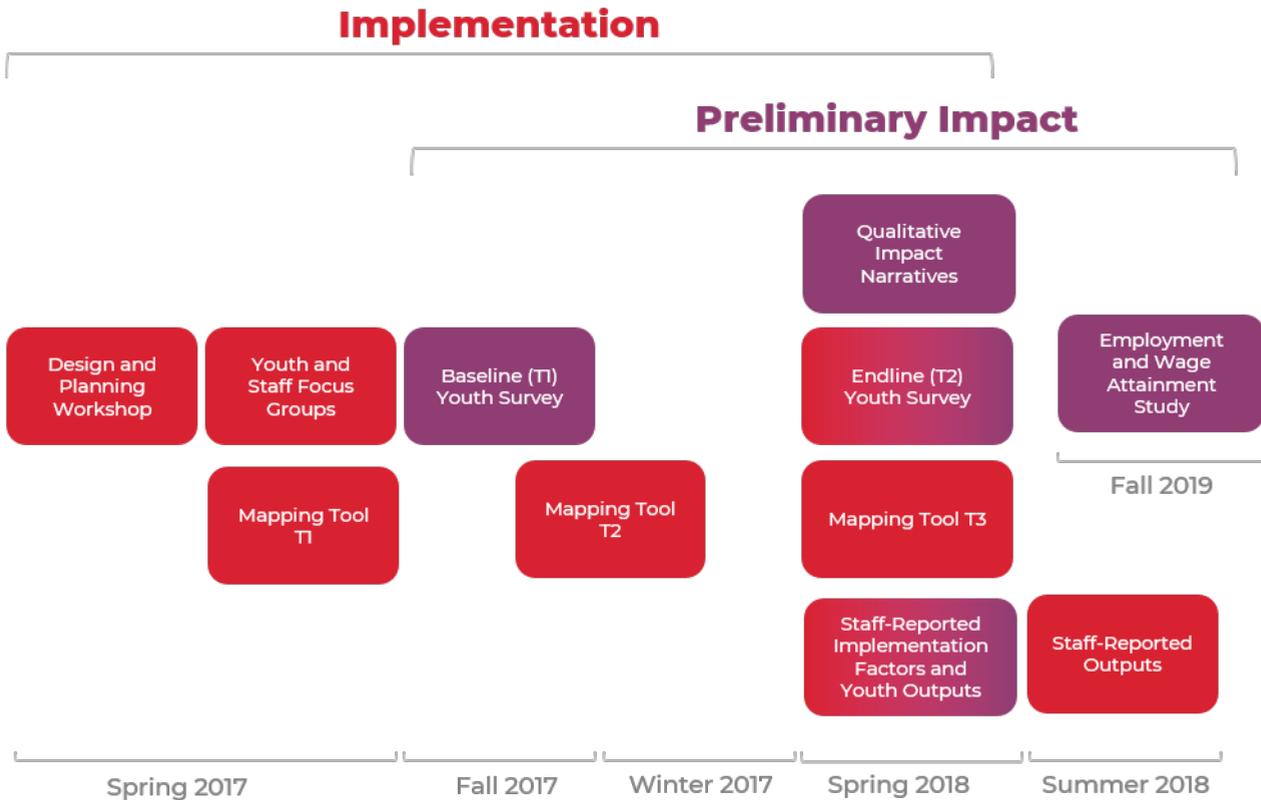
The implementation evaluation was designed to advance understanding of the processes by which programs utilizing the Opportunity Reboot model engage opportunity youth and guide them on a path to success. To do this, a descriptive, non-experimental design with a mixed-methods approach was used to understand how our community partners' wraparound Opportunity Reboot models were being applied and the degree of alignment with the model's logic model, as well as key insights on how to operationalize fidelity and assess dosage.

The preliminary impact evaluation was designed to empirically link young people's experiences in the programs using the Opportunity Reboot model to change in key youth development outcomes. The preliminary impact evaluation used three designs: (1) a single-group non-experimental design (which included baseline and endline youth surveys and staff-reported implementation factors); (2) qualitative impact interviews; and, (3) a quasi-experimental design. The quasi-experimental design included a study of employment and wage attainment using data collected by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and propensity score matching to compare Opportunity Reboot participants with a comparison group of non-participants. Using the standards set forth by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the overarching purpose of the preliminary impact evaluation was to strengthen the level of preliminary evidence and establish emerging moderate evidence that the Opportunity Reboot model positively impacted the lives of opportunity youth.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the purpose, timing, and source of each element of the evaluation design. Additional information regarding methodology is incorporated into Implementation Evaluation (Section 2) and Preliminary Impact Evaluation (Section 3) sections of this report.

This evaluation design reflects modifications made when the Corporation for National and Community Service Social Innovation Fund was defunded and Youthprise was asked to reimagine how to maximize the level of the evidence achieved with the available resources. This led to three significant changes to the evaluation design: (1) truncating the capacity-building phase of the implementation evaluation, (2) streamlining research questions (e.g., additional preliminary impact-level research questions were added), and (3) adding more robust methods to test for preliminary impact (e.g., propensity score matching). Appendix A provides detailed information, and a justification, for the three significant modifications that were made.

Figure 3 Opportunity Reboot Evaluation Design



Notes. T1 refers to the baseline, or Time 1, administration of the youth survey. T2 refers to the endline, or Time 2, administration of the youth survey. The Endline (T2) Youth Survey included measures of program quality and satisfaction, which were included in the implementation evaluation. The staff-reported implementation factors included measures of dosage and engagement, which were included both the implementation and preliminary impact evaluation.

## Community Partners

All evaluation activities were done in partnership with six community partners: Compass, Guadalupe Alternative Program (GAP), MIGIZI, Opportunity Youth of Duluth (OYOD), Prior Crossing, and Tri-City Bridges to the Future. These six community partner organizations joined Youthprise in integrating the Opportunity Reboot model into their program and evaluating its implementation and preliminary impact. These organizations each have long histories of serving opportunity youth across the state of Minnesota. A description of each of the community partner organizations and the opportunity youth they serve is provided in Figure 4.

## Target Beneficiaries

Over the course of their partnership with Youthprise, the six partner organizations served a cumulative total of 1,507 opportunity youth between the start of their project funding in April 2016 to the end of their project funding in February 2020 (December 2019 for one partner organization). Drawing on data from the SIF Data Supplement, 36% of these youth were men and boys of color. Other known demographic characteristics of these youth included Native Americans (15%), Hispanic/Latinx (13%), and immigrants (29%). This total number of 1,507 youth reflects all participants who received program services. Many of these youth did not meet the requirements for participation in the study because: (a) they exited the program before the evaluation started; (b) they joined the program after the evaluation ended; or, (c) their participation was highly episodic and, as a result, they were not exposed to the Opportunity Reboot model features. For example, the 1,507 number includes youth who visited the drop-in services provided by the Opportunity Youth of Duluth. However, these youth received none or very little substantive content tied to the Opportunity Reboot model making these youth ineligible for study participation.

Thus, the target sample for the evaluation consisted of a much smaller sample of 418 youth (see Table 3). These 418 youth participated in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model between April 2017 (within 6 months prior to baseline data collection; i.e., when the model was fully rolled out to partners) and April 2018 (beginning of the endline survey data collection window). Although there are some differences between the survey participants and target study participants (see Table 3), the survey participants are reasonably representative of the target sample. The final sample of survey participants includes fewer opportunity youth who identify as Native American and/or Hispanic/Latinx and more opportunity youth who identify as immigrant/non-Native.

**Table 1** Implementation Evaluation Activities

Activity	Purpose	Timing	Source
Design and Planning Workshops	Articulate the underlying program theory driving the work of program sites	Spring 2017	Program Staff
Focus Groups	Understand how staff and youth participants experience the program	Spring 2017	Youth Participants Program Staff
Mapping Tools	Assess program alignment with the Opportunity Reboot model	Spring 2017 Winter 2017 Spring 2018	Program Staff Youthprise Staff Evaluators
Endline (T2) Youth Survey	Collect endline data on program quality and satisfaction	Spring 2018	Youth Participants
Staff-Reported Outputs Questionnaire	Secure data on each of the named outputs in the logic model	Spring 2018	Program Staff
Staff-Reported Youth-Level Implementation Factors and Youth Outputs	Secure data on whether each youth met the target for the youth-focused outputs named in the logic model	Spring 2018	Program Staff

*Notes.* The staff-reported youth-level implementation factors and youth outputs were collected as part of the same brief survey. The implementation evaluation used a descriptive, non-experimental design with a mixed methods approach. Measures from the endline (Time 2) Opportunity Reboot Youth survey and Staff-Reported Implementation Factors and Youth Outputs survey were included in both the implementation and preliminary impact evaluation activities (see Table 2).

**Table 2** Preliminary Impact Evaluation Activities

Activity	Purpose	Timing	Source
Baseline (T1) Youth Survey	Collect baseline data on youth demographics and short term outcomes	Fall 2017	Youth Participants
Endline (T2) Youth Survey	Collect endline data on youth demographics and short term outcomes	Spring 2018	Youth Participants
Qualitative Impact Narrative Activities	Gather rich open-ended insights from youth about their program experiences and short term outcomes	Spring 2018	Youth Participants
Staff-Reported Youth-Level Implementation Factors and Youth Outputs	Secure data on each youth's level of program engagement, and dosage	Spring 2018	Program Staff
Quasi-Experimental Design Employment and Wage Attainment Study with Propensity Score Matching	Compare Opportunity Reboot participants to similar youth on select intermediate outcomes	Fall 2019	DEED

*Notes.* DEED = Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. The preliminary impact evaluation used three research designs: (1) single-group, non-experimental design (using the baseline and endline youth survey, staff-reported implementation factors), (2) qualitative impact narrative activities, and (3) quasi-experimental design with propensity score matching (employment and wage attainment study). Measures from the endline (Time 2) Opportunity Reboot Youth survey and Staff-Reported Implementation Factors and Youth Outputs survey were included in both the implementation and preliminary impact evaluation activities (see Table 1).

**Table 3** Comparison of Total Youth Served, Target Sample, and Final Sample

	Total Youth Served	Target Sample of Study Participants	Final Sample of Study Participants
<b>Participation Time Frame:</b>	Start of Partner Funding to End of Partner Funding	6 Months Prior to Start of Baseline Youth Survey to Start of Endline Youth Survey	Participants who Provided Baseline and Endline Youth Survey Data
<b>Total n</b>	1,507	418	194
<b>Native American</b>	15%	22%	7%
<b>Hispanic/Latinx</b>	13%	16%	15%
<b>Men/Boys of Color</b>	36%	50%	42%
<b>Immigrant/Non-Native</b>	29%	31%	45%

*Notes.* Percentages do not add up to 100% due to non-mutually exclusive categories. The demographic characteristics used to compare samples were drawn from the SIF Data Supplement.

Figure 4 Description of Opportunity Reboot Community Partners



- 1 **Opportunity Youth of Duluth (OYOD)** is implemented in partnership with SOAR Career Solutions, Life House, Woodland Hills, Duluth Workforce Development, Lake Superior College, Duluth Public Schools Independent School District #709, and Duluth Adult Basic Education. The OYOD project builds upon the strengths of each partner agency and coordinates employment and stabilization services, addresses barriers to education and employment and provides youth with an on-ramp toward a life of meaningful employment and social engagement. This project incorporates transitional and traditional employment readiness models in order to meet the individualized needs of youth. OYOD serves opportunity youth from the Duluth-area, many of whom are youth of color experiencing homelessness, previously incarcerated, and/or chemically dependent. The project is located in Duluth, MN.
- 2 **Compass** is a blended alternative educational program that emphasizes career and college readiness, civic engagement, and overall well-being for high school-aged students who are disconnected or on a path to disconnection from school. These opportunity youth are offered appropriate academic accommodations and individualized programming, a structured and supported setting, connections to mentors and community partners, and a balance between alternative and mainstream settings. Compass staff help students discover, learn, and navigate their path to success. Compass is located in Sauk Rapids, MN.
- 3 **Tri-City Bridges to the Future** is a collaborative in Faribault, Red Wing, and Northfield that offers career pathways approaches for 130 opportunity youth ages 14-24, including large numbers of incarcerated youth and youth from immigrant communities. The primary focus is high school completion. The collaborative provides dual enrollment options through partnerships with area higher education institutions and postsecondary training in career clusters that have clear pathways to higher degrees. Tri-City Bridges is located in Northfield, Faribault, and Red Wing, MN.
- 4 **MIGIZI's** programming provides a green jobs pathway for 60 indigenous opportunity youth per year by providing education, training, supports, and experiences needed to prepare them to become financially independent, self-determining adults. The project also helps indigenous youth connect with, and discover, their cultural role as caretakers of the Earth. MIGIZI is located in Minneapolis, MN.

- 5 **Prior Crossing**, provides culturally competent employment and educational programs and wraparound services for 44 homeless youth, a majority of whom are youth of color, at a youth housing facility in Saint Paul, MN. Prior Crossing operates on a Housing First model: a person's access to housing should not be determined by their income, chemical or mental health, or their current motivation to improve it. Their primary outcome is to increase access to wraparound services to reduce homelessness by providing age-appropriate trauma-informed services, employment and skills training, and social connections in a manner that can lift people out of poverty with longer-term supports.
- 6 **Guadalupe Alternative Programs (GAP)** is a community-based education and social service agency. GAP implements the YouthBuild model for over 100 opportunity youth from Saint Paul's West Side, Dayton's Bluff, Payne-Phalen, and Greater East Side neighborhoods by giving them the tools and credentials needed to achieve school, career, and life success. Its program provides comprehensive wraparound services along with secondary and post-secondary education, workforce preparation, and credentialing. In addition, participants have access to academic and social-emotional supports in-house, and from partnerships with multiple community agencies and educational institutions. The population served includes a majority from immigrant and refugee communities. GAP is located in Saint Paul, MN.

# Research Questions

Ten research questions guided the implementation and preliminary impact phases of the Opportunity Reboot evaluation.

## Implementation

1. Was the Opportunity Reboot model implemented with fidelity?
2. What does participation and engagement in the Opportunity Reboot model look like for opportunity youth?
3. Did Opportunity Reboot program partners achieve output targets?
4. How satisfied were Opportunity Reboot participants with their experiences and the overall quality of their programs?

## Preliminary Impact

5. Did youth who participated in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model experience measurable and significant gains in short-term outcomes over the program year? Did all youth experience the benefits of program participation equally, or were program impacts experienced differentially by diverse demographic groups of youth?
6. Controlling for demographic, background, and implementation factors, what are the predictive associations between the youths' experiences of the Opportunity Reboot model features and their short-term outcomes?
7. In their own words, how did participants describe experiencing the features of the Opportunity Reboot model at their program sites?
8. In their own words, how did youth describe the impact of Opportunity Reboot on their lives?
9. What percent of youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were able to secure employment? How is this similar or different from the comparison group?
10. What percent of youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were able to secure living wage employment? How is this similar or different from the comparison group?

## Contribution of this Study

Collectively, the implementation and preliminary impact evaluations strengthen the preliminary evidence that program enhancement models, like Opportunity Reboot, that are infused into existing wraparound support programs hold promise for positively disrupting the lives of opportunity youth. This evidence is reflected in the quantitative change observed in youths' self-report surveys, in the raw and compelling narratives they openly shared, and in the employment and wage records maintained by the state of Minnesota.

The study featured a number of strengths that collectively add to the applied youth development literature and contribute to both research and practice. The effects seen for this wraparound model suggest that, while new programs are often needed, existing programs for opportunity youth can be enhanced in targeted ways for youth success. Opportunity youth often represent a difficult challenge to retain in longitudinal studies, yet this evaluation had a good retention rate, enhancing the quality of the data. The inclusion of significant percentages of rural and Native American youth was also an unusual feature of the evaluation study. The mixed methods approaches allowed both a 30,000-foot observation of overall effects across youth and programs, as well as a more granular understanding of how the effects were experienced by individual youth. Finally, the attention to both in-depth study of implementation and of preliminary impact in one study enabled greater insights into the program features responsible for youth outcome effects than is common.

## Organization of this Report

The remainder of this report is organized around the implementation and preliminary impact research questions, with a final section that articulates the contribution of this study. At the outset of the Implementation Evaluation (Section 2) and Preliminary Impact Evaluation (Section 3) sections, information is provided on:

- (a) Approach,
- (b) Instruments,
- (c) Sample, and
- (d) How the data were analyzed.

This is followed by a point-by-point presentation of the research questions and the related findings.



Section 2

# Implementation Evaluation

The implementation evaluation employed a descriptive, non-experimental design with a mixed-methods approach. This portion of the study focused on how the Opportunity Reboot model was implemented, contributing to understanding of contextual differences in how the Opportunity Reboot model is realized on the ground across geographically diverse community partners who serve young people with complex needs. In addition to helping the evaluation team understand how the four feature enhancements of the Opportunity Reboot model are implemented, this phase of work also built the capacity of the community partners to collect high-quality and useful data to inform the preliminary impact evaluation. It also identified how program participants described their experience and satisfaction with their participation in the Opportunity Reboot programs.

## Designing and Planning the Implementation Evaluation

To launch the implementation evaluation, Search Institute facilitated full-day Design and Planning workshops and focus groups with each community partner. The highly interactive workshops were attended by 2-3 evaluation team members, 4-6 staff from the community partner organization, and a member of the Youthprise team.

The Design and Planning workshops were organized around six objectives:

1. Build rapport between program staff and the evaluation team;
2. Co-create expectations for how the community partner and the evaluation team would work together;
3. Articulate the logic model guiding the program at each partner site, explicitly describing how they were (or were not) already serving opportunity youth in ways that align the Opportunity Reboot model and identifying possible areas where additional technical assistance may be needed;
4. Invite feedback and recommendations on the core Opportunity Reboot model based on partner's expertise and experience working with opportunity youth;
5. Share the proposed evaluation design and gather feedback on potential barriers; and
6. Audit current data collection activities and evaluation capacity of each community partner.

These workshops were paired with youth and staff focus groups at each community partner site. These semi-structured conversations: (a) built rapport with program staff and participants; (b) deepened the evaluation team's understanding of each program; and, (c) contextualized and grounded the evaluation design in the lived experiences of opportunity youth. Focus group data were recorded, transcribed, and systematically analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were summarized in reports made available to partners and Youthprise<sup>1</sup>.

The insights from these workshops and focus groups profoundly shaped the Opportunity Reboot model, technical assistance support plan, and the evaluation design. They also set the stage for what became strong, collaborative relationships between the evaluation team and community partners.

The following pages describe in more detail how these activities shaped the refinement of the Opportunity Reboot model, identified model-focused technical assistance needs of the partner organizations, and informed the evolution of the evaluation design.



<sup>1</sup> Copies of these reports are available by request from the authors.

# Refining the Opportunity Reboot Model

The Design and Planning activities provided a forum for dialogue about the Opportunity Reboot model. While the model was met with overwhelming support, partners also offered constructive and insightful feedback for further improvements. As a result of these conversations, four noteworthy refinements were made to the model (Box 1).

In addition to these refinements, Youthprise leveraged both existing evidence on best practices for supporting opportunity youth and the collective wisdom of community partners to further articulate the model by specifying the core concepts and strategies that operationalize each of the four Opportunity Reboot model features. These nine core concepts and their undergirding strategies are adhered to by programs implementing the Opportunity Reboot model through their program practices and policies. The concepts and strategies are identified in Table 4. The specific tactics used by partners to implement these strategies varied naturally from program to program, allowing them the flexibility required to meet the specific needs of their youth population, available partners, and geographic location.

## Box 1 Opportunity Reboot Model Refinements

**Opportunity Reboot Model language was evaluated to ensure cultural responsiveness.** All language in documents describing the model were critically reviewed by program partners to ensure they were culturally responsive to the diversity of young people served by their programs.

**The Positive Mentoring Relationship feature was broadened to include both formal and informal mentoring relationships.** Several partners noted the critical need for mentors who understand trauma and street culture; training in the areas is rarely provided to the adults who volunteer in formal mentoring programs. Program staff, case managers, teachers, and employers were commonly identified as mentors by program participants.

**Important role staff play in helping youth identify goals that are realistic and achievable was acknowledged via the Individualized Goal Supports feature.** Staff work directly with each young person to figure out their goals, then break them down into manageable and concrete steps. For many youth, this is a new process that requires skillful staff facilitation.

**The Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships feature was simplified.** The revised language more adequately encompasses the many types of formal, informal, long-standing, and episodic partnerships leveraged to support program participants.

## Table 4 Opportunity Reboot Model Features, Concepts, and Strategies

All four features of the Opportunity Reboot model are interrelated and grounded in evidence-based practice. Each of the features reflects three core principles: cultural responsiveness, a relationship focus, and inclusion of youth voice.

### Feature 1. Positive Mentoring Relationships

**Concept 1A. Program staff engaged with youth adopt a mentoring mindset grounded in best practices of culturally responsive informal mentoring and relationship building.**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Strategy 1Ai.  | Program staff receive customized, ongoing technical assistance in informal mentoring best practices that supports continuous professional development.   |
| Strategy 1Aii. | Program staff develop and implement a plan for incorporating relevant informal mentoring best practices to maximize positive relationships between youth and adults (includes employers, when applicable). |

**Concept 1B. Youth are prepared for mentoring experiences and develop skills to identify and engage informal mentors.**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Strategy 1Bi.   | Youth understand their rights, responsibilities and have appropriate expectations of a mentoring relationship. |
| Strategy 1Bii.  | Youth learn how to identify informal mentors.  |
| Strategy 1Biii. | Youth receive support from program staff in order to maximize the impact of informal mentors.                  |

### Feature 2. Individualized Goal Supports

**Concept 2A. Programs assess youth's needs and strengths.**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Strategy 2Ai.   | Program staff leverage internal and external resources to meet youth's needs, such as healthcare, housing, and transportation. |
| Strategy 2Aii.  | Program staff and youth engage in a visioning process about current and future goals that is strengths-based.                  |
| Strategy 2Aiii. | Youth learn to identify their strengths, potential support networks, and resources.  |

**Concept 2B. Youth develop an individualized education and work plan in achieving their goals with assistance from program staff.**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Strategy 2Bi.   | Youth learn to set attainable and measurable goals within the plan that have short-term, intermediate, and long-term milestones. |
| Strategy 2Bii.  | Youth and program staff identify their roles and responsibilities within the plan.   |
| Strategy 2Biii. | Youth learn to identify and address barriers, including modifying their plan if necessary.                                       |

**Concept 2C. Programs support youth in tracking progress, recognizing and learning from setbacks, and reaching their goals.**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Strategy 2Ci.   | Program staff motivate and encourage youth to attain short-term, intermediate and long-term milestones.  |
| Strategy 2Cii.  | Program staff assist youth in revising and expanding goals when appropriate.   |
| Strategy 2Ciii. | Program staff provide informal and formal assistance, including helping youth reflect on the overall goal-setting process and address barriers to achieving goals. |
| Strategy 2Civ.  | Program staff and youth celebrate successes in attaining milestones.   |

## Table 4 Continued Opportunity Reboot Model Features, Concepts, and Strategies

### Feature 3. Coordinated Career Pathways Supports

**Concept 3A. Programs create opportunities for career exploration that are grounded in connecting youth with employers in high growth-high demand local industries.**

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Strategy 3Ai.   | Program staff facilitate exploration of career interest inventories and labor market information related to high growth-high demand occupations.  |
| Strategy 3Aii.  | Program staff create linkages with specific employers in high demand industries to deepen youth participants' understanding of career options including hands-on work experiences with employers. |
| Strategy 3Aiii. | Program staff arrange opportunities for youth to participate in on-site secondary, post-secondary and/or on-the-job training leading to industry/employer recognized credentials.                 |

**Concept 3B. Programs assist youth with career preparation and planning.**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Strategy 3Bi.   | Program staff engage youth in occupational aptitude and basic skill assessments to develop and implement an agreed upon education and work plan that aligns with their career goals. |
| Strategy 3Bii.  | Program staff provide youth with programming aimed at improving financial literacy and money management.   |
| Strategy 3Biii. | Program staff prepare youth to successfully navigate a job search, application process, interviews, and other processes associated with their identified career path.                |

**Concept 3C. Programs provide culturally appropriate wraparound services that include multiple support structures pre- and post-employment to promote retention and encourage continuing education.**

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Strategy 3Ci.  | Program staff provide training aimed at promoting critical job retention and academic success, including social-emotional competencies, work readiness and life skills.     |
| Strategy 3Cii. | Program staff have regular contact with youth to discuss barriers to maintaining employment and academic success and identify specific resources to address those barriers. |

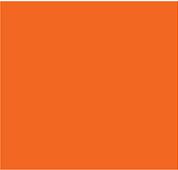
### Feature 4. Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships

**Concept 4A. Programs regularly interact with diverse stakeholders to implement strategies and increase capacity to serve youth.**

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Strategy 4Ai.   | Cross-sector partners are identified and establish a clear vision and goals for collaboration.                                    |
| Strategy 4Aii.  | Cross-sector partners agree on specific roles and responsibilities as it relates to serving youth.                                |
| Strategy 4Aiii. | Cross-sector partners maintain and strengthen collaboration through regular interactions and share successes and lessons learned. |

# Identifying Model-Focused Technical Assistance Needs

The focused conversations about the Opportunity Reboot model and existing programming that occurred during the Design and Planning activities helped identify growth areas where additional technical assistance and support is needed for community partners to fully integrate and realize the potential of the Opportunity Reboot model. The additional technical assistance needs that were generated, and a description of how each was met are described below.



## Interest In Specific Mentoring-Focused Content in Trainings

Community partners requested resources that provided specific guidance on: (a) how to mentor older youth, 18-24 years of age; (b) youth-initiated mentoring; and, (c) how to support mentees in ways that are developmentally responsive and that progress over the tenure of a multi-year deep and sustained mentoring relationship (i.e., bring mentorship to the “next level”). While the core of the training remained consistent across partners, MENTOR Minnesota worked closely with each community partner to adapt some portion of the mentoring training content to meet specific site-level needs.



## Offer Mentoring Training for Employers

Staff shared that employers sometimes know little about the realities and challenges opportunity youth face, and how to give critical, yet supportive feedback. Sites shared that potential employers are sometimes hesitant to accept opportunity youth as staff or interns because they: (a) fear these young people will be unable to meet their expectations for the positions, and (b) feel unable to provide the supervision necessary to train youth so they can be successful. Additionally, some employers have a set of cultural, often biased, raced, classed, gendered, abled expectations about opportunity youth that create barriers for the youth to succeed. In response to this identified need, MENTOR Minnesota developed a mentoring training for employers. Four of the community partners hosted these trainings for local employers, and the response was positive. As another large contribution of this study, MENTOR Minnesota now makes this training available to communities across the state.



## Create Opportunities for Community Partners to Share Tools and Resources

The community partners were eager to learn about the resources, strategies, and tools used by other organizations. Partners expressed interest in learning about visioning and goal-setting processes and programs used by other partners. They also wanted shared online resources through which they could share career mapping tools and assessments, educational support tools, and individualized career support tools. As part of their multi-pronged system of support, Youthprise designed each of the quarterly in-person convenings to include dedicated time for partners to share resources focused on a different element of the Opportunity Reboot model. An online repository was also created to facilitate cross-partner resource sharing.

## Informing the Evaluation Design

The Design and Planning activities also highlighted key considerations related to the evaluation approach and design. It became clear early in these conversations that although the projected numbers of young people served by each community partner was sufficient, on paper, for an evaluation to be conducted at each site, attrition and apprehension from the young people would lead to reductions in eligible research participants, and thus pose significant power challenges for all quantitative analyses. Our partners highlighted their struggle with programmatic attrition given the transient nature of the youth populations served and the general instability in their lives due to mental health, chemical dependency, housing insecurity, and system-related issues, thus not guaranteeing their presence at two defined time points for a baseline and end line survey assessment. Further, staff foreshadowed that programmatic attrition would likely be compounded in an evaluation, as research is seen as a historically oppressive activity for many opportunity youth, thus leading them to either abstain from research activities altogether or neglect to provide critical information. Given these barriers and their potential impact on powering the analyses, our community partners collectively advocated for — and, we subsequently shifted to, with support from CNCS — a unified evaluation design in which the data was aggregated across sites (rather than a multi-site approach).

Opportunity youths' apprehension about research and researchers served as a critical insight for this project; one that led to significant shifts in how the evaluation team engaged community partners and their program participants in testing the survey items, the approaches used to collect data that focused foremost on building trust with program participants, and the addition of the qualitative impact narratives to the evaluation design.

Involving opportunity youth and staff to build trust. The need to test survey items in advance of administering a survey is standard practice when working with new items and a new population of participants. In the Design and Planning workshops and focus groups, program staff highlighted the challenges that surveys can pose when used with opportunity youth. This included concerns about participants' literacy and comprehension abilities, their willingness to trust the source and use of the resulting data, and the need to ensure items were interpreted by opportunity youth as they were intended.

Sharing these concerns, time was built into the evaluation design to ensure staff and a subset of program participants could thoroughly review all survey content. Ultimately, these reviews helped the evaluation team put forward more robust and clear survey items.

For example, it was noted that some youth do not always understand who is and is not a staff person at a program site. By using the language the program staff and participants understand (and, in some cases, specific names of individuals), the unique design of the site-specific surveys could address that particular challenge. These reviews also helped identify and refine items that could be traumatizing for some youth. Feedback from staff was used to develop an administration guide that was prepared to support program staff with data collection.



Program staff also discussed at length issues of trust, or the potential lack of trust, in having people external to the community partner organization leading data collection activities. There was shared agreement that trust was critical to both collecting high-quality data and the ethical conduct of applied research. Program staff highlighted the need for any individual coming into their space to build rapport with program participants, to be a consistent presence across data collection activities, and the importance of having known program staff introduce evaluation staff to reinforce that the evaluator was an invited, and

trusted, guest. The Search Institute evaluation team worked closely with each community partner to identify and implement rapport-building strategies with participants. For baseline and end line data collection, program staff were asked to administer the survey to ensure youth buy-in into the process. In addition to the survey administration guide, program staff received remote coaching by the evaluation team on survey administration.

Early conversations with program staff and participants showcased the importance and value of being able to pair quantitative and qualitative data when sharing opportunity youth's experiences in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model. Thus, the evaluation design was expanded to include a series of qualitative impact narratives to complement the youth survey. These qualitative data provide a level of rich, thick

description and nuance that quantitative data often lack. For example, achieving stability for some opportunity youth meant that they were getting off the streets and on public assistance, even though society may not deem that as the ideal and it may not be fully reflected as success in the intermediate outcomes of the Opportunity Reboot model.

In addition to informing a series of responsive evaluation modifications, the Design and Planning activities helped the community partners cultivate an evaluative mindset and built buy-in for the evaluation as a rigorous process intended to elevate the Opportunity Reboot model's level of evidence.



# Implementation Evaluation Instruments

Four instruments were used to collect data during the implementation evaluation: (a) the Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool; (b) staff-reported questionnaire on program outputs, (c) staff-reported implementation factors and youth outputs; and, Opportunity Reboot youth survey.

## Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool

Tracking fidelity to the Opportunity Reboot model presented an interesting challenge as the model was intentionally designed: (a) to be integrated into an existing program, and (b) to give partners flexibility in selecting site-specific tactics to realize the core model concepts. Moreover, most of the strategies reflect micro-actions meant to be seamlessly integrated into the day-to-day interactions that occur between youth and program staff making them difficult to systematically track quantitatively. In addition, if honest, candid input was desired and in order to support full integration of the Opportunity Reboot model, the Design and Planning workshops showed the critical need to design a fidelity metric that was seen and experienced by community partner leadership and staff as a supportive technical assistance tool — and not as a strict evaluation assessment. For these reasons, a longitudinal, mixed methods approach to measuring fidelity was utilized that aimed at understanding how the Opportunity Reboot model was being implemented by each of the community partners. This approach triangulates data from community partners, Youthprise, and the evaluation team in assessing an organization's alignment to the Opportunity Reboot model.

The implementation evaluation was meant to capture the nuances in programmatic tactics employed to account for contextual differences among the partners, including population factors such as nativity, housing status, English language proficiency; available career pathways; region; and, organizational type including school- or community-based settings. This approach, which aligned with the fidelity measurement plan outlined in the approved SIF Evaluation Plan, was referred to as the Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool (see Appendix B). The Mapping Tool was used at three time points during a 15-month window: approximately March 2017 (Initial, Time 1), December 2017 (Time 2), and May 2018 (Final, Time 3).

## Overview of the Tool

The Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool is organized around the 26 strategies named in the Opportunity Reboot model (see Table 4). For each strategy, partners were asked to reflect on a series of questions.

- § First, they were asked, “What are you doing in your program to implement this strategy?” Here partners would list the specific activities or tactics being used by their program.
- § Next, they were asked “How would you describe your program’s current alignment with this strategy?” Partners responded to this question using a quantitative 4-point alignment scale: 0 = Not Aligned; 1 = Minimally Aligned; 2 = Mostly Aligned; 3 = Strongly Aligned. If a partner rated a strategy less than strongly aligned, they were asked a series of follow-up questions: “What plans, if any, do you have to more fully implement this strategy? By when? What resources or assistance do you need, if any, from Youthprise to do this? How aligned will the program be with this strategy once the aforementioned plans are implemented?”
- § Lastly, for each model feature, partners were asked: “What additional activities in your program support this feature that are beyond what is captured in the Opportunity Reboot strategies?”

While responses to the open-ended questions were formally recorded on the Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool, they were not thematically coded, as their purpose was not evaluative but rather to structure the conversation, provide insight on additional technical assistance needs, and provide context for the quantitative assessments.

## Recruitment

Decisions about which program leaders and staff would participate in the Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool conversations were made collaboratively by Youthprise and the lead contact at each community partner site. The goal was to recruit program leaders and staff who had both a broad and a deep understanding of the organization-specific tactics being employed to operationalize the features of the Opportunity Reboot model and who would be available across all waves of data collection. Recruitment to participate in the Mapping Tool discussions was easy as community partners were eager to talk about the innovative ways they were bringing the Opportunity Reboot model to life, and to problem-solve with Youthprise areas of the model that needed to be strengthened.

## Time 1 and Time 2 Administration

To bolster the validity of this fidelity approach, the first two administrations were conducted jointly by the evaluation team, program leadership and staff, and Youthprise. As part of these conversations, the evaluation team and Youthprise probed qualitatively for specific evidence and information about the activities (i.e., tactics) being used to implement each strategy. If either the evaluation or Youthprise team member disagreed with a community partner's quantitative assessment on the Mapping Tool, the specific score was discussed until consensus was reached (this was rare, and in all cases ended with the recorded score reflecting the assessment made by the evaluation or Youthprise team member). The same Youthprise staff member was present at all administrations of the Mapping Tool (across partners and over time) helping to ensure consistency in the assessments and providing expertise on the model strategies and concepts.

At Time 1 and Time 2, an average of four staff participated at each community partner site, including at least one member of the organization's senior leadership team (e.g., executive director, program director, program manager, assistant principal, school administrator) and one staff engaged in direct service with the opportunity youth served by the program (e.g., employment counselor, teacher, wraparound services team, case manager). While some community partners decided to include a larger group of staff for the Time 1 assessment, a core group of those staff remained consistent across all administrations, outside of a couple of staff who left their respective organizations during the data collection period. A total of 28 community partner leaders and staff participated at Time 1 and 22 participated at Time 2.

## Time 3 Administration

Time 3 administration. For the final administration (Time 3), the Mapping Tool was again completed by program staff, an evaluation team member, and Youthprise. However, at this time point the tool was completed separately by each reporter in order to independently assess and quantify fidelity to the Opportunity Reboot model. Each reporter was blind to the assessments of the other reporters; allowing potential discrepancies across reporters to be identified.

Upon completion, the independent fidelity scores assigned by the evaluation team and Youthprise were compared first, before looking at the community partners' scores.

The results show 91% perfect agreement at the strategy level across partners between the two reporters; that is, the evaluation team and Youthprise were in perfect agreement on 142 out of 156 (26 strategies x 6 partners) strategy-level scores. Further broken down by feature:

- § Feature 1 – Positive Mentoring Relationships: 77% perfect agreement, 23 of 30 scores;
- § Feature 2 – Individualized Goal Supports: 98% perfect agreement, 59 of 60 scores;
- § Feature 3 – Coordinated Career Pathways Supports: 91% perfect agreement, 46 of 48 scores; and,
- § Feature 4 – Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships: 78% perfect agreement, 14 of 18 scores.

The evaluation team and Youthprise discussed discrepant scores to reach consensus on a final fidelity score. This consensus score was deemed the final Time 3 fidelity assessment.

Next, this final consensus fidelity score was compared to each community partner's final scores on the Mapping Tool. The results revealed 94% perfect alignment (147 of 156 scores) at the strategy level across partners between reporters. Table 5 describes the 9 discrepant fidelity scores; for purposes of brevity the aligned scores were excluded. A majority of the discrepancies were due to Youthprise assessing stronger alignment than the GAP program team did in five strategies (i.e., S 1Bi-iii, S 2Ciii, S 3Bi). An additional four discrepancies were due to Youthprise assessing weaker alignment than three community partners (i.e., Compass, GAP, MIGIZI) on strategies in the Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships feature. An examination of fidelity by partner shows strong agreement in assessments across partners: 92% with Compass (24 of 26 strategies perfectly aligned), 77% with GAP (20 of 26), 96% with MIGIZI (25 of 26), 100% with OYOD, Prior Crossing, and Tri-City Bridges (26 of 26).

## Staff-Reported Questionnaire on Program Outputs

Working with community partners, Youthprise set quantitative targets for outputs tied to each of the four features of the Opportunity Reboot model (see Figure 2). These outputs are the direct products of the model-specified activities. A questionnaire was completed by a designated staff member at each of the community partner sites in order to collect data on two outputs: (1) the percentage of direct service staff who have participated in the Maximize Your Impact training, and (2) the number of new and beneficial collaborations that have been established to support opportunity youth locally. The staff member charged with reporting these data was typically a program leader, such as the executive director or program director. Staff completed these assessments retrospectively in Summer 2018.

Partners reported on the number of direct service program staff, employers, and/or other supportive adults who attended the Maximize Your Impact training made available by MENTOR Minnesota as part of the Opportunity Reboot model's emphasis on supporting the intentional and systematic integration of the model features. This training focuses on developing a "mentoring mindset" in everyday life. Focusing on some of the fundamentals of positive youth development, participants learn how to be strengths-based, youth-centered, help young people overcome challenges, and identify and nurture individual goals. Attendance logs that were systematically tracked, and verified, by MENTOR Minnesota were used by staff to report on training participation

In addition to reporting on participation in these mentoring trainings, staff also reported on the number of new partnerships their organization formed as part of their efforts to integrate the Opportunity Reboot model. Staff reported these data by listing each of the newly formed partnerships.

**Table 5** Discrepancies in Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool Final (Time 3) Fidelity Assessments

Program	Strategy	Time 3 Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool Alignment Assessments		
		Community Partner	Consensus Final	Reason for Adjustment
Compass	S 4Ai. Cross-sector partners are identified and establish a clear vision and goals for collaboration.	Strongly	Mostly	Partnerships are transactional, less of a cohesive strategic network with aligned goals.
	S 4Aii. Cross-sector partners agree on specific roles and responsibilities as it relates to serving youth.	Strongly	Mostly	
GAP	S 1Bi. Youth understand their rights, responsibilities and have appropriate expectations of a mentoring relationship.	Mostly	Strongly	Mentoring trainings were provided to program participants and staff, which was the core activity for these strategies of the model. GAP is going beyond connecting participants to others by emphasizing a more formalized mentoring role for these relationships.
	S 1Bii. Youth learn how to identify informal mentors.	Mostly	Strongly	
	S 1Biii. Youth receive support from program staff in order to maximize the impact of informal mentors.	Mostly	Strongly	
	S 2Ciii. Program staff provide informal and formal assistance, including helping youth reflect on the overall goal-setting process and address barriers to achieving goals.	Mostly	Strongly	This process is implemented more informally than formally at GAP, but is still effective in helping participants reflect on their progress toward individualized goals.
	S 3Bi. Program staff engage youth in occupational aptitude and basic skill assessments to develop and implement an agreed upon education and work plan that aligns with their career goals.	Mostly	Strongly	These assessments are used by GAP, albeit somewhat informally. These informal assessments still track the indicators suggested by this strategy, thus alignment was increased.
	S 4Aiii. Cross-sector partners maintain and strengthen collaboration through regular interactions and share successes and lessons learned.	Strongly	Mostly	Partnerships do not have a formalized structure in which they collaborate.
MIGIZI	S 4Aii. Cross-sector partners agree on specific roles and responsibilities as it relates to serving youth.	Strongly	Mostly	Partnerships did not develop a plan of aligned goals.

## Staff-Reported Implementation Factors and Youth Focused Outputs

Designated staff members at each of the community partner sites were asked to complete a brief survey on each of the young people who participated in either the baseline (Time 1) or endline (Time 2) Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey (see the Preliminary Impact section for more detail on this survey). Program leadership assigned staff to report on youth with whom they had direct experience working with in the program. Seven pieces of data were gathered via these surveys: two youth-level implementation factors, and five youth outputs named in the Opportunity Reboot logic model (see Figure 2), including the Maximize Your Opportunity training provided by MENTOR Minnesota. Maximize Your Opportunity prepares youth to build a relationship with a mentor and make the most of their mentoring experience. It uses engaging activities to explore the roles and boundaries of a mentor, set realistic expectations, practice communication skills, set personal goals, and learn how to engage with natural/informal mentors throughout life.

As described below in Research Question 2, the evaluation team worked closely with each community partner to operationalize the two youth-level implementation factors (i.e., dosage and engagement). Using the site-specific operational definitions, staff provided a program dosage and participant engagement designation for each young person. It was also determined during the Design and Planning activities, that program staff were best positioned to provide data on five of the youth-focused outputs. Thus, for each participant, staff also indicated whether the young person had: (a) participated in the Maximize Your Opportunity mentoring training (drawing on attendance logs tracked and verified by MENTOR Minnesota); (b) set goals and, if so, whether they had created a formal plan to reach these goals; (c) demonstrated marked growth towards the individual goals they had established with the program; (d) enrolled in a credential program, training, or coursework aimed at preparing them for a viable career path; (e) participated in an apprenticeship, internships, or other paid or unpaid work experience.

Program staff completed these youth-specific surveys in Spring 2018. The online survey was designed to be accessed by multiple staff, typically case managers, who had access to case notes, program databases, and knowledge of the outputs named above. Most staff completed the survey either concurrently with the endline (i.e., Time 2 youth survey used in the preliminary impact evaluation) or retrospectively at a single time point for participants who were no longer in the program. Some community partners elected to add detail on a rolling basis, updating fields as information changed or progress was made by participants. The survey platform was designed to reflect the program's roster, allowing staff to select a participant based on their participant ID. The evaluation team frequently corresponded with staff to respond to questions and gauge their current status, paying close attention to youth who had participated in the youth survey at both baseline and endline. Eighty-six percent of the 194 youth surveys that were matched between baseline and endline had corresponding staff surveys.

## Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey

The Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey was primarily used for the preliminary impact study with the exception of a few items tied to the implementation evaluation about program outputs and program quality and satisfaction. A description of these implementation-focused items is provided below. For a full description of the sample, data collection, and development of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey, please refer to the Preliminary Impact section of this report.

Youth were asked to report on two outputs named in the Opportunity Reboot logic model at baseline: (a) whether they can identify 2-3 program staff who support their growth; and (b) whether they can identify at least one new adult outside of the program who supports their growth. Responses were scored on a 5-point agreement scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. An output was considered achieved for an individual youth if they indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with each statement.

In addition to knowing how participants experienced the specific features of the Opportunity Reboot model, community partners were eager to better understand how youth participants more generally experienced the quality of their programming. The endline youth survey was extended to include nine questions assessing how youth experienced various aspects of their program — e.g., having an interest in program activities, feeling safe, feeling like their needs were met. All items were assessed on a 5-point agreement scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. An indicator of quality was considered achieved for an individual youth if they indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with each statement.

# IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

## FINDINGS BY RESEARCH QUESTION

Four research questions — answered using the data from the instruments described above — guided the implementation evaluation. The following section presents each of the research questions, in turn, and summarizes the core findings.

### Research Question 1

## Was the Opportunity Reboot model implemented with fidelity?

Tables 6 and 7 provide graphic summaries of the data collected with the Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool by site aggregated at the feature level (Table 6) and overall (Table 7) at Time 1 (initial) and Time 3 (final). These tables collectively illustrate how fidelity to the Opportunity Reboot model was strengthened over time.

Overall, all community partners made significant progress in their alignment to the Opportunity Reboot model between the initial and the final administration of the Mapping Tool: There was a notable shift from fewer “not or minimally aligned” scores in the initial assessment to (nearly) all “mostly” or “strongly” aligned scores in the final assessment. This progress was notable in all four features of the model and for all community partners.

The only exception was the Positive Mentoring Relationships feature for Opportunity Youth of Duluth (OYOD). At the final assessment, 60% of the strategies in this feature for this partner were still “not or minimally” aligned (however, this is down from 100% at the initial assessment). As discussed below, this designation was largely due to program leadership’s resistance to providing their participants with formalized mentoring training. Program leadership believe that a structured mentoring training delivered by an external training – with whom they have no relationship would not be well received by their population of participants. This perception stemmed from their experiences with other formalized training and classroom-type settings. Program leadership believed that this content would not resonate with their participants in this form, especially when they were more concerned, at that time, with meeting participants’ housing and food needs.

All of the other model features were mostly or strongly aligned across the six community partners. Given the role of shared technical assistance as well as the formation of a collective learning community, much of the program-specific actions tended to look more similar at the final administration of the Mapping Tool, when compared to the first administration. This was an added benefit of highlighting and discussing the exemplary features of each community partner at the cohort’s convenings.

Appendix C provides a detailed graphic summary of the data collected by partner and by strategy at Time 1 and Time 3. The following is a narrative analysis of how alignment to the Opportunity Reboot model shifted over the course of the project.

**Table 6 Summary of Model Alignment Assessments: Percent of Alignment by Feature**

		Feature 1. Positive Mentoring Relationships			Feature 2. Individualized Goal Supports		
		Not or Minimally Aligned	Mostly Aligned	Strongly Aligned	Not or Minimally Aligned	Mostly Aligned	Strongly Aligned
Compass	Initial	0%	20%	80%	0%	0%	100%
	Final	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
GAP	Initial	80%	20%	0%	50%	0%	50%
	Final	0%	60%	40%	0%	10%	90%
MIGIZI	Initial	20%	60%	20%	10%	20%	70%
	Final	0%	0%	100%	0%	20%	80%
OYOD	Initial	100%	0%	0%	20%	10%	70%
	Final	60%	40%	0%	0%	10%	90%
Prior Crossing	Initial	100%	0%	0%	0%	60%	40%
	Final	0%	60%	40%	0%	30%	70%
Tri-City Bridges	Initial	60%	40%	0%	0%	20%	80%
	Final	0%	60%	40%	0%	0%	100%

		Feature 3. Coordinated Career Pathways Support			Feature 4. Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships		
		Not or Minimally Aligned	Mostly Aligned	Strongly Aligned	Not or Minimally Aligned	Mostly Aligned	Strongly Aligned
Compass	Initial	63%	13%	25%	67%	33%	0%
	Final	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%
GAP	Initial	25%	13%	63%	67%	33%	0%
	Final	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%
MIGIZI	Initial	25%	50%	25%	33%	67%	0%
	Final	0%	0%	100%	0%	67%	33%
OYOD	Initial	0%	25%	75%	33%	33%	33%
	Final	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Prior Crossing	Initial	75%	25%	0%	67%	0%	33%
	Final	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	100%
Tri-City Bridges	Initial	0%	25%	75%	0%	33%	67%
	Final	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%

**Table 7 Summary of Overall Model Alignment**

		Not or Minimally Aligned	Mostly Aligned	Strongly Aligned
Compass	Initial	63%	13%	25%
	Final	0%	0%	100%
GAP	Initial	25%	13%	63%
	Final	0%	0%	100%
MIGIZI	Initial	25%	50%	25%
	Final	0%	0%	100%
OYOD	Initial	0%	25%	75%
	Final	0%	0%	100%
Prior Crossing	Initial	75%	25%	0%
	Final	0%	75%	25%
Tri-City Bridges	Initial	0%	25%	75%
	Final	0%	0%	100%

## Feature 1

### Positive Mentoring Relationships

Positive mentoring relationships were largely outside of the purview of community partners prior to the launch of Opportunity Reboot (as indicated by the low level of alignment with the mentoring-focused concepts and strategies). In completing the first Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool, the partners had — promisingly — already begun identifying and exploring ways to get more intentional about integrating mentoring into their program models. These efforts were further reinforced by the mentoring-focused technical assistance provided by MENTOR Minnesota and Youthprise.

**At the time of the final mapping tool, most programs (n = 5) were primarily aligned with this feature of the Opportunity Reboot model.** At the concept-level, all community partners were, at minimum, mostly aligned with Concept 1A and all but one community partner was aligned with Concept 1B. Opportunity Youth of Duluth was the only partner that reported, with Youthprise agreement, that they were minimally aligned with Concept 1B (Strategies 1Bi, 1Bii, and 1Biii) and not preparing program participants for mentoring experiences and helping them develop skills to identify and engage informal mentors. As described above, Opportunity Youth of Duluth staff felt their program participants would not participate in any kind of formalized training or workshop focused on this content.

While they agree that youth need support in making healthy decisions related to informal relationships, this largely happened in an unstructured manner through regular programming and services. Two other community partners (Tri-City Bridges and Prior Crossing) were assigned scores of mostly aligned for all strategies within Concept 1B. These strategies reflected the current state of training at those particular sites, given that not all of their youth had participated in the Maximize Your Opportunity Training.

As a result of the technical assistance provided by core partners, community partners revised their case management approach to include more access to staff and new relationship-building practices, such as motivational interviewing, trauma-informed practices, restorative justice practices, culturally-responsive practices, and elements of the Developmental Relationships Framework. A few of the community partners employed strategies that included expanding the numbers and types of mentors they had available to participants to include internal staff beyond a participant's case manager and, in some instances, included external employers or other community partners. Included in this expansion were additional systematic support structures for the adults who served in these mentoring roles. This included more check-ins with the community partners and reflection activities on their mentoring relationship.

Much of the positive mentoring relationships feature, in practice, was built on the concept that young people benefit from understanding the roles of mentors, developing skills to identify formal and informal mentors, and reflecting on their mentoring relationships. These were critical elements of the workshops that all community partners participated in (Maximize Your Impact and Maximize Your Opportunity). Although, as noted above in the Opportunity Youth of Duluth example, how broadly these workshops were incorporated into each community partner varied based on their own level of understanding of mentoring practices as well as the unique needs of their populations.



## Feature 2

### Individualized Goal Supports

Of the four Opportunity Reboot model features, Individualized Goal Supports had the strongest alignment across all six community partners; all of the community partners were aligned with this feature of the Opportunity Reboot model over the tenure of the project. This included strong alignment at the more nuanced concept- and strategy-levels. Only three strategies received scores of less than strong alignment across all community partners (Strategies 2Aii, 2Biii, 3Cii). These were largely due to their goal-reflection activities being less formalized outside of critical programmatic milestones such as enrollment (as in the case of MIGIZI) or differing across career pathways (as in the case of GAP). The lower alignment score did not suggest that these activities did not occur, only that they hoped to more systematically incorporate reflection activities in the case management process outside of when barriers arose that needed to be addressed.

Overall, partners were confident with their established goal setting processes. Drawing on highly-relational approaches, program staff work closely with opportunity youth to establish open lines of communication and identify, monitor, and adjust goals that are responsive to youths' individual needs. Goal-setting strategies employed across community partners included motivational interviewing, creating SMART goals, and facilitating visioning processes. In addition to helping participants set goals, a key part of supporting youth with goals involves staff helping youth navigate complex educational, financial, health, and legal systems. In some instances, this required working with other organizations in the community to meet those goals before a participant could fully engage with the program. Some examples of these basic priorities included meeting housing needs, addressing mental health concerns, and increasing English literacy.

Program staff acknowledged that youths' goals often change as they learn more about the requirements and industry standards for pursuing specific personal and career interests. **Motivating, encouraging, and supporting young people to achieve their goals was a particularly strong section in the model with moderate or strong alignment from the beginning of the project.** Working with youth to identify resources and draw on their strengths to set and reach goals is the foundation of the partners' programs, and they — appropriately — claimed this work proudly. Case management was the method most sites employ to establish, communicate, and process goals with opportunity youth. Youth are expected to learn professional and healthy relationship boundaries and the skills to set goals through the process of working with program staff.

Program staff leveraged community connections to help youth figure out what they want to do. Most programs exposed youth to different career trajectories through guest speakers, field trips, and conversations about what professions youth want to explore. Sites used various tactics for setting short- and long-term goals, all of which included processes for breaking large goals into manageable pieces.

## Feature 3

### Coordinated Career Pathways Supports

The community partners saw significant growth in their coordinated career pathways supports through their integration of the Opportunity Reboot model. This was largely due to strengthening their intentionality in providing resources and partnerships that can support this work, along with additional technical assistance from Youthprise and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. **The initial Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool showed that only two of the partners were “mostly aligned” with this model feature. By the end, all six partners had achieved full alignment.** This alignment existed at the concept-level and in all but one of the strategies (S 3Aii). Prior Crossing achieved a mostly aligned score for this particular strategy due to the need to scale up their existing credentialing and certification opportunities. Many opportunities existed, but long-term plans for this partner included additional options that would meet the diverse occupational interests of their participants.

Using a pathways approach to support opportunity youths' career development serves as an effective process not only for introducing youth to a job and formal employment, but also creating opportunities for youth to explore career trajectories and align themselves with a job that is a good fit for their skills and interests. Partners use a wide range of tactics to support experiential learning, such as site visits to local colleges and universities, guest speakers from various industries, short-term job training such as “ride alongs” and CDL (Commercial Driver's License), and workplace tours.

At its core, this feature included similar activities across all community partners but some of these varied out of necessity due to the different types of credentialing and certification pathways offered (e.g., nursing, information technology, hospitality, green jobs, and others). Consistent practices across program partners included the administration of career interest inventories and aptitude tests, incorporating financial literacy into curricula, conducting mock interviews, and supporting the development of application materials (such as resumes and cover letters).

The core activities of each community partner involved building specific skills related to the respective pathways they offered as well as supporting the attainment of outputs related to certifications and credentialing (such as internship hours and examinations). In addition to these activities, other critical tactics included forming and sustaining employment and educational partnerships that provided opportunities in relevant industries for their participants. Building and maintaining these organizational relationships were viewed as critical to creating and sustaining their participants' pathways to these careers. To facilitate this, community partners coached employers and participants on how to build, strengthen, and maintain professional relationships. Partners also helped program participants build social capital with potential local employers and higher education entities by organizing introductions, meetings, and job fairs, and, when necessary, served in a mediation capacity with those entities when issues arose around a participant's performance, including behavior, etiquette, punctuality, or attendance.

## Feature 4

### Impactful Cross-sector Partnerships

Each of the community partners relied heavily on people and organizations outside of their programs to fully implement all model features and to achieve Opportunity Reboot goals that they could not achieve on their own. These partnerships range from informal to more structured partnerships; and from something more like a vendor relationship to true collaboration and integration. The most common partnerships included employers, education institutions, governmental agencies, and other community organizations that addressed basic needs. At the time the initial Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool was completed, most partners were actively working to expand and deepen their network of partnerships, through outreach and ongoing relationship management. By the final administration of the tool, all partners had made progress across the three named strategies in this feature and three partners (Tri-City Bridges, Prior Crossing, and Opportunity Youth of Duluth) achieved strong model alignment across all named strategies (S 4Ai, S 4Aii, S 4Aiii). The other three partners (GAP, Compass, and MIGIZI) were mostly aligned by the final administration of the tool in all strategies. While these community partners assembled an impressive number of impactful partnerships, these relationships were not formalized with a Memorandum of Understanding and collective goals were not systematically set. In these instances, community partners did not establish a formalized collaborative that codified the roles and responsibilities beyond their own individual relationships with the network of partnerships. This led to a slight reduction in their fidelity designation to “mostly aligned” from most reporters.

Most of the cross-sector partnerships leveraged by the partners were aimed at providing Opportunity Reboot participants with trainings, services, opportunities, and other resources that sites were unable to provide on their own. For example, partners offered training for English language learners, and on topics like socioemotional learning, financial literacy, sexual health, environmental justice, and jobs in the Green economy. These partnerships also create opportunities for college visits, scholarships, internship or job placements, and service-learning. They provide mental health services, GED support, and financial counselling. Partnerships were also forged with the explicit purpose of removing barriers to program participation and success (e.g., access to food, bus passes, childcare). In a few cases, partners provide support to program staff, rather than to program participants (e.g., around recruiting or evaluation). Sometimes partners purchase services from program sites, providing additional income to support site organizational goals. Staff of all sites reported connecting with partners to talk about progress being made by youth they serve together, and to work together to identify ways to better help youth achieve goals. Initiating and nurturing these partnerships was a significant task for staff at each community partner. Once partnerships were formed, staff were tasked with managing the relationship and setting expectations for collective success. This most frequently occurred through in-person formal meetings and informal check-ins with key individuals at each partnering organization.

## Research Question 2

# What does participation and engagement in the Opportunity Reboot model look like for opportunity youth?

The evaluation team worked closely with each community partner to better understand what participation and engagement looked like for opportunity youth in the Opportunity Reboot partner programs. This led to the development and operationalization of measures of critical implementation factors (i.e., program dosage, participant engagement).

## Dosage and Engagement

**In accordance with criteria pre-specified by the partners in consultation with the evaluation team (as described in Tables 8 and 9), participants' program dosage and engagement were scored on a 3-point scale (high, medium, and low). Among the overall sample of participants, 64% were assessed by program staff to have received high dosage, 28% with medium dosage, and 8% with low dosage. A little more than half (59%) of the overall sample of participants were assessed by program staff to have high levels of program engagement, 30% with medium engagement, and 11% with low engagement. Details of how the dosage and engagement criteria were developed follow.**

The plan to measure how often young people participated (i.e., program dosage) in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model and how engaged they were when they showed up (i.e., participant engagement) emerged through ongoing dialogue between the evaluation team and community partners.

The Design and Planning activities, described above, illuminated the variability in range that existed across community partners in program dosage. For example, Compass — the program embedded within Sauk Rapids-Rice School District — has a program model that involves daily interactions between program staff and students every day school is in session. This is also true of MIGIZI. In contrast, dosage is much lower in a program like Prior Crossing where participants are typically older and are only required to meet with program staff once a month (although, in reality, interactions often occurred much more frequently but fully at the discretion of the participant). This contextual variation in programmatic settings and populations served across community partners presented the need for a more nuanced metric that quantified multiple objective data points for each program participant. These metrics went beyond a single assessment of attendance and included explicit thresholds on multiple variables that determined whether a participant was to be codified as having high, medium, or low program doses. For the full detail on each community partner's objective and quantifiable dosage metrics, taking into account their program context and target beneficiaries, see Table 8.

Data on participants' level of program dosage were already being routinely collected, monitored, and logged by each partner for other reporting purposes; each being reflective of their program model and the populations served. To establish a common metric across the community partners, each partner was asked to work with the evaluation team to review and strengthen existing metrics and subsequently, to quantify what high, medium, and low program dosage looked like using those dosage metrics, thereby essentially creating a formula for use in determining the designation.

**Table 8** Description of Quantitative Program Dosage Metrics by Community Partner

Community Partner	High Dosage	Medium Dosage	Low Dosage
Compass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrollment: All Compass classes</li> <li>Attendance: &lt;8 absences</li> <li>Contacts: Attend a minimum of two face to face meetings per month and a weekly connect</li> <li>Event Attendance: Miss &lt;2 field trips or guest speakers</li> <li>Circle Attendance: Misses &lt;2 Circle activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrollment: &gt;half of Compass classes</li> <li>Attendance: Between 8-14 absences</li> <li>Contacts: Attend a face to face and connect with a mentor &gt;half of the maximum meeting times</li> <li>Event Attendance: At least half of field trips and guest speakers</li> <li>Circle Attendance: Attend &gt;half of Circle activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrollment: &lt;half of Compass classes</li> <li>Attendance: &gt;14 absences</li> <li>Contacts: Attend a face to face and connect with a mentor &lt;half of the maximum meeting times</li> <li>Event Attendance: Attend &lt;half of field trips or guest speakers</li> <li>Circle Attendance: Attend &lt;half of the Circle activities</li> </ul>
GAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance: 91% to 100%</li> <li>Volunteer Hours: &gt;300 hours</li> <li>Credits: &gt;8 credits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance: 80% to 90%</li> <li>Volunteer Hours: 150-299 hours</li> <li>Credits: 4 to 7.5 credits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance: &lt;80%</li> <li>Volunteer Hours: &lt;150 hours</li> <li>Credits: &lt;4 credits</li> </ul>
MIGIZI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total Hours: &gt;150 hours</li> <li>Completed Projects: 75%-100%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total Hours: 100 to 150 hours</li> <li>Completed Projects: 50%-74%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total Hours: &lt;100 hours</li> <li>Completed Projects: &lt;50%</li> </ul>
OYOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payroll Hours: &gt;150 hours (Life House)</li> <li>Attendance: 75%-100% (SOAR)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payroll Hours: 50-149 hours (Life House)</li> <li>Attendance: 50%-74% (SOAR)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payroll Hours: &lt;50 hours (Life House)</li> <li>Attendance: &lt;50% (SOAR)</li> </ul>
Prior Crossing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Manager Interaction: &gt;3 meetings per month</li> <li>Employment Coach Interaction: &gt;3 meetings per month</li> <li>Length of Stay: &gt;12 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Manager Interaction: 2-3 meetings per month</li> <li>Employment Coach Interaction: 2-3 meetings per month</li> <li>Length of Stay: 4-11 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Manager Interaction: 0-1 meetings per month</li> <li>Employment Coach Interaction: 0-1 meetings per month</li> <li>Length of Stay: 0-3 months</li> </ul>
Tri-City Bridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contacts: &gt;6 contacts with staff</li> <li>Tenure: &gt;12 weeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contacts: &gt;2 contacts with staff</li> <li>Tenure: 6-12 weeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contacts: &gt;1 contacts with staff</li> <li>Tenure: &lt;6 weeks</li> </ul>

As an example, GAP used a combined metric of on-site attendance, volunteer hours, and out-of-school time credits. The dual benefit of this approach is that it allows for variability in dosage that is reflective of each partner's program model while still allowing the aggregation of data across partners for the preliminary quantitative impact evaluation analyses.

A similar process was used to determine the partner-specific definitions of what high, medium, and low participant engagement looked like. To start, each community partner was asked to describe, in writing, the kinds of behaviors they observe and to record in case notes that signify when participants are fully engaged and when they are disengaged in their programs. Drawing directly from these descriptions, the evaluation team provided partners with partner-specific guidance on how to track participant engagement. It was important for these metrics to be easily understood and observable by program staff so that case managers (or, their equivalents — depending on the program model) would be able to accurately report on their respective metrics in their case notes, and subsequently, in the Staff-Reported Questionnaire. As an example, Prior Crossing used a combined metric of participants attending volunteer events, consistently attending meetings, and frequency in engaging staff. For the full detail on each community partner's engagement metrics, see Table 9.

Program dosage and participant engagement was collected on every program participant who completed either the baseline or endline youth survey as part of the preliminary impact evaluation. These data were collected via the Staff-Reported Implementation Factors and Youth Outcomes survey (see above for additional detail). Designated staff who worked directly with the program participants were charged with reporting this data.

### Research Question 3

## Did Opportunity Reboot program partners achieve output targets?

Youthprise set quantitative targets for implementation outputs tied to each of the four features of the Opportunity Reboot model (see Figure 2). These outputs are the direct products of model-specified activities. The diverse nature of these outputs required us to gather data from various sources (described in the Implementation Evaluation Instruments section) including the staff-reported questionnaire on program outputs (which drew on attendance logs tracked and verified by MENTOR Minnesota), the staff-reported survey on implementation factors and youth-focused outputs, and the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey.



Table 10 summarizes the targeted and observed levels of each of the outputs for the overall sample and, for youth-focused outputs, by age (14-17 year-olds and 18+ year-olds). **Half of the outputs tied to the Positive Mentoring Relationships feature of the Opportunity Reboot model were achieved across community partners.** Staff and youth at five partner sites had high levels of participation in both of the mentor trainings.

**Table 9** Description of Program Engagement Metrics by Community Partner

Community Partner	Engagement Data Points	High Engagement	Medium Engagement	Low Engagement
Compass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieved passing grades in classes</li> <li>Schoolwork completion</li> <li>High marks in classroom participation</li> <li>Frequent communication with Compass Program Manager</li> </ul>	Meets all criteria	Meets 75% of the criteria	Meets less than 75% of the criteria
GAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earning a credential or certification</li> <li>Improved literacy</li> <li>Earning a diploma</li> </ul>	Obtained all 3 milestones	Obtained any 2 of the 3 milestones	Obtained 1 or less of the milestones
MIGIZI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in community projects</li> <li>Participation in class discussions</li> </ul>	Demonstrates the named behaviors "a lot" of the time	Demonstrates the named behaviors "sometimes"	Demonstrates the named behaviors "rarely"
OYOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation when present</li> </ul>	Attending regularly and participating at a high level	Actively involved, but not always participating	Not attending regularly and not actively participating
Prior Crossing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attending volunteer events</li> <li>Attending meetings</li> <li>Engagements with staff</li> </ul>	Actively participating, progressing toward goals, and showing up for meetings and volunteer events	Visible at Prior Crossing but typically non-responsive or inactive in events	Non-responsive, inactive, and rarely visible at Prior Crossing
Tri-City Bridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observations made when youth are accessing the program services</li> </ul>	Actively pursuing next steps in ISS plan and responds to Bridge staff outreach attempts most or all of the time	More passive than active participation and responds to Bridge staff outreach attempts some of the time	Passive participation and responds to Bridge staff outreach attempts none of the time or very rarely

**Table 10** Targeted and Observed Opportunity Reboot Logic Model Outputs

Output	Target	Observed		
		All	Ages 14-17	Ages 18+
<b>Feature 1. Positive Mentoring Relationships</b>				
O1. Staff who work directly with youth have participated in the <i>Maximize Your Impact</i> training. <sup>2</sup>	90%	91% 100%, if OYOD is excluded	—	—
O2. Youth have participated in the <i>Maximize Your Opportunity</i> training. <sup>3</sup>	90%	85% 92%, if OYOD is excluded	97% 100%	82% 90%
O3. Youth can identify 2-3 staff at their program who support their growth. <sup>1</sup>	95%	83%	69%	88%
O4. Youth can identify at least one new adult outside of the program who supports their growth. <sup>1</sup>	90%	75%	58%	82%
<b>Feature 2. Individualized Goal Supports</b>				
O5. Youth have set goals and created a plan to reach these goals. <sup>3</sup>	95%	98% set goals 99% created formal goal plan	100% 98%	97% 99%
O6. Youth have demonstrated marked growth towards their individualized goals. <sup>3</sup>	75%	82%	76%	84%
<b>Feature 3. Coordinated Career Pathways Supports</b>				
O7. Youth have enrolled in credential programs, trainings, or coursework aimed at preparing them for viable career paths. <sup>3</sup>	95%	96%	98%	95%
O8. Youth have participated in an apprenticeship, internship, or other paid or unpaid work experience. <sup>3</sup>	75%	76%	48%	86%
<b>Feature 4. Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships</b>				
O9. New, beneficial collaborations have been established by the organization to support opportunity youth locally. <sup>2</sup>	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Notes.* Data on the outputs were gathered from three sources: <sup>1</sup>youth-report from the endline Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey; <sup>2</sup>staff-report outputs questionnaire; <sup>3</sup>staff-report of implementation factors for each individual participant. One partner, Opportunity Youth of Duluth (OYOD), determined, in consultation with MENTOR Minnesota and Youthprise, that their program staff and youth participants would not participate in either of the mentoring trainings offered as supports for Opportunity Reboot. — is used to denote cells that do not have youth data.

One partner, Opportunity Youth of Duluth (OYOD), determined, in consultation with MENTOR Minnesota and Youthprise, that their program staff and youth participants would not participate in either of the mentor trainings offered as part of the Opportunity Reboot model. OYOD leadership felt their current professional development for staff sufficiently covered issues related to mentoring and mentoring mindsets, and that a youth-focused mentor training was not an urgent priority for the homeless youth they serve. **Across partner sites, high numbers of participants reported they could identify 2-3 program staff and one new adult outside of the program who supported their growth; although, neither output target was met.** Younger opportunity youth were also lower on both of these outputs than their older peers.

**All remaining outputs focused on the Individualized Goal Supports, Career Pathways Supports, and Impactful Cross-Sector Partnership elements of the Opportunity Reboot model were met or exceeded.** As expected because of their age, fewer 14-17 year-old opportunity youth had participated in an apprenticeship, internship, or other paid or unpaid work experience. Noteworthy, all community partners indicated that their organization had established new, beneficial collaborations to support opportunity youth in their community. The number of new collaborations ranged from 5 to 74. Collaborations included for-profit companies, secondary and higher education institutions, adult basic education, juvenile corrections facilities, city and government offices, and mental health organizations.

## Research Question 4

### How satisfied were Opportunity Reboot participants with their experiences and the overall quality of their programs?

In addition to focused quantitative and qualitative analysis of opportunity youths' experiences of the Opportunity Reboot model and its impact, youth were also asked to complete a brief set of program quality and satisfaction items at the endline administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey. As shown in Table 11, most youth participants rated the quality of their programs high; at least 72% of participants answered "agree" or "strongly agree" to each of the program quality and satisfaction items. It is particularly noteworthy that four out of five youth in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model were interested in program activities, felt physically and emotionally safe, felt respected, and also believed their teachers and counselors were trying to help them.

**Table 11** Abbreviated Summary of Program Quality and Satisfaction Item Frequencies

Items	Agreement
When I am at [program], I am interested in the activities, and what is going on.	82%
When I am at [program], people make me feel like I am important or special.	69%
When I am at [program], I feel physically and emotionally safe.	82%
When I am at [program], staff work hard to get to know me.	77%
When I am at [program], people are interested in, and respect my culture.	83%
My teachers and counselors work with key adults in my life who are trying to help me. For example, counselors not at my program, parenting adults, employers, teachers, probation officers, or others.	79%
I have someone at [program], who acted like a mentor to me.	75%
I know how to find people to mentor me in my life.	76%
On average, how interested or not interested are you in the activities you participate in at [program]?	72%

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*Note.* [program] is used here as a placeholder. In the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey, the actual name of the program a participant was enrolled in was used.



Section 3

# Preliminary Impact Evaluation

The preliminary impact evaluation of Opportunity Reboot built directly and iteratively on the implementation evaluation. Its goal was to **strengthen the level of preliminary evidence and establish emerging moderate evidence that the Opportunity Reboot model had a positive impact on the lives of opportunity youth**, using the standards set forth by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The focus of the preliminary impact evaluation was twofold:

1. To empirically test the association between young people’s experiences in the programs using the Opportunity Reboot enhancements and key short-term youth development outcomes; and
2. To test whether participants in Opportunity Reboot programs fare better than non-participants on select intermediate outcomes.

As shown in Figure 3, the preliminary impact evaluation consisted of three major research activities: (1) two youth surveys (baseline and endline; i.e., a single group non-experimental outcome evaluation design); (2) qualitative youth impact narrative activities; (3) a quasi-experimental design study of employment and wage attainment that leveraged data collected by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to compare program participants and non-participants. As described in the Implementation Evaluation section, staff-reported dosage and engagement variables were created as part of the implementation evaluation. These variables were also included as part of the preliminary impact evaluation. This section of the report begins by providing a methodological overview of the data collection methods used for these three major research activities, with the remainder of the section structured around the preliminary impact evaluation questions, including the specific analytic methods used and the associated results.

All research materials, protocols, and procedures were reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. Prior to administering the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey and initiating the Opportunity Reboot Youth Impact Narrative activities, the evaluation team — in conjunction with community partners — obtained parental consent for each youth to participate in the survey; this was a separate process from obtaining the youths’ assent, which was done in the survey itself. Youth who were 18 or older on the survey administration dates consented to their own participation. With IRB approval, the requirement of parental consent was waived for youth in circumstances where community partner staff determined that (a) it was not possible to secure parent or guardian consent as many participants were homeless and/or had severed ties with their parents or guardians because of neglect or abuse; or, (b) it could not be reasonably obtained or attempting to do so was not in the best interests of the participants.



In these situations, an appointed staff member at the community partner organization (e.g., warden, caseworker, school superintendent) who had an established relationship with the youth and a background in social welfare or case management was asked to approve (or not) the parent consent form as an authorized representative. Additional detail on the human participant research protections that guided the evaluation data collection activities can be found in Appendix D.

# Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey

## Survey Development Process

In preparation for the forthcoming Opportunity Reboot impact evaluation activities that were to follow, a full-day workshop was convened to establish shared agreement about the core proximal



youth outcomes that would be used in the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey and become the cornerstone of the cross-partner impact evaluation. More specifically, this workshop aimed to: (a) identify the core short-term youth outcomes of the Opportunity Reboot model; (b) build consensus on the operational definition of each outcome; (c) engage participants in vetting possible measures and methodologies that might be used to capture these data. The workshop provided an opportunity to bring multiple perspectives into the same space to shape the preliminary impact evaluation. Those present included program leadership from each community partner, direct service and support staff, evaluation team members, and Opportunity Reboot core partners, including Youthprise.

## Short-Term Youth Outcomes

There was widespread buy-in among workshop participants that the following criteria would be used to evaluate whether a short-term outcome warranted inclusion in the youth impact survey:

- § Young people, the community partners, core Opportunity Reboot partners, and funders care about, and value, the short-term outcome.
- § There must be a reasonable expectation that the outcome is malleable, and that quantitative change can be captured over the course of a 9-12 month period across diverse populations of young people.
- § There is a strong theoretical argument that the short-term outcome could be a direct result of the features, concepts, and strategies named in the Opportunity Reboot model (see Table 4).
- § The outcome has been empirically established by extant scientific research to be a leading indicator of the named intermediate and longer-term outcomes of the Opportunity Reboot model (see Figure 2).
- § There is shared agreement that the short-term outcome is critical to shifting the life trajectories of opportunity youth.

In addition to these criteria, the group agreed it was critical that the short-term outcomes be limited to only those deemed essential for the evaluation with the intent of keeping the survey brief, the level of youth participation high, and the data quality strong.



Further, the metrics used to assess the final outcomes must be responsive to the language, reading, and traumatic and contextual experiences of the opportunity youth served by these programs. And, these data must be collected in a way that is fair, respectful, and inviting. Many of these opportunity youth view research as inherently oppressive and find it difficult to trust “outsiders.” Thus, it was important that data were collected in a safe and open relational context and that it was clear to youth why these data were being collected and how the data were going to be used.

The work of identifying core short-term youth outcomes began by leveraging data the evaluation team collected as part of the early Design and Planning workshops and focus groups. This included partner-specific logic models, as well as themes from the youth and staff focus groups about program impact. Search Institute led a large-group process in which each named outcome from these materials was reviewed based on the five inclusion criteria identified above. This process led to reorganization, renaming, and removal of some short-term outcomes.

Using the refined list of short-term outcomes, all workshop attendees participated in an activity to prioritize the list. This process led to quick agreement across community partners on the core outcomes that would be measured in the impact study. It also provided a list of contextualized outcomes of high importance and relevance to individual community partners. The evaluation team worked with these individual community partners to define and measure these outcomes. One such example was at MIGIZI, where developing an appreciation of Native American identity and culture is an important aspect of their work with opportunity youth from the Native community.

With the refined list of short-term youth outcomes identified, small groups of workshop participants worked to draft operational definitions of each outcome. These draft definitions were then reviewed and commented on by other participants until shared consensus was generally achieved. Co-constructing these operational definitions enabled participants to move beyond broad outcomes (e.g., social-emotional competencies) and, additionally, articulate the specific skills or outcomes of interest (e.g., self-awareness, relationship skills) that comprise these broader outcomes.

Using these draft operational definitions, the process of measurement identification and review began. Using the outcomes named in these resources, the evaluation team conducted some pre-work and identified a pool of possible metrics to be considered for use in the final phase of the implementation evaluation and the forthcoming impact evaluation. Then, equipped with a prioritized list of outcomes, small groups scored the available metrics based on simplicity of language, length, appropriateness, and relevance. Participants were asked to provide specific recommendations on all metrics that they felt required modification in order to work for their program.

The evaluation team used the products of this working meeting to further refine the targeted short-term youth outcomes, and their associated metrics. The final list of short-term outcomes can be found in Figure 2.

## Validating the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey

Prior to administration, the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey was subjected to several rounds of careful review to test readability, interpretation, translation needs, contextual and cultural appropriateness, and identification of possible traumatic triggers. Vetting procedures included expert reviews by core Opportunity Reboot partners, staff reviews by each community partner; and cognitive interviews with youth participants.

**Expert Reviews.** The Opportunity Reboot core partner team — consisting of 10 staff with expertise in diversity, equity, inclusion, education, youth development, evaluation, mentoring, public policy, and workforce development — conducted expert reviews of the initial youth survey draft. Based on this feedback, items were revised to sharpen the conceptual clarity and dimensionality of each construct being measured.

**Staff Reviews.** Staff from each program (total  $n = 12$ ) reviewed the individual survey items and provided feedback on the appropriateness of the language, if used with their population of program participants, as well as item relevance and potential for items to trigger traumatic events. Using these recommendations, the evaluation team refined the content and created a version for participant review.

**Youth Cognitive Interviews.** Cognitive interviews (sometimes called “think-aloud interviews”) were conducted with 3-4 youth participants at each program location (total  $n = 24$ ). The purpose of these interviews was to evaluate, from the youth perspective, the utility of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey as an assessment for determining program effectiveness. The evaluation team gathered participants’ qualitative evaluations of the survey and facilitated a process through which young people from the community partners’ programs helped refine the phrasing and appropriateness of items.

In these cognitive interviews, the evaluation team made it clear to participants that the team was interested in how youth came to an answer or response to a survey item rather than their actual answer. For example, participants were told that evaluators want to know what they were thinking about when they heard the question, what pictures or examples they saw in their head, and what the words meant to them. Participants were also monitored for any issues in reading the survey aloud and asked to circle words that they believed were difficult to read for them or their peers.

In addition to adjusting the language of the survey items, broader questions about concepts were posed as well. To gauge whether items might be sensitive to change, participants were asked if they thought their answers to particular questions would have been different a few months ago. Other definitional questions were asked of participants to ensure broad understanding of key phrases. These were typically asked due to being flagged by program staff as potentially problematic. An example included: “What do phrases like “goals” or “goal setting” mean to you? Do you refer to this in a different way? Can you give me an example of how you use, or might use, goal setting in your life?” These data were analyzed across sites to determine revision needs. All edits were made prior to baseline implementation of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey.

The cognitive interviews also made it apparent that a number of Karen students (many refugees from Burma) who participated in programming at the GAP community partner site would be unable to complete the survey in English. As such, a Sgaw Karen version of the tool was created to ensure these youth could participate. This survey underwent a series of translations and back-translations to ensure that the wording accurately reflected the intent of the item on the English version of the survey.

## Data Collection

The Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey was administered twice: baseline was established in Fall 2017 (Time 1) and again at endline in Spring 2018 (Time 2). While for some youth these baseline and endline survey administrations aligned with the beginning and end of their program, this was not true for the overwhelming majority of participants; many of whom have or will cycle in and out of the programs offered by community partners for years as they work to get their lives on track. Thus, it is inappropriate to refer to — or to interpret the results of the data from — these survey administrations as pre- and post-survey data. The nature of the wraparound supports provided by community partners and the (sometimes urgent, sometimes ongoing) needs of the youth served called for more responsive research design shaping than is traditional, and did not lend themselves to using a strict pre/post research design. The accelerated timeline prompted by funding changes also made such a design unrealistic.

The final versions of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey consisted of 86 items at baseline, and 112 items at endline (a couple of the community partners elected to include additional site-specific items). The baseline survey took participants 22 minutes, on average, to complete; the longer endline survey took participants 34 minutes, on average. Most youth were surveyed on computers or tablets using a web-based survey that was hosted and administered via the evaluation team's secure data collection platform. A small subset of youth completed the survey on paper; the most common reason for doing so was because one of the community partners served incarcerated youth who were unable to access personal electronic devices. Staff at the community partner sites helped facilitate youths' access to the survey and were available to participants to answer any clarifying questions.

## Sampling

The evaluation team, in collaboration with community partner staff, invited all opportunity youth ages 14 to 24 who were participating in partner programs in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 to complete the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey. In total, 298 youth participated at baseline, and 236 youth participated at endline; 194 of these youth participated at both time points. Demographic characteristics of participating youth are reported in Table 12 (note that the sums of the demographic subgroups in the table may not add up to the total sample size, as some youth chose not to provide responses to these demographic questions).

Two-thirds of baseline (Time 1) participants were retained at endline (Time 2). If known, program staff were asked to account for each baseline participant who attempted prior to the endline survey administration. The explanations generally fit into four broad categories: (a) 49% of attrited participants could not be contacted for the endline survey; (b) 40% were unavailable due to no longer being a participant in their programs for reasons tied to mobility, early graduation, or disciplinary termination from their program site; (c) 7% were newly incarcerated when the endline survey was administered; and, (d) 4% were unavailable due to work or school conflicts, or experienced a significant life event when the endline survey was administered. The demographic characteristics of these attrited youth were generally similar to that of the youth who participated at both time points (see Table 12); however, there were more Black and White participants and fewer Asian participants in the attrited group. Additionally, there were more US-born participants and participants of non-Twin Cities metropolitan area programs among the attrited youth compared to the retained sample of youth.

**Table 12** Demographic Characteristics of Opportunity Reboot Youth Participants

Characteristic	Matched Sample		Attrited Sample	
	<i>n</i>	Valid %	<i>n</i>	Valid %
Age	M = 19.4		M = 19.3	
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	93	51.1%	48	49.0%
Female	89	48.9%	50	51.0%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
African, African American, or Black	26	17.0%	24	24.5%
Asian	54	35.3%	18	18.4%
Native American	10	6.5%	8	8.2%
White	24	15.7%	22	22.4%
Mixed Race	13	8.5%	11	11.2%
Some Other Race	3	2.0%	4	4.1%
Hispanic or Latinx	23	15.0%	11	11.2%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>				
Heterosexual	78	63.4%	59	62.8%
Not Heterosexual	45	36.6%	35	37.2%
<b>Nativity</b>				
Born in the United States	101	55.2%	64	66.0%
Born outside the United States	82	44.8%	33	34.0%
<b>Geographic Location</b>				
Participated in Twin Cities Metro Sites	107	57.5%	46	46.9%
Participated in Greater Minnesota Sites	79	42.5%	52	53.1%

*Notes.* The attrited sample is comprised of youth who *only* participated in the baseline administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey. The sums of the demographic subgroups may not add up to the total sample size, as some youth chose not to provide responses to these demographic questions.

## Preliminary Impact Measures and Instruments

The Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey included metrics on the following major sections: (a) youths' experiences of the Opportunity Reboot model features; (b) youth short-term outcomes; and as mentioned in the implementation evaluation; (c) program quality and satisfaction indicators; and, (d) selected youth-focused outputs named in the Opportunity Reboot logic model (Figure 2). Appendix E summarizes the measures' psychometric properties

**Independent variables: Opportunity Reboot Model features.** The Opportunity Reboot model has four core features: positive mentoring relationships, individualized goal supports, coordinated career pathways supports, and impactful cross-sector partnerships. In the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey, the positive mentoring relationships feature was parsed into two measures in order to discreetly capture both youths' experience of *within-program* mentoring relationships and *outside-of-program* mentoring relationships. Youths' experiences of the cross-sector partnerships were excluded from the survey for reasons of both brevity and this feature's more direct focus on the six partner organizations. The study (and subsequent analyses) included the following four measures of the Opportunity Reboot model features assessed only at endline, with the exception of *within-program positive mentoring relationships*, which was assessed at both time points:

**Within-program positive mentoring relationships** were measured using Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework (Roehlkepartain et al., 2017). The scale uses five items ( $\alpha T1=.94$ ;  $\alpha T2=.92$ ) aligned with each of the major elements of the framework. To help youth focus on a specific relationship within the program they participate in, the evaluation team worked with each community partner to determine who the case manager or case manager-equivalent was at each site. These items were coded such that the appropriate site-specific relational target was explicitly named for youth in the respective programs. Items asked youth to assess how much their case manager(s) at the specific program showed them that they mattered (Express Care), pushed them to be their best (Challenge Growth), helped them get things done (Provide Support), took their ideas seriously (Share Power), and connected them with new people or places (Expand Possibilities). All five items were assessed on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from *Never* to *Very Often*.

**Outside-of-program positive mentoring relationships** were assessed with a single item: "During my time at [name of program inserted], I formed a relationship with an adult outside of the program who supports my growth. This might include, for example, a boss, mentor, neighbor, church members." This question was asked only at endline 2, and was assessed on a 5-point agreement scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

**Individualized goal supports** were measured with four items ( $\alpha = .88$ ): “When I am at [name of program inserted], people make me feel like I am important or special,” “[Name of program inserted] helped me identify what I am good at and areas where I may need help,” “The staff at [name of program inserted] checked in with me

regularly about my goals,” and “The staff at [name of program inserted] want me to reach the goals I set.” All four items were assessed on a 5-point agreement scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

**Coordinated career pathways supports** were measured with two items: “At [name of program inserted], I had opportunities to explore education and career options” and “[Name of program inserted] helped me make a plan to reach my career or education goals.” These items were highly correlated ( $r = .69^{***}$ ). Both items were assessed on a 5-point agreement scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

The means and standard deviations of these independent variables can be found on Table 13; individual item frequencies can be found in Tables 14 and 15.



## Dependent Variables: Short-term Youth Outcomes

As described in the Short-Term Youth Outcomes section above, the key stakeholders in the Opportunity Reboot project collectively narrowed the targeted youth outcomes to 11 variables, which fit in three overarching categories: positive identity, social-emotional competencies, and skills for systems navigations. Unless otherwise noted, all of these survey items were asked in both the baseline and endline youth surveys, and were assessed on a 5-point agreement scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. Scales were created by calculating the mean of available items. The short-term youth outcomes targeted in this evaluation include:

### Positive Identity

- § **Positive self-worth**, a 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .93$ ), assesses youths’ sense of self-worth and belief in themselves.
- § **Positivity in the face of challenge**, a 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ), asks youth about their ability to stay positive — or perceive positive opportunities and takeaways — when faced with failure, challenges, or other difficult situations.
- § **Goal-setting skills**, a 6-item scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ), gauges youths’ ability to set goals and then figure out different ways to reach those goals (e.g., breaking the goals down into more manageable steps; acquiring specific skills; adapting to setbacks) to reach these goals.
- § **Future orientation**, a 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ), measures youths’ orientation towards the future, and whether they consider the ramifications of decisions on their future.
- § **Civic efficacy**, a 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .78$ ), measures youths’ belief in doing things that have a positive impact on other individuals as well as one’s community.

## Social-Emotional Competencies

- § **Self-awareness**, a 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .80$ ), asks youth whether they can identify their strengths and weaknesses, if they know what matters most to them, and if they know who they are and what they believe in.
- § **Responsible decision making**, a single item measure, is represented by this statement: "I think about what might happen before making a decision."
- § **Relationship skills**, a 5-item scale ( $\alpha = .71$ ), assesses a range of interpersonal skills including active listening, empathy, sociability, and communication skills.

## Systems Navigation and Skills

- § **Financial literacy**, a 5-item index, assesses youths' ability to understand and manage their personal finances. For this index, youth were presented with a set of questions on money management and budgeting, as well as knowledge of financial institutions and products, and asked to assess their familiarity with each. Index scores are calculated by summing the scores on the five items. Possible values on this index range from 0 to 20.
- § **Job-seeking skills**, a 5-item index, consists of questions that ask youth about their familiarity with various aspects of the job-seeking process (e.g., where to find postings for jobs or paid internships; how to complete an application, prepare a résumé and cover letter, and how to prepare for an interview). Although originally scored on a 5-point agreement scale, for purposes of analysis, items were dichotomized such that youth who responded that they Agree or Strongly Agree were recoded as 1. All other responses were recoded as 0. These dichotomized versions of these items were summed to create an index score, ranging from 0 to 5.
- § **Resource identification skills**, a 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ), asks youth if they can find the services they need and, if not, if they know someone they can talk to who can point them toward the needed health, education, employment, financial, and housing services they may be seeking to access.



**Table 13** Means of Opportunity Reboot Model Feature Measures

Measures	Mean (SD)
Within Program Mentoring Relationship at Baseline	3.94 (0.95)
Within Program Mentoring Relationship at Endline	4.11 (0.80)
Outside of Program Mentoring Relationships	3.96 (0.95)
Individualized Goal Supports	4.18 (0.69)
Coordinated Career Pathways Supports	4.09 (0.71)

*Notes.* All items are on a 5-point scale (response values range between 1 and 5). Baseline refers to the Time 1 administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey; endline refers to the Time 2 administration. Δ represents the change in means from baseline to endline.

**Table 14** Frequencies of Within Program Mentoring Relationship Items

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
<b>How often does your [case manager] ...</b>										
...show you that you matter to them?	3.8%	3.3%	7.0%	1.6%	25.9%	21.9%	27.6%	35.0%	35.7%	38.3%
...push you to be your best?	3.3%	2.2%	4.9%	0.5%	17.4%	15.3%	35.3%	37.7%	39.1%	44.3%
...help you get things done?	1.6%	1.1%	5.5%	4.3%	25.7%	12.0%	27.3%	39.7%	39.9%	42.9%
...listen to your ideas and take them seriously?	2.2%	1.6%	4.9%	2.2%	21.9%	18.6%	32.2%	37.2%	38.8%	40.4%
...connect you with new people or services that help you?	2.7%	2.2%	9.3%	4.3%	23.5%	22.3%	27.9%	33.2%	36.6%	38.0%

*Notes.* [case manager] is used here as a placeholder for information that was tailored for each partner. The evaluation team worked with each partner to tailor the wording of this item such that youth were directed to think about the program staff who most directly oversaw the execution of the Opportunity Reboot model at their site. Some partners used terms like “case manager,” or “program mentor” while others opted to refer to staff explicitly by name. Baseline refers to the Time 1 administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey; endline refers to the Time 2 administration.

**Table 15** Frequencies of Outside of Program Mentoring, Individualized Goal Supports, and Career Pathways Supports Items

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Outside of Program Mentoring</b>					
During my time at [program], I formed a relationship with an adult outside of the program who supports my growth. This might include, for example, a boss, mentor, neighbor, church members.	3.0%	3.6%	18.6%	44.3%	30.5%
<b>Individualized Goal Supports</b>					
When I am at [program], staff work to meet my personal needs. That is, staff figure out what your specific needs and interests are and then help you.	0.6%	4.8%	15.5%	50.6%	28.6%
[Program] helped me identify what I am good at and areas where I may need help.	—	4.7%	14.7%	45.9%	34.7%
The staff at [program] checked in with me regularly about my goals.	—	5.3%	18.1%	48.5%	28.1%
The staff at [program] want me to reach the goals I set.	—	2.9%	11.1%	47.4%	38.6%
<b>Coordinated Career Pathways Supports</b>					
At [program], I had opportunities to explore education and career options.	—	1.8%	12.3%	49.1%	36.8%
[Program] helped me make a plan to reach my career or education goals.	0.6%	2.9%	14.0%	45.6%	36.8%

*Note.* [program] is used here as a placeholder. In the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey, the actual name of the program a participant was enrolled in was used. — is used to denote cells in which no youth used this response option.

# Qualitative Impact Narrative Activities

Longitudinal impact narrative activities were incorporated in the preliminary impact evaluation of Opportunity Reboot to deepen, and provide nuance for understanding how opportunity youth experienced the Opportunity Reboot model at community partner sites. The evaluation team worked closely with program staff to coordinate these activities, and to ensure the data collection procedures were carefully and intentionally designed in ways to make participating youth feel safe and comfortable.

The evaluation team employed a collective set of qualitative photovoice methods that consisted of four distinct parts: (a) a group orientation with 2-4 participants at each partner site; (b) independent youth-initiated activities designed to help youth capture their program experiences (i.e., taking photos or writing/drawing in a journal); (c) a one-on-one interview with each participant to complete a journey map using their pictures or journal entries; and (d) reconvening the participants from the initial orientation to participate in a focus group.

## Data Collection

At most partner sites, the first two activities occurred in early Spring 2018 and the last two activities occurred in late Spring 2018 or early Summer 2018. The timing between the first and second group of activities was typically six to eight weeks. Activities were primarily conducted at the program site. Participants were invited to take pictures or write in their journals at any location that was reflective of their program experiences, including outside the program site during field trips.

## Sampling

A small subsample of Opportunity Reboot participants ( $n = 29$ ; 2-7 from each community partner program) took part in the qualitative impact narrative activities. Participants were recruited by program staff, who identified a sample of young people who were available and willing to participate, and who reflected some of the diversity of youth typically served by the program. As part of the impact narrative activities, participants were asked to voluntarily self-identify their age, gender, and race or ethnicity by writing it on their journey map. Of the 29 participants, 21 chose to provide some or all of this information. Participants' ages ranged from 14 to 24. Eleven participants identified as male, ten as female. Two participants identified as African-American, three as White, two as mixed, four as Asian, one as Karen, two as Somali, three as Hispanic or Latinx, and one as White, Black, and Native American.

All 29 youth participated in the group orientation and the photo-taking or journaling activities. A small number of youth ( $n = 4$ ) were unable to participate in the focus group due to scheduling conflicts or, at one location, there was only one participant who showed up. For these youth, the questions from the focus group were discussed using an interview format.

## Impact Narrative Protocols

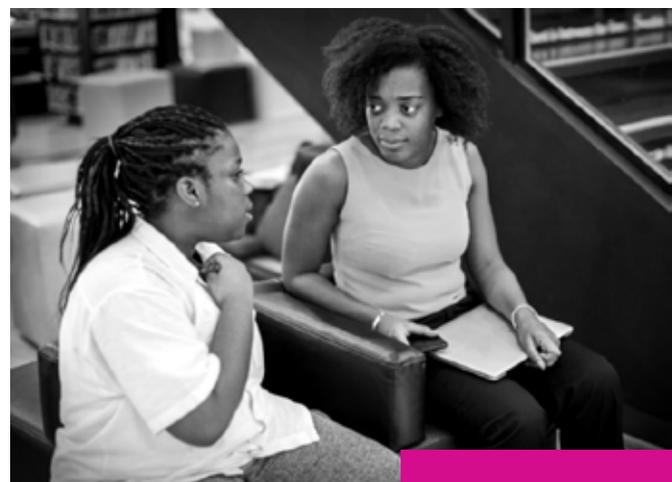
The use of photovoice as a research method has been utilized since the early 1990s, blending qualitative narratives with the medium of photography in order to explore participants' experiences in their communities (Wang & Burris, 1994). Early photovoice methods included a number of distinct steps, such as researcher-guided focus group discussions about key photographs selected by participants and participant-led discussions.

on how to share this information with stakeholders (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang, 1999). Photovoice has since gained popularity as a qualitative research method that allows researchers a nuanced insight into the visualized perceptions of individuals' everyday realities (Close, 2007; Foster-Fishman et al., 2005). The use of photovoice data can be effectively used as a tool to better understand and evaluate participants' experiences in a program (Kramer et al., 2013).

The Opportunity Reboot qualitative impact narratives utilized three protocols that integrated several of the cornerstone aspects of photovoice methods. These included (a) a group orientation protocol; (b) an interview protocol for participants to share how their photos and journals were reflective of their experiences in the program; and (c) a focus group protocol that explored how participants perceived change in themselves in their relationship to school and work as a result of the program.

**Group Orientation Protocol.** Activities began with a researcher leading an orientation with participants in a group setting. The purpose of the orientation was to build community among participants, introduce the impact narrative activities, and provide training on the use of disposable cameras or journals. Participants were provided a Fujifilm Instax camera to practice taking pictures that were centered and clear. If participants utilized the journal option, they were provided a practice journal with a prompt asking them to choose one milestone or barrier from the program and make an entry in the journal about that experience.

**Interview Protocol.** Participants used disposable cameras for the photo journaling activity to take pictures of places, people (with permission), and experiences throughout their time in the program that they identified as important to share. Some partner sites opted-out of the photo option, due to privacy concerns. For these sites, a journaling option was used instead, with participants writing about or drawing their experiences in a journal provided by the evaluation team. During the one-on-one interviews, participants were prompted to select several photos, writings, or drawings that stood out to them and place them on a "journey map" generally in chronological order. They discussed how these artifacts were representative of their experiences in the program and what was important about those experiences to their growth. Youth were allowed to keep the photos (or journal) at the end of the interview. Interviews were approximately 90 minutes long



**Focus Group Protocol.** In a larger focus group, participants were asked to complete a "Three-Act Play" of how their relationship to school and work had changed as a result of the program. Participants drew pictures or wrote words on an 11×17 handout with three large boxes to create three "scenes" depicting their relationship with work and school before the program, their experience now and what they think their relationship with school and work will be in the future. Participants described the scenes to the focus group facilitator and talked about how they had changed over time. Participants took turns describing the scenes and talked about how they had changed over time. These focus groups were approximately one and a half to two hours long.

<sup>2</sup>Copies of these protocols are available by request from the authors.

# Employment and Wage Attainment Study

The impact evaluation also included a quasi-experimental study using data collected by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to track evaluation participants' employment and wage attainment, and to compare how participants who were exposed to programs using the Opportunity Reboot model compared to youth who shared similar demographic characteristics but were not involved in these programs or other similar programs.

In order to assess participants' success at securing living wage employment and attaining stable or increasing wages, the evaluation team partnered with DEED, which is responsible for tracking employment and wage data on all Minnesota residents. A contract was established with DEED to examine the employment and wage data of our study participants and use propensity score matching to compare them with youth who shared similar demographic characteristics over four quarters: Q<sub>3</sub> of 2018, Q<sub>4</sub> of 2018, Q<sub>1</sub> of 2019, and Q<sub>2</sub> of 2019. Data from Q<sub>2</sub> of 2018 (i.e., the same quarter when the Time 2 Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey was administered) was established as the reference point (or T<sub>0</sub>) for DEED's analyses. For some youth (estimated to be 59% based on program exit data provided by staff), this was also approximately the time of their exit from community partner programs.

## Data Collection

The wage and employment data that were analyzed in this portion of the evaluation were collected by DEED; the collection of these data is one of the many duties the agency is charged with in the Minnesota Statutes. The only additional data collected for this piece of the preliminary impact evaluation were detailed socio-demographic data on each Opportunity Reboot participant. These data were collected using the Common Participant Profile (completed by program staff using their internal participant tracking database). The questions in the Common Participant Profile were designed to mirror the socio-demographic indicators tracked by DEED; allowing for higher quality propensity score matching. The list of socio-demographic indicators drawn from the Common Participant Profiles are listed below.



## Sampling

There were two samples for this portion of the study: the sample of young people who participated in community partner programs using the Opportunity Reboot model, and a comparison sample that was generated by DEED using propensity score matching.

DEED used propensity score matching techniques to generate a comparison sample and estimate the effect of the Opportunity Reboot model. The evaluation team provided DEED with detailed socio-demographic data from the Common Participant Profile on each of the Opportunity Reboot participants who met inclusion criteria.

The socio-demographic characteristics used to create a matched comparison sample were:

- § Gender (from the Common Participant Profile);
- § Latinx ethnicity (from the Common Participant Profile);
- § Race (from the Common Participant Profile);
- § Geography (specifically, Twin Cities metropolitan area vs. Greater Minnesota; this item was created using the program sites' locations);
- § Wages of study youth at program enrollment (DEED was able to locate wage data using the Social Security numbers and birthdates); and,
- § Educational attainment of study youth at program enrollment (this was provided by the program sites provided).



Overall, 209 youth from Opportunity Reboot participated in the employment and wage portion of the impact evaluation, along with 241 youth drawn by DEED as a comparison sample, using propensity score matching techniques. The two samples differed on race and educational attainment distributions, with the comparison sample having a higher proportion of White youth and youth with some college. These differences were then mitigated by employing a number of statistical adjustments to strengthen comparability (see Mitigation of Differences between Opportunity Reboot and Comparison Samples section below). Demographics and comparisons of demographics are found in Tables 16 and 17, and details on each sample follow.

### Opportunity Reboot Sample

Inclusion criteria included providing the evaluation team with a Social Security number and birthdate and being between the ages of 18 and 24. Social Security numbers and birthdates were required in order to identify youth from Opportunity Reboot sites in the state's employment and wage databases. This identifying information was collected from participants as part of the IRB-approved informed consent and assent processes.

For comparison purposes, the Opportunity Reboot sample for this portion of the study was limited to youth ages 18 to 24, as DEED does not collect data from youth 17 years and younger. Additionally, Opportunity Reboot participants were excluded by DEED from propensity score matching if they had any missing data on any of the matching socio-demographic characteristics listed above (9 youth, or 4% of the study sample, met this criteria). Following these inclusion criteria, the evaluation team was able to gather Social Security numbers and birthdates from 209 of the opportunity youth participating in Opportunity Reboot sites.

<sup>2</sup> CareerForce is a public-private partnership that provides career training, services, and information to job seekers, and an applicant matching service to employers (among other things). CareerForce has physical locations where job seekers can seek career advice (like having someone look over their resumes, help them prepare applications, etc.).

<sup>3</sup> MinnesotaWorks is a state-run database where job seekers can upload their resumes - employers can then search this database to find potential applicants who have skills that they are looking for in positions they would like to fill.

**Table 16** Descriptive Statistics of Comparison and Opportunity Reboot Samples

Characteristic	Comparison	Opportunity Reboot
<b>Total Sample</b>	241	209
<b>Mean Age (years)</b>	20.6	21.2
<b>Female</b>	47%	49%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian	5%	11%
Asian	3%	44%
Black / African American	19%	26%
Hispanic / Latinx	6%	7%
White	63%	16%
Multiracial	7%	2%
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
HS Diploma/GED or Less	12%	75%
Some College	45%	2%
College Degree	0%	0%
<b>Prior Employment</b>	67%	56%

*Note.* These descriptive statistics were provided by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

**Table 17** t-Tests of Select Sociodemographic Characteristics between Comparison and Opportunity Reboot Groups

Characteristic	Means		$\Delta$ SD	<i>t</i>
	Comparison	Opportunity Reboot		
Gender	.57	.54	0.10	0.48
Person of Color (POC)	.87	.87	0.04	0.16
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
Less than HS Diploma/GED	.74	.73	0.06	0.16
HS Diploma/GED or Less	.23	.23	0.06	0.04
Some College	.02	.03	0.01	0.50
Prior Employment	.60	.59	0.10	0.26
Age	21.16	21.09	0.35	0.34
Age × Gender	33.12	32.44	2.15	0.56
Prior Employment × POC	.52	.51	0.10	0.06

*Notes.* The results of the t-tests confirmed there were no statistically significant differences between the comparison and Opportunity Reboot groups on these variables. Gender was coded as 0=Male, 1=Female; Person of Color, the Educational Attainment categories, and Prior Employment were dichotomously coded such that 0=Characteristic absent and 1=Characteristic present. Age is a continuous variable. Results were provided by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

Approximately half of the Opportunity Reboot sample for the employment and wage attainment study were GAP participants ( $n = 107$ ); the other half of the sample consisted of 36 youth from Tri-City Bridges, 33 youth from Prior Crossing, 27 youth from Opportunity Youth of Duluth, and 12 youth from MIGIZI. Compass, one of the community partners serving high school students, was completely excluded from these analyses, since very few of these youth were age-eligible for employment under Minnesota labor statutes.

No additional inclusion criteria such as participation/dosage minimums, or being an active program participant at the time were imposed. But, the great majority of youth had participated for a relatively long period in the programs, and relatively frequently as well. Using enrollment and exit dates from the Common Participant Profile, it was calculated that 89% of study youth had participated in their programs for 4 or more quarters (only 4.4% had participated in their programs for less than 2 quarters, and fewer than 11% had participated for less than 3 quarters). Additionally, 67% of participants were rated by their staff mentors as having high dosage, and 24% were rated as having medium dosage (i.e., less than 10% of participants had low dosage).

### Exits from Opportunity Reboot partner programs

As mentioned previously, by the time the analyses for the employment and wage attainment study were conducted, 59% of participants had exited their programs; however, other than GAP — which has an explicit graduation date, it is unknown whether these exits were due to program completion or dropout. Based on the previous experience of the programs, it is reasonable to expect that many of these youth will cycle in-and-out of these programs over several years as they need additional — or, different — supports. The deep relationships and connection opportunity youth have with these programs and staff often make them safe spaces for youth to turn to when they need help. Programs, like those we partnered with for Opportunity Reboot, are intentional in designing seamless on- and off-ramps that allow opportunity youth to re-engaged with the program as needed.

When disaggregated by program, all GAP youth exited the program at endline, while all MIGIZI and Tri-City Bridges youth remained. Nearly all Prior Crossing youth (except for two individuals) remained as well. Notably, Opportunity Youth of Duluth (OYOD) had a 50% exit rate, with no discernable demographic or background differences between those who exited and those who remained. These differences are tied to the programs' designs:

- § GAP is a 1-year program with an explicit graduation date;
- § MIGIZI and TCB both provide a year of intensive programming, followed by lighter contact for as long as needed by participants;
- § Prior Crossing is a residential program, with no end date;
- § Opportunity Youth of Duluth provides drop-in career planning and job seeking services, as well as a year-long course in entrepreneurship and small business.

## Retained vs. Excluded Opportunity Reboot Sample

As noted above, a small total of 9 youth (4% of the sample) were excluded by DEED from the employment and wage part of the study. When comparing the Opportunity Reboot participants who were retained in DEED's analyses to those who were excluded or dropped (mostly due to study staff's inability to obtain Social Security numbers and birthdates):

- § There were disproportionately more Asian participants in the DEED analysis sample (44.4% vs. 8.4% in the sample of excluded Opportunity Reboot participants);
- § There were disproportionately fewer US-born participants in the DEED analysis sample (43.2% vs. 76.9% of excluded Opportunity Reboot participants);
- § There were disproportionately fewer participants from Greater Minnesota in the DEED analysis sample (27.7% vs. 60.0% of excluded Opportunity Reboot participants).

These comparisons overstate the differences between the excluded and retained youth because the percentages for the excluded youth are based on a very small group of 9 individuals. Nevertheless, to the extent that participants' inclusion into (or exclusion from) the DEED sample was not random, it is therefore a source of potential response bias, albeit quite small. As a result, findings from DEED's analyses are likely biased against more-transient individuals; specifically US-born individuals living in Greater Minnesota, whose whereabouts are harder for program sites to keep track of (nearly all of Opportunity Reboot's Asian youth were Karen refugees in the GAP program, and residents of the Twin Cities metropolitan area).

## Comparison Sample

Three criteria were used to identify the pool of eligible individuals for the comparison sample: (a) the individual needed to be between the ages of 18 and 24, as DEED does not collect data from individuals under the age of 17; (b) the individual had to have sought services at a CareerForce location, and/or posted their resume on Minnesota Works (a possible indication they were disconnected from school and/or work); and, (c) the individual was not currently — and had not previously been — a participant in an eligibility-based program similar to the Opportunity Reboot partner sites. (DEED tracks enrollment using Workforce One; all state and federally funded workforce development programs are required to use Workforce One for case management and data entry as a condition of receiving funding.)

DEED then used the sociodemographic data noted above to assign a propensity score to each member of the comparison group; the higher their score, the more similar they are to Opportunity Reboot participants on these demographic characteristics. Thus, each Opportunity Reboot participant was matched to an individual (or multiple individuals) whose demographic characteristics suggested they were very similar; the only difference was these "matched" individuals did not participate in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model. Therefore, it can be inferred that any differences DEED observes between the Opportunity Reboot study

<sup>3</sup> CareerForce is a public-private partnership that provides career training, services, and information to job seekers, and an applicant matching service to employers (among other things). CareerForce has physical locations where job seekers can seek career advice (e.g., having someone look over their resumes, help them prepare applications).

<sup>4</sup> MinnesotaWorks is a state-run database where job seekers can upload their resumes. Employers can then search this database to find potential applicants who have skills that they are looking for in positions they would like to fill.

participants and the comparison group can reasonably be attributed to study youths' participation in Opportunity Reboot.

The comparison sample consisted of 241 individuals. Descriptive statistics on the comparison sample, and on how they compare to the Opportunity Reboot sample, can be found in Table 16. The unique circumstances and backgrounds of Opportunity Reboot participants resulted in marked discrepancies in race and educational attainment when compared to individuals in the comparison sample.

## Mitigation of differences between Opportunity Reboot and Comparison Samples

To mitigate this, DEED performed kernel density matching (see Bendewald et al., 2016) using the *diff* Stata package obtained from the Boston College Statistical Software Components (SSC) archive of user-contributed programs. The propensity scores are used as weights for comparison group data; comparison group individuals who are 'better' matches with individuals in the Opportunity Reboot sample are assigned higher weights, and are consequently more influential. This approach decreases the variance between the control and treatment groups, at the cost of having a higher probability of having less-than-ideal matches in the comparison group. Thus, the impact of any subpar matches will be assigned very small weights, mitigating their influence (Caliendo & Kopeinig, 2005). Additionally, the analyses were restricted to observations within the area of common support (i.e., the range of propensity scores where the probability of observing treatment and control cases overlap (Heckman et al., 1999), which also weeds out suboptimal matches.

DEED ran two-sample t-tests, which are summarized in Table 17, to verify that the comparison and Opportunity Reboot samples were comparable (see Bryson et al., 2002). As expected, none of the t-scores were statistically significant. Furthermore, the differences between the comparison and Opportunity Reboot samples' standard deviations were within .25 except for age at  $SD = .34$ , and the age x gender interaction term indicating that the two samples were statistically comparable. Note that interactions between age x gender and persons of color x prior employment were included because Hosmer-Lemeshow tests (Lunt, 2014) run by DEED indicated that these factors impacted inclusion into the Opportunity Reboot treatment group in a non-linear way.

## Power Analyses

Post *hoc* power analyses were specified in G\*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to estimate the power achieved based on small effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = .25 - .40$ ). Small effect sizes were selected because a previous intervention targeting employment outcomes for youth with similar characteristics as the current study sample found similar effect sizes between treatment and comparison groups (e.g., Ferguson, 2018). Similarly, a meta-analysis of programs similar to Opportunity Reboot found that program effects tend to be small in the year immediately following the program (Card et al., 2011; 2015). Based on these parameters, the estimated power for the quasi-experimental sample is .845 – .996 (.607 – .923 for the Persons of Color subsample). These findings show that the study had enough power (.80 or above) to detect statistically significant differences between the Opportunity Reboot sample and the comparison group for effect sizes above .25. The study was slightly underpowered to be able to detect statistically significant differences between Opportunity Reboot Persons of Color and the comparison group subsample for smaller effect sizes.

Although propensity score matching is a powerful method that makes the quasi-experimental portion of the present study possible, it is important to also note its limitations. For instance, the quality of the comparison group matches is only as good as the matching variables used. For example, participants in Opportunity Reboot programs have experienced substantial barriers such as homelessness and interactions with the criminal justice system, but since these factors were not quantified in the comparison data set, it was not possible to match the Opportunity Reboot participants in the treatment sample with fully comparable people in the comparison pool. It is therefore possible for these ‘omitted variables’ to adversely impact the statistical significance of the models.

## Internal and External Validity

The preliminary impact evaluation was designed to minimize several critical threats to internal and external validity in pursuit of strengthening the level of evidence supporting the Opportunity Reboot model. The approach to minimizing these threats was informed by the evaluation teams’ learning from, and alongside, community partners during the implementation evaluation.

### Internal Validity

The Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey was administered at baseline and endline to establish associations between opportunity youths’ experiences of the four core features of the Opportunity Reboot model and growth in their positive identity, social-emotional competencies, and ability to navigate systems. The use of a single-group non-experimental outcome evaluation design was selected given that this was the first evaluation of the Opportunity Reboot model and community partners had not collected data of this rigor before.

While this design limits claims that the observed change in outcomes is *caused* by the Opportunity Reboot model, efforts were made to preliminarily strengthen the cause-effect relationship between the Opportunity Reboot model and youth outcomes by integrating a rich series of qualitative impact narrative activities that elicited organic responses from participants about their experience of the Opportunity Reboot model features and their impact (if any). The employment and wage employment study was also added to further strengthen the preliminary evidence (and establish emerging moderate evidence) targeted in the single group non-experimental component of the preliminary impact evaluation. Descriptions of how internal validity threats were addressed is provided below:

### Selection Bias

A propensity score matching procedure (described above) was used to reduce potential selection bias in drawing a comparison group. The results of the matching procedures showed that the Opportunity Reboot sample and the comparison group are statistically similar across all of the matching covariates. Furthermore, the differences between the samples were less than 0.25 standard deviations for all of the matching covariates with the exception of age (SD = .34). These findings suggest that propensity score matching was able to minimize the likelihood that characteristics of the sample were responsible for the differences that were found between the Opportunity Reboot sample and the comparison sample. It is, however, important to note that potential threats to internal validity remain despite the use of propensity score matching. Since the matching was limited to a finite number of demographic variables, there were undoubtedly other participant characteristics that were excluded and may have been associated with the outcomes of interest.

### Selection Additive Effects

Important demographic characteristics that may have accounted for differential treatment effects were accounted for in regression models (e.g., age, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity) to help reduce the likelihood of selection additive effects. As described above, the propensity score matching procedure used a number of important demographic characteristics that may be related to employment and/or wage attainment. This procedure resulted in a statistically similar Opportunity Reboot and comparison group sample, reducing the likelihood that participant characteristics accounted for differences that were observed between these two samples.

### Instrumentation

To ensure observed changes were not due to the testing procedure, every effort was made to maintain consistency in the survey instrument, the administrators, and the method of administration across community partner sites and time points. The only changes in the survey between administrations were the introduction of an additional set of metrics that were only appropriate to ask at endline. Administrators were provided with an administration guide aimed at standardizing the protocol. Lastly, at both time points the survey was administered via the same medium.

### Experimental Mortality

Many opportunity youth struggle with mental and chemical health issues, homelessness, and disconnection from family and, as a result, tend to be highly mobile. This makes study retention challenging. However, even given these challenges, two-thirds of the baseline sample were retained at the endline survey. Program staff made every effort to invite all youth who were being served by their programs at either time point to participate in the evaluation, and made an extra concerted effort to invite the endline participation of all baseline participants. Using available data, demographic comparisons were made between the retained and attrited samples. Findings showed that the retained and attrited samples were similar across most demographic characteristics with a few exceptions (i.e., race/ethnicity, nativity). These demographic characteristics were accounted for in all of the regression analyses to account for any impact they may have on outcome variables. Yet, it is still likely that attrited youth were different from retained youth in other important ways that are not accounted for in the regression models, which may limit internal validity.

### Regression to the Mean

In the Design and Planning workshops, program staff explained the phenomenon of *creaming* that sometimes occurs when their programs are asked to provide data upon which high-stakes funding decisions are made. *Creaming* refers to hand selecting the participants from whom data is shared in order to maximize empirical evidence of impact. To minimize this phenomenon, the evaluation team talked at length with all programs about the need to recruit all youth to participate, not just youth who are likely to have extreme baseline scores. Building on the strong relationship with the evaluation team, community partners trusted that this approach would yield the most valuable data for continuous program improvement and, even if the findings were null or small, there would still be a compelling story to tell. Findings also showed few differences between the retained and attrited samples however, it is possible that important demographic characteristics were missing in the analyses.

### Maturation

The time between the two administrations of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey was about 9 months across community partners. Limiting the amount of time between administrations had the benefits of reducing the amount of mental and physical changes youth may have experienced. To control for the effect of changes that might have been brought about by improved access to mental health services through participating programs, mental health status was included as a covariate in the models.

## Expectancy Effects

The informed consent and assent forms distributed before each data collection — and reviewed verbally — clearly communicated that the purpose of this study was to understand participants' program experiences. At the outset of each data collection, it was also clearly communicated to participants that their responses (and choice about whether or not to participate) would not affect their access to services or their ability to participate in the program. The evaluation team, and the program staff, simply wanted to better understand their program experience.

## External Validity

Many of the factors that jeopardized external validity could not be addressed due to study design limitations. This evaluation only captured data from a single, multisite implementation of the Opportunity Reboot model, with subsample sizes by site being too small to test for differences. Additionally, the study sample is quite idiosyncratic in some ways (see Box 2 under Research Question 9 below), especially when compared to similarly aged youth across the state of Minnesota. Furthermore, with the single group non-experimental component of the preliminary impact evaluation, selection into treatment was not random, and the study did not include a control group.

Subsequent evaluations that seek to attain higher levels of evidence will need to employ more complex quasi-experimental evaluation designs that can rule out other explanations for change in the outcomes, test for generalizability, and account for the multiple treatment threats inherent in the Opportunity Reboot model approach (i.e., program enhancement model vs. standalone program).



# Preliminary Impact

## Findings by Research Question

Building on the implementation evaluation research questions, the Opportunity Reboot preliminary impact evaluation focused on six additional research questions. The sections below provide: (a) detailed methodological information about how each of these questions were answered drawing on the quantitative and qualitative data described above; and (b) a summary of the core findings.

### Research Question 5

Did youth who participated in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model experience measurable and significant gains in short-term outcomes over the program year? Did all youth experience the benefits of program participation equally, or were program impacts experienced differentially by diverse demographic groups of youth?

To answer this research question, participants' scores on each of the short-term youth outcomes assessed in the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey at baseline (Time 1) and endline (Time 2) were compared using a series of paired t-tests. These tests allowed the evaluation team to establish whether change in these outcomes did occur; and, if it did, the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of this change. The means on each of the short-term youth outcome scales were used to make these comparisons; additional information on the measures can be found in the Preliminary Impact Measures and Instruments section above. The paired t-test analyses discussed in this section were run using StataSE 13.

The results of the paired t-tests are summarized in Table 18, including a Cohen's d measure of effect size. In general, an effect size of less than  $d = .20$  is considered small but meaningful,  $d = .50$  is considered medium, and  $d = .80$  or greater is considered large (Cohen, 1992; Durlak, 2009).

- § **The analyses showed that youth positively changed between baseline (Time 1) and endline (Time 2) across all short-term outcomes**, and that these changes were statistically significant with the exception of positive self-worth, future orientation, civic efficacy, and responsible decision making.
- § **Effect sizes for most of these changes were small.**
- § These findings show that, **on average, youth made significant and measurable gains on a myriad of important short-term outcomes** including in areas of positive identity, social-emotional competencies, and skills for systems navigations, during the course of their participation in the Opportunity Reboot programs.

To determine whether these changes were experienced across different demographic subgroups of youth, changes in short-term youth outcomes were examined by gender, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity. Separate paired t-test models for male and female participants showed that both groups experienced positive change on all of the outcomes (see Table 19).

**Table 18** Paired t-Tests of Short-Term Youth Outcomes

Outcomes	<i>n</i>	Means		Paired <i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
		Baseline	Endline		
<b>Positive Identity</b>					
Positive Self-Worth	181	4.10	4.15	-0.78	.06
Positivity in the Face of Challenge	181	3.92	4.10	-3.06**	.23
Goal-Setting Skills	183	4.02	4.18	-3.47***	.26
Future Orientation	172	4.19	4.23	-0.81	.06
Civic Efficacy	181	4.00	4.08	-1.35	.10
<b>Social-Emotional Competencies</b>					
Self-Awareness	179	3.89	4.08	-3.41***	.25
Responsible Decision Making	180	3.92	4.04	-1.91	.14
Relationship Skills	181	3.83	3.97	-2.97**	.22
<b>Skills for Systems Navigation</b>					
Financial Literacy	182	13.03	13.87	-2.93**	.22
Job-Seeking Skills	182	3.18	3.51	-2.71**	.20
Resource Identification Skills	180	3.79	3.95	-2.59*	.19

*Notes.* \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . Baseline refers to the Time 1 administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey; endline refers to the Time 2 administration. All but two outcomes were scored using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the named outcomes. The Financial Literacy Index was created by summing participants' scores on five items each scored on a 5-point scale; thus, scores range from 0 to 20. Similarly, the Job-Seeking Skills Index was created by dichotomizing (0/1) responses to five items then summing across the five items. The Job-Seeking Skills Index has a possible range of 0 to 5. Paired t-tests employ listwise deletion; as such, youth whose surveys contained missing information on the data needed for these analyses were excluded.

**Table 19** Paired t-Tests of Short-Term Youth Outcomes by Gender

Outcomes		<i>n</i>	Means		Paired <i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
			Baseline	Endline		
<b>Positive Identity</b>						
Positive Self-Worth	Male	88	4.20	4.21	-0.07	.01
	Female	89	4.00	4.07	-0.82	.09
Positivity in the Face of Challenge	Male	90	3.97	4.11	-1.53	.16
	Female	87	3.86	4.06	-2.67**	.29
Goal-Setting Skills	Male	91	4.06	4.19	-1.80	.19
	Female	88	3.98	4.16	-2.88**	.31
Future Orientation	Male	87	4.18	4.24	-0.72	.08
	Female	81	4.19	4.20	-0.09	.01
Civic Efficacy	Male	89	4.01	4.05	-0.46	.05
	Female	88	3.99	4.09	-1.19	.13
<b>Social-Emotional Competencies</b>						
Self-Awareness	Male	88	3.88	4.04	-2.00	.21
	Female	87	3.90	4.10	-2.44*	.26
Responsible Decision Making	Male	88	4.00	4.06	-0.58	.06
	Female	88	3.83	4.03	-2.30*	.25
Relationship Skills	Male	88	3.92	4.01	-1.29	.14
	Female	89	3.75	3.90	-2.60*	.28
<b>Skills for Systems Navigation</b>						
Financial Literacy	Male	90	13.44	13.72	-0.75	.08
	Female	88	12.66	13.90	-2.86**	.30
Job-Seeking Skills	Male	90	3.03	3.17	-0.78	.08
	Female	88	3.38	3.83	-2.71**	.29
Resource Identification Skills	Male	88	3.82	3.95	-1.41	.15
	Female	88	3.76	3.92	-1.93	.21

*Notes.* \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . Baseline refers to the Time 1 administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey; endline refers to the Time 2 administration. The Other race category includes youth who self-identified as Native Americans, as well as multiracial. These categories were combined due to insufficient sample size (which we defined as <15 individuals). All but two outcomes were scored using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the named outcomes. The Financial Literacy Index was created by summing participants' scores on five items each scored on a 5-point scale; thus, scores range from 0 to 20. Similarly, the Job-Seeking Skills Index was created by dichotomizing (0/1) responses to five items then summing across the five items. The Job-Seeking Skills Index has a possible range of 0 to 5. Paired t-tests employ listwise deletion; as such, youth whose surveys contained missing information on the data needed for these analyses (i.e., demographic variable, short-term youth outcome) were excluded.

However, these changes were statistically significant only for females (with the exception of positive self-worth, future orientation, and civic efficacy — where the changes were noted previously to not be statistically significant for the full sample as well; additionally, resource identification skills were also not significant).

On average, participants who identified as heterosexual (or, “straight”) reported stronger goal-setting skills at baseline; all other differences in short-term youth outcomes were not statistically significant for this group (see Table 20). Participants who identified as non-heterosexual (i.e., asexual, bisexual, gay or lesbian, pansexual, queer, questioning, or other) reported statistically significant gains in positivity in the face of challenge and self-awareness between baseline and endline.

There were four race/ethnicity groups in the sample with subsample sizes sufficient for analyses: Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and White. A fifth group — referred to as Other — was comprised of the remaining participants (more specifically, 10 of these Other group members identified as Native American; 13 as multiracial; and 3 declined to select any of the race options provided in the survey). The paired t-tests by race/ethnicity groups are summarized in Table 21. The difference in participants’ means at baseline and endline were not statistically significant for youth who identified as White or Hispanic/Latinx. Black youth reported statistically higher levels of responsible decision making, while Asian youth reported statistically higher levels of positivity in the face of challenge and financial literacy at endline. Youth who identified as another race/ethnicity (coded as Other) reported higher levels on seven short-term outcomes at endline: positive self-worth, positivity in the face of challenge, goal-setting skills, responsible decision making, self-awareness, relationship skills, and resource identification skills.

Youth who participated in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model did experience measurable and significant gains in critical short-term outcomes, however these gains were not experienced equally by all youth. **The findings suggest that female participants may be benefiting more from their participation in Opportunity Reboot programs than their male counterparts.** It also appears that youth with diverse racial and ethnic identities may experience the Opportunity Reboot programs differently, with **youth in the Other race/ethnicity group experiencing the most significant positive growth between baseline (Time 1) and endline (Time 2).** It is unclear why certain subgroups of youth tended to benefit more in terms of the short-term outcomes than other youth. More research is needed to understand how youth with different identities experience the program features at each site.

**Table 20** Paired t-Tests of Short-Term Youth Outcomes by Sexual Orientation

Outcomes		<i>n</i>	Means		Paired <i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
			Baseline	Endline		
<b>Positive Identity</b>						
Positive Self-Worth	Heterosexual	75	4.22	4.19	0.29	.03
	Non-Heterosexual	45	3.96	4.03	-0.57	.09
Positivity in the Face of Challenge	Heterosexual	76	4.00	4.01	-0.05	.01
	Non-Heterosexual	45	3.84	4.16	-2.85**	.42
Goal-Setting Skills	Heterosexual	77	4.09	4.22	-2.22*	.25
	Non-Heterosexual	45	4.02	4.19	-1.59	.24
Future Orientation	Heterosexual	73	4.21	4.25	-0.44	.05
	Non-Heterosexual	41	4.25	4.27	-0.15	.02
Civic Efficacy	Heterosexual	75	4.03	4.11	-0.83	.10
	Non-Heterosexual	45	4.01	4.07	-0.43	.06
<b>Social-Emotional Competencies</b>						
Self-Awareness	Heterosexual	74	3.98	4.10	-1.61	.19
	Non-Heterosexual	45	3.79	4.08	-2.24*	.33
Responsible Decision Making	Heterosexual	76	3.99	4.11	-1.17	.13
	Non-Heterosexual	45	3.82	3.96	-0.97	.15
Relationship Skills	Heterosexual	75	3.88	4.01	-1.85	.21
	Non-Heterosexual	45	3.78	3.88	-1.13	.17
<b>Skills for Systems Navigation</b>						
Financial Literacy	Heterosexual	76	13.84	14.22	-0.88	.10
	Non-Heterosexual	45	12.87	13.89	-1.81	.27
Job-Seeking Skills	Heterosexual	76	3.37	3.58	-1.41	.16
	Non-Heterosexual	45	3.07	3.51	-1.61	.24
Resource Identification Skills	Heterosexual	75	3.87	4.04	-1.84	.21
	Non-Heterosexual	45	3.73	3.93	-1.57	.23

*Notes.* \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . Baseline refers to the Time 1 administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey; endline refers to the Time 2 administration. The Other race category includes youth who self-identified as Native Americans, as well as multiracial. These categories were combined due to insufficient sample size (which we defined as <15 individuals). All but two outcomes were scored using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the named outcomes. The Financial Literacy Index was created by summing participants' scores on five items each scored on a 5-point scale; thus, scores range from 0 to 20. Similarly, the Job-Seeking Skills Index was created by dichotomizing (0/1) responses to five items then summing across the five items. The Job-Seeking Skills Index has a possible range of 0 to 5. Paired t-tests employ listwise deletion; as such, youth whose surveys contained missing information on the data needed for these analyses (i.e., demographic variable, short-term youth outcome) were excluded.

**Table 21** Paired t-Tests of Short-Term Youth Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity

Outcomes		<i>n</i>	Means		Paired <i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
			Baseline	Endline		
<b>Positive Identity</b>						
Positive Self-Worth	Asian	52	4.33	4.30	0.34	.05
	Black	24	4.28	4.60	-2.03	.41
	Hispanic	22	3.95	4.11	-0.98	.21
	White	24	3.68	3.43	1.47	.30
	Other	26	3.71	4.13	-2.32*	.46
Positivity in the Face of Challenge	Asian	53	4.01	4.21	-2.03*	.28
	Black	25	4.15	4.27	-0.77	.15
	Hispanic	23	3.94	4.29	-2.04	.42
	White	23	3.52	3.65	-0.76	.16
	Other	25	3.47	4.04	-3.05**	.61
Goal-Setting Skills	Asian	53	4.07	4.18	-1.52	.21
	Black	25	4.31	4.35	-0.45	.09
	Hispanic	23	4.07	4.30	-1.39	.29
	White	24	3.59	3.77	-1.59	.32
	Other	26	3.68	4.17	-2.42*	.48
Future Orientation	Asian	49	4.22	4.31	-1.09	.16
	Black	20	4.47	4.38	0.55	.12
	Hispanic	22	4.08	4.24	-1.29	.27
	White	24	3.90	3.79	0.70	.14
	Other	25	4.21	4.40	-1.13	.23
Civic Efficacy	Asian	53	3.91	3.93	-0.18	.03
	Black	24	4.04	4.35	-1.59	.32
	Hispanic	22	4.11	4.14	-0.12	.03
	White	24	3.90	3.84	0.31	.06
	Other	22	4.01	4.36	-1.60	.32
<b>Social-Emotional Competencies</b>						
Self-Awareness	Asian	51	3.71	3.89	-1.80	.25
	Black	25	3.98	4.13	-0.91	.18
	Hispanic	23	4.03	4.20	-0.99	.21
	White	23	4.01	3.99	0.23	.05
	Other	25	3.81	4.24	-2.19*	.44
Responsible Decision Making	Asian	52	3.87	3.98	-1.23	.17
	Black	24	3.83	4.38	-2.72*	.55
	Hispanic	22	4.14	4.00	0.65	.14
	White	24	3.88	3.75	0.90	.18
	Other	25	3.92	4.20	-1.10	.22
Relationship Skills	Asian	53	3.78	3.90	-1.78	.24
	Black	23	3.67	3.89	-1.75	.37
	Hispanic	22	4.05	4.06	-0.16	.03
	White	24	3.72	3.80	-0.70	.14
	Other	26	3.75	4.16	-2.19*	.43

**Table 21 Continued** Paired t-Tests of Short-Term Youth Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity

Outcomes		n	Means		Paired t	Cohen's d
			Baseline	Endline		
<b>Skills for Systems Navigation</b>						
Financial Literacy	Asian	53	12.85	13.83	-2.01*	.28
	Black	24	12.58	13.13	-0.88	.18
	Hispanic	23	14.65	15.78	-1.42	.30
	White	24	12.08	12.54	-0.60	.12
	Other	25	12.24	13.72	-1.38	.28
Job-Seeking Skills	Asian	53	3.19	3.47	-1.18	.16
	Black	25	3.48	4.00	-1.91	.38
	Hispanic	22	3.05	3.68	-2.13	.45
	White	24	3.13	3.50	-1.09	.22
	Other	25	2.68	3.16	-1.44	.29
Resource Identification Skills	Asian	53	3.72	3.79	-0.71	.10
	Black	23	3.74	3.99	-1.38	.29
	Hispanic	23	4.09	3.94	0.81	.17
	White	23	3.87	3.99	-0.79	.16
	Other	25	3.48	4.07	-2.38*	.48

Notes. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . Baseline refers to the Time 1 administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey; endline refers to the Time 2 administration. The Other race category includes youth who self-identified as Native Americans, as well as multiracial. These categories were combined due to insufficient sample size (which we defined as <15 individuals). All but two outcomes were scored using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the named outcomes. The Financial Literacy Index was created by summing participants' scores on five items each scored on a 5-point scale; thus, scores range from 0 to 20. Similarly, the Job-Seeking Skills Index was created by dichotomizing (0/1) responses to five items then summing across the five items. The Job-Seeking Skills Index has a possible range of 0 to 5. Paired t-tests employ listwise deletion; as such, youth whose surveys contained missing information on the data needed for these analyses (i.e., demographic variable, short-term youth outcome) were excluded.

## Research Question 6

Controlling for demographic, background, and implementation factors, what are the predictive associations between the youths' experiences of the Opportunity Reboot model features and their short-term outcomes?

Building on the paired t-tests, multiple regression models were used to examine how youth's experiences of the Opportunity Reboot model features — positive relationships with mentors *within* their programs, positive relationships with mentors *outside* their programs, and experience of receiving individualized goal supports and career pathways supports — impacted change in the targeted short-term youth outcomes between baseline and endline.

A number of covariates were included in the regression models that were hypothesized to be related to the short-term youth outcomes. Informed by the paired t-test findings (see above), gender and race/ethnicity were included as control variables. Sexual orientation was excluded because the results of the paired t-tests suggested that the change between baseline and endline were similar for both groups. In addition, the following controls were also included:

**Age** was controlled to account for the variation in short-term outcomes that may stem from the large age range of participants (14 to 24 years). This range encompasses several developmental stages spanning from early and middle adolescence to young adulthood; thus it is reasonable to infer that youth may have very different program experiences and needs in their Opportunity Reboot programs. Post-hoc analyses were also completed with age specified as a categorical variable. Age was dummy coded into three groups: 14-17, 18-20, and 21-24. The age group 18-20 served as the reference category.

A single-item **mental health indicator** was also included, as mental health issues were directly and inversely associated with many of the Opportunity Reboot short-term youth outcomes. As part of the survey, youth participants were asked: "Are you experiencing mental health issues (such as anxiety, depression, or other issues)?" The response option was Yes or No.

**Program dosage**, as described in the Implementation Evaluation Instruments section, was reported on for each youth participant by a staff member from the community partner organization. Participants' program dosage was scored as low, medium, or high in accordance with criteria pre-specified by the partners in consultation with the evaluation team. Among the overall sample of participants, 64% were assessed by program staff to have received high dosage, 28% with medium dosage, and 8% with low dosage. It was hypothesized that participants who showed up more often, and/or participated in a higher volume of activities, would also experience stronger effects from their time at program sites.

As with program dosage, program staff were asked to assess **participant engagement** levels on a 3-point scale (high, medium, and low). Among the overall sample of participants, 59% were assessed by program staff to have high levels of engagement, 30% with medium engagement, and 11% with low engagement. Like program dosage, it was hypothesized that participants who were more engaged in their program would experience stronger effects — that is, reap more benefits — from their time at their program sites.

To understand the relationship between Opportunity Reboot features and youth short-term outcomes, the evaluation team specified several multiple regression models. Two models were run for each outcome: first a model with only covariates, and then a second model with both covariates and the model features. By comparing the two steps'  $R^2$ s (i.e., the percentage of observed variance that can be explained by the model's independent variables), the explanatory power of the model features could be calculated. Due to the small sample sizes of these models, a threshold for statistical significance at  $p < .10$  was used. The regression models are summarized in Table 22.

As previously discussed in the Measures and Instruments subsection of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey methodological section, only within program mentoring relationships items were asked at both baseline and endline surveys; for this reason, baseline-endline change ( $\Delta$ ), in within program mentoring relationships were used in the regression models (the other three model features were assessed only in the endline youth survey). These regression models were run using StataSE 13.

## Covariates

- § Of the covariates included in these models, **age** was significantly associated with positive change in positivity in the face of challenge, goal-setting skills, and responsible decision making.
- § **Females** were more likely than males to experience positive change in financial literacy.
- § **Asian youth** were less likely than White participants to experience positive change in job-seeking skills.
- § **Black youth** were less likely than White participants to experience positive change in goal-setting skills; and youth in the Other race category were more likely than White participants to experience positive changes in positivity in the face of challenge, self-awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills.
- § **Youth with greater engagement** during the Opportunity Reboot program (i.e., engagement) experienced greater positive change in positivity in the face of challenge.
- § **Youth who participated in the Opportunity Reboot program more often** (i.e., dosage) experienced greater positive changes in goal-setting skills, future orientation, and relationships skills.

## Opportunity Reboot Model Features

- § As for the Opportunity Reboot model features, **both positive mentoring relationships *within* and *outside* of the program appear to be critical to youths' growth on the short-term outcomes.**
  - Participants who strengthened their mentoring relationships with staff within the program reported significant gains on all three of the skills for systems navigation outcomes (i.e., financial literacy, job-seeking skills, and resource identification skills).
  - Youth who forged new mentoring relationships with adults outside of the program saw positive gains in their orientation towards the future, civic efficacy, self-awareness, responsible decision making, relationship skills, financial literacy, job-seeking skills, and resource identification skills.
- § **The career pathways supports feature was significantly associated with positive changes in youth's job-seeking skills**, suggesting that this addition to Opportunity Reboot programs had a positive effect on youth's job-seeking skills.

**Table 22** Multiple Regression Models on the Impact of Opportunity Reboot Model Features on Change in Short-Term Youth Outcomes

Positive Identity					
Variables	Δ Positive Self-Worth	Δ Positivity in Face of Challenge	Δ Goal-Setting Skills	Δ Future Orientation	Δ Civic Efficacy
<b>Covariates</b>					
Age	0.07 (.00)	0.27+ (.04)	0.38* (.08)	0.13 (.01)	0.02 (.00)
Female (REFERENCE: MALE)	0.05 (.00)	-0.00 (.00)	0.01 (.00)	-0.06 (.00)	0.08 (.01)
Race/Ethnicity (REFERENCE: WHITE)					
Asian	0.12 (.00)	-0.19 (.01)	-0.33 (.03)	-0.04 (.00)	-0.11 (.00)
Black	0.20 (.03)	-0.14 (.01)	-0.32* (.06)	-0.10 (.01)	0.00 (.00)
Hispanic	0.23 (.03)	0.03 (.00)	0.05 (.00)	0.16 (.02)	-0.05 (.00)
Other	0.22 (.03)	-0.00 (.00)	0.01 (.00)	0.03 (.00)	0.22+ (.04)
Mental Health	0.13 (.01)	0.20 (.03)	0.08 (.01)	-0.18 (.03)	-0.01 (.00)
Engagement	-0.18 (.02)	0.26+ (.04)	0.05 (.00)	-0.06 (.00)	-0.10 (.01)
Participant Dosage	0.29+ (.04)	-0.02 (.00)	0.29+ (.04)	0.41** (.09)	0.05 (.00)
<b>Independent Variables</b>					
Δ Within Program Mentoring	0.19 (.03)	0.09 (.01)	0.12 (.01)	0.08 (.01)	0.16 (.02)
Outside of Program Mentoring	-0.13 (.01)	0.09 (.01)	0.16 (.02)	0.25* (.06)	0.45*** (.16)
Individualized Goal Supports	-0.07 (.00)	-0.12 (.00)	-0.11 (.00)	0.04 (.00)	-0.29 (.02)
Career Pathways Supports	0.28 (.02)	0.18 (.01)	0.14 (.01)	0.13 (.01)	0.13 (.01)
Adj. R <sup>2</sup> <sub>CONTROLS</sub>	.089	.049	.128	.075	-.019
Δ Adj. R <sup>2</sup> <sub>with IVs</sub>	.031	-.015	.012	.107	.185
Partial η <sup>2</sup> <sub>IVs</sub>	.072	.026	.045	.067	.215
Model n	91	91	92	89	92

Notes. Standardized coefficients (β) are reported; effect size (partial η<sup>2</sup>) in parentheses. †p < .10, \*p ≤ .05. \*\*p ≤ .01. \*\*\*p ≤ .001. The Other race category includes youth who self-identified as Native Americans, as well as multiracial. These categories were combined due to insufficient sample size (which we defined as <15 individuals). Multiple regression employs listwise deletion; as such, youth whose surveys contained missing information on the data needed for these analyses were excluded.

**Table 22 Continued** Multiple Regression Models on the Impact of Opportunity Reboot Model Features on Change in Short-Term Youth Outcomes

Variables	Social-Emotional Competencies			Skills for Systems Navigation		
	Δ Self-Awareness	Δ Responsible Decision Making	Δ Relationship Skills	Δ Financial Literacy	Δ Job-Seeking Skills	Δ Resource Id Skills
<b>Covariates</b>						
Age	0.16 (.01)	0.28+ (.04)	-0.02 (.00)	-0.10 (.01)	0.05 (.00)	0.14 (.01)
Female (REFERENCE: MALE)	0.03 (.00)	0.03 (.00)	-0.06 (.00)	0.21* (.05)	0.09 (.01)	0.04 (.00)
Race/Ethnicity (REFERENCE: WHITE)						
Asian	-0.02 (.00)	-0.08 (.00)	0.06 (.00)	0.04 (.00)	-0.39* (.04)	-0.24 (.02)
Black	-0.10 (.01)	0.09 (.00)	0.14 (.01)	-0.01 (.00)	-0.21 (.03)	-0.11 (.01)
Hispanic	0.08 (.00)	-0.01 (.00)	0.08 (.00)	-0.01 (.00)	-0.13 (.01)	-0.24 (.03)
Other	0.26+ (.05)	0.24+ (.04)	0.22+ (.04)	0.04 (.00)	-0.06 (.00)	0.04 (.00)
Mental Health	0.11 (.01)	0.10 (.01)	-0.01 (.00)	-0.14 (.02)	-0.03 (.00)	0.08 (.01)
Engagement	0.06 (.00)	-0.02 (.00)	-0.01 (.00)	-0.01 (.00)	0.08 (.00)	0.12 (.01)
Dosage	0.08 (.00)	-0.01 (.00)	0.35* (.06)	0.11 (.01)	0.06 (.00)	-0.00 (.00)
<b>Independent Variables</b>						
Δ Within Program Mentoring	0.04 (.00)	0.01 (.00)	-0.05 (.00)	0.28* (.07)	0.26* (.06)	0.24+ (.05)
Outside of Program Mentoring	0.27* (.06)	0.24+ (.04)	0.36** (.10)	0.24* (.05)	0.21+ (.04)	0.23+ (.04)
Individualized Goal Supports	-0.09 (.00)	-0.30 (.02)	-0.20 (.01)	-0.02 (.00)	-0.55** (.09)	-0.25 (.02)
Career Pathways Supports	0.06 (.00)	0.15 (.01)	0.15 (.01)	-0.18 (.01)	0.66*** (.13)	0.21 (.01)
Adj. R <sup>2</sup> <sub>CONTROLS</sub>	.043	.036	.055	.001	.087	-.010
Δ Adj. R <sup>2</sup> <sub>with IVs</sub>	.029	.008	.063	.123	.098	.081
Partial η <sup>2</sup> <sub>IVs</sub>	.064	.076	.122	.128	.320	.118
Model n	88	93	92	93	93	91

Notes. Standardized coefficients (β) are reported; effect size (partial η<sup>2</sup>) in parentheses. \*p < .10, \*p ≤ .05. \*\*p ≤ .01. \*\*\*p ≤ .001. The Other race category includes youth who self-identified as Native Americans, as well as multiracial. These categories were combined due to insufficient sample size (which we defined as <15 individuals). Multiple regression employs listwise deletion; as such, youth whose surveys contained missing information on the data needed for these analyses were excluded.

- § **Individualized goal supports were *negatively* associated with positive changes in youth’s job-seeking skills.** This negative association may simply be a reflection of a core principle adopted by all partner sites: the need to meet opportunity youth where they are at. Youth who require the most intensive individualized goal supports are often the youth who have more urgent needs that must be met before focusing on job-seeking skills. This includes addressing chemical and mental health issues, securing stable housing, and — perhaps — even focusing on education before focusing on employment.
- § **The four model features collectively had moderate to large effect sizes on at least one outcome in each overarching outcome category:** positive identity (civic efficacy, partial  $\eta^2 = .215$ ); social-emotional competencies (relationship skills, partial  $\eta^2 = .122$ ); and skills for systems navigation (financial literacy, partial  $\eta^2 = .128$ ; job-seeking skills, partial  $\eta^2 = .320$ ; resource identification skills, partial  $\eta^2 = .118$ ).  $\eta^2$ s or partial  $\eta^2$ s of .02 are considered small;  $\eta^2 \cong .13$  are considered moderate, and  $\eta^2 \cong .26$  or greater are considered large (Cohen et al., Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

The regression model results yielded two main takeaways: (1) program sites excel at delivering on their core services: namely, providing participants with tangible resources as well as teaching them financial literacy and job-seeking skills; and, (2) the models highlight just how essential outside-of-program mentors were to participants’ success in their respective programs — and potentially to their success in their longer-term post-program lives. Programs that are seeking ideas for how to improve their programming may consider providing participants with more targeted guidance on how to locate outside-of-program mentors, and how to cultivate these relationships.

- § The evaluation team also ran the regression models with age as a categorical variable (14-17, 18-20, and 21-24) to determine whether there were differential program impacts among various age groups. Model results show that program impacts did not differ for youth of different age groups for most outcomes with the exception of positivity in the face of challenge and responsible decision-making.
- § Opportunity youth (ages 14-17) reported fewer changes in positivity in the face of challenge and responsible decision-making relative to youth ages 18-20 and ages 21-24.

Thus, there were no meaningful differential age impacts for most of the study’s outcomes. It makes intuitive sense that younger youth demonstrated much smaller changes than older youth in terms of positivity in the face of challenge and responsible decision-making as these outcomes are highly influenced by one’s lived experiences.



## Research Question 7

### In their own words, how did participants describe experiencing the features of the Opportunity Reboot model at their program sites?

The impact narratives were designed to complement the broader research and evaluation design by deepening understanding of a small group of Opportunity Reboot participants, their experience in the program, and how their experiences impacted their lives. The qualitative impact narrative interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The analysis of this qualitative data used a grounded theory approach, facilitated by NVivo software (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Charmaz, 2008). Themes were compiled through the use of an open coding structure, guided by the Opportunity Reboot model features and short-term outcomes identified in the Opportunity Reboot logic model. Two or more researchers participated in data analysis of each site and across sites to determine a consensus on the coding structure.

To answer this research question, the major qualitative themes tied to each of the four features of the Opportunity Reboot model are presented. These are paired with quotes from participants to illuminate the core ideas.

#### Positive Mentoring Relationships: Relationships Laid the Foundation for Participant Success

When participants talked about mentoring relationships they generally referred to program staff including case managers, teachers, and youth workers. These mentoring relationships were integral to participant success in the program. Participants shared numerous accounts of what these relationships meant to them, what they looked like, and how they helped

them grow. In a close examination of the impact narrative data, it became clear that participants talked about all five critical components of what are being described in youth development literature as *developmental relationships* (see Pekel et al., 2015). Developmental relationships are defined as close connections through which young people discover who they are, gain abilities to shape their own lives and learn how to interact with and contribute to the world around them. These connections between youth and adults or youth and their peers powerfully and positively shape young people's growth and development.



She actually gets us...instead of most teachers pushing us away if we're having a bad day.

Past research has highlighted relationships as the critical active ingredient of strong youth development programs (Li & Julian, 2012; Liang & Rhodes, 2007; Pekel et al., 2015). Research has linked developmental relationships with positive outcomes in families and schools, including motivation to learn, emotional competence, prosocial behavior, effortful control, and personal responsibility (Pekel et al., 2015). The five core elements of a developmental relationship are: express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities (see Appendix F for an overview of Developmental Relationships Framework).

After analyzing data and noting the emphasis participants placed on relationships as key to growth and success, data specifically regarding mentoring relationships were re-analyzed using the Developmental Relationships Framework as a lens. What youth experienced through mentoring relationships is explored in each of the five elements below.

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**Express Care.** For participants in difficult circumstances, being able to trust program staff was critical. Mentors build relationships with young people by providing space for them to share important information, or by providing information they could trust. One participant described their trusting relationship this way: “[You can] talk to her about something you can’t talk to your family about, you can tell her and trust that she won’t tell your family, unless it becomes a big problem.” Youth described how they appreciated when mentors encouraged or praised them. One participant quoted their mentor, who would tell them, “You got this.” While another participant discussed how his mentor noticed and praised him for his efforts: “He said I was his best worker...I work harder...and I don’t complain about what I do.” Others shared that their mentors give them pep talks, and encouraged them by reinforcing their belief that they could reach their goals.

It was important for participants that their mentors were kind to them and fun to be around. In interviews, participants described how their mentors joked around with them, but the jokes were mutually fun. In general, mentors were also described as “showing compassion,” “so nice and kind,” and “patient.”

In addition, mentors made efforts to get to know participants. “They have an ability to connect with people in our circumstances,” noted one participant. Mentors got to know participants through intentionally spending time with them, even when busy, or asking participants about their lives, aspirations, and hobbies. Participants appreciated when mentors expressed care by checking in with them and making sure they had what they needed.

**Challenge Growth.** Participants discussed how mentors expected their best, and pushed them to try harder to reach their goals. One participant described it this way: “They always pretty much encourage students to do their work and get it done, keep pushing forward.” Another said, “She was always trying to help them through and trying to get them to realize what they need to do and help them push through that.” Some of the ways that mentors pushed them included encouragement to go to college, complete their goals, and being brave when faced with challenges.

Mentors also shared their own stories of overcoming challenges for the purpose of motivating young people. One participant said, “They share and talk about their experiences and they keep motivating me, that you have to have a goal.”



When I first came to GAP, I didn’t speak English very well, she asked me, “What do you want to do in your future?” and I said, “I want to be English teacher, but I don’t think I can do that.” And she said, “No, I believe you can do, because I will be your mentor.”

Lastly, mentors challenged young people's growth by holding them accountable for their progress and actions. Some participants who were a part of a program's housing initiative shared that mentors would hold them accountable for "showing up" and "being a good tenant." Additional expectations of mentors included being respectful, following the rules, and working cooperatively with other young people and staff.

**Provide Support.** Participants described various ways that mentors had provided them help and support through their program. Mentors did this through academic support, guiding young people through problems, and goal setting. "She's kinda like everybody's therapist," noted one participant. It was also impactful for participants when mentors helped them with instrumental needs outside of the program, such as rent, food, and gas: "She'll help you with stuff that doesn't involve [the program]."

Many staff members in Opportunity Reboot programs taught or guided young people in academic pursuits. Participants shared several examples of new concepts or skills they learned from mentors. "[Staff member] has just helped me learn how to do homework better and be able to stay on task," said one participant. Many participants described feeling stuck when faced with a skill they were not yet proficient in, and how a mentor stepped in to help: "[Staff member's] teaching was important for completing projects."

**Share Power.** While this element in the Developmental Relationships framework was expressed the least, participants shared some salient examples of how staff members shared power with them. In particular, participants appreciated mentors that would "treat them like adults" and work collaboratively with them: "She's very flexible with our schedule...she works with us." Another participant described how being part of the program felt differently than being in school as a child; mainly, this was due to how staff members treated them as adults with autonomy and respect.

Other ways that staff members shared power was through providing participants choices on activities in the program, or listening to young people's ideas and valuing their decisions: "She'll be like, 'Well, here's a list,' but if you don't want to do anything on the list, you can always do something else."



**Expand Possibilities.** Most of how staff expanded possibilities for participants is described in the following sections about career pathways and individualized goal supports. However, a few participants shared how mentors expanded their possibilities through their mentorship and teaching, or by connecting participants to resources beyond their teaching. One participant noted that they found a mentor’s teaching to be “inspirational” when thinking about the future, while another noted that their teacher had helped learn about new supports. “She gives me a lot of websites you can go to [for academic help].” Others talked about the adults they viewed as mentors broadened their knowledge. One participant gave an example of how they had learned about an energy bill that allowed the county to help pay for installing solar panels on houses. This was exciting for this participant who was interested in green energy solutions.

Participants noted that their success depended, in part, on staff “making things happen” or helping plan and execute their goals and connect them to new ideas. “[They] even give us a calendar for what we’re gonna do,” said one participant. Mentors’ careful planning of events and activities facilitated the type of learning and growth that participants experienced in their program. One participant noted that “I think they put their students first. No matter what, they are always putting their students first.”

## Individualized Goal Supports: Finding the Right Resources to Support Participants’ Unique Objectives

**Tracking Goals and Habits.** As noted in participants’ relationships with mentors, staff provided support of goal setting and achievement for young people. Participants named specific ways that staff facilitated goal setting by the use of setting goals and tracking strategies. “We go over our [goals] and make sure we’re doing our checklists and stuff like that,” said one participant. In addition to tracking goals, participants also reflected on their goals and how their progress would impact their future.

One strategy utilized by staff and participants included habit tracking, where participants learned to track their habits and how they contributed to their goals each day. “[Habit trackers] helped me realize what habits I should probably do more or which habits I should totally cut out of my life,” noted one participant.

**Connecting goals to college or future careers.** Youth discussed how staff helped them see how work experience, coursework, and training could help them achieve their goals. For youth who are incarcerated, this allowed them to envision a future beyond release from detention. One participant said, “[It helps] prepare us for once we get released from here, and help us have, you know, the skills to obtain jobs in the community and to obtain enrollment in colleges and just prepare us for what’s ahead. Figure out what’s ahead if we don’t have a clear picture of what’s ahead, too.” Some participants had created a goal of attending a certain college or entering a particular career field. Staff were able to tailor their support to these participants by looking up information on colleges of their choice, explaining what would need to be accomplished to be successful in a career, or encouraging participants to stick to their goal, even if it is difficult. This individualized support was often unique to the program: “...some places, you don’t get one-on-one time with other people [such as in this program], they just work with everybody as a whole.”



...I told [staff] that I wanted to be an architect. They told me, “I can help you out, I know this college,” or “I know this teacher.”

**Facilities and resources.** For many, the reality of working towards a goal of entering a college or career field required resources and financial support. Several participants shared that it was the free facilities, staff time, and resources that helped them be successful in achieving their goals: “The facility is good, it’s free, you can use the computer after school. But, in high school, you don’t even have the opportunity to use the computer after school, you just gotta leave.” Another said, “If you want to apply for a job, you can call the teacher and they will help you.”

Participants also described the need for financial support. As one participant noted, it was necessary to “make sure I have enough financial support that I’m not gonna go into debt.” Staff helped to “reach out to the community and get those resources that we need to be a successful human being.” Some other financial support that was provided to participants included information on scholarships and savings programs.

## Career Pathways Supports: Opportunities to Build Skills Today and Dream About the Future

**Hands-on work experience.** Many participants worked in a job through their program that helped them build workplace skills or specialized training. Some participants shared that it felt like they were “getting paid to learn” through these experiences, with the added benefit of adding job experience to their resumes. Many participants were also provided specialized training and certifications, such as OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) compliance, CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) training, and CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) certification. Participants were eager to finish these trainings, due to their direct link with potential job opportunities. One participant said, “We have to learn to fix a computer and if we finish, we get the certificate, and they said that if we have it, they can help find a job for us.”



Some participants described these work experiences as an opportunity to “get ahead,” especially when others in their age group may not have had these opportunities. “I can only name four 18-year-olds that I know who have gotten the qualifications I’ve gotten...I’m already a step above my age group.”

Other participants may not have had a paid job through their program, but volunteered instead. They described how their volunteer experiences had also been a way to prepare for future careers: “We get to work with the people...I have a chance to volunteer in long-term care, so I feel like [I had] more experience.”

**Leadership and life skills.** Participants also described the benefit of learning leadership and life skills, beyond job-specific training. One participant shared that they felt they solved “real-life problems” through their program, such as how to read and manage an electric bill or utilize environmentally-friendly and efficient tools in their home. Another said, “We work on different skills, and our main skill was teamwork.” Others echoed the sentiment that collaboration with others helped them grow in their leadership abilities: “...they just prepare you for the leadership skills...so you feel confident to work with other people...you have more confidence and more experience about that.”

**College and career preparation.** Participants described several ways that their programs offered preparation for college. These included college visits over the course of their participation in a program. “It’s a good option, because I look at different colleges and see my options of where I want to go,” noted one participant. Programs also provided information on how to apply for college, including notification of deadlines, and how they could academically prepare for college. One participant shared, “They help you with college opportunities as well, and they explain stuff there, too.” Another participant shared that even though they were not interested in colleges early in their high school career, they appreciated that staff exposed them to ideas for colleges.

For some participants, college credits earned through their program allowed them to begin their college careers with some credits already completed. Participants were able to articulate the link they saw to their college coursework and beginning their college experience with an advantage: “...with the amount of credits I already have...instead of me having to wait at the back of the line to get accepted before anyone, I’d probably be the first one they’d accept, because I already have some college credits. My transcript for college looks good so far.”

In addition to college preparation, participants also experienced a variety of opportunities to hone skills for obtaining a job. Interviews and job application help were discussed by a large number of participants, with some noting that they got a job with the help of a staff member who helped them to apply. Other activities that helped included mock interviews, resume and application workshops, and guidance on how to find jobs. One participant said, “It’s important for me, like before I interview, I have more experience. If I go to the real interview, it will make me less nervous, like I can’t speak. I have experience already. I can do a good job.” Many young people also participated in activities through their programs to learn about different career paths and what they could do to prepare for them. Others shared what it was like to participate in a career exploration class: “[It’s] making me think about how my future could be, like with different jobs, especially through the career exploration class I have at the end of the day, ‘cause we’ve done a lot of field trips to these different job sites.”



If I weren’t in [Tri-City Bridges], I’d be, like, in hell right now. I wouldn’t have any idea what to do since my parents aren’t really a help, but thanks to the [Tri-City Bridges] office, I have more opportunities. They know what to do, while I don’t.



## Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships

### Connecting with New People, Places, and Skill-Building Opportunities

For reasons of length and site-level variability, participants were not asked about their interactions with organizations that partnered with their program site. However, these experiences surfaced naturally in the qualitative impact narratives as youth highlighted the opportunities to experience new places, people, and skills as a particularly memorable aspect of their time at their programs.

**Field trips.** Several of the cross-sector partnerships that participants experienced were in the form of interactive field trips. Many of these field trips included a career component by exposing participants to the work of a variety of fields that they learned about in school. Others went on college visits to provide participants the opportunity to see what college is like and learn about what is necessary to be accepted at various colleges. Some experiences allowed participants the opportunity to meet professionals in different careers and watch them work. Other field trips provided cultural education and enrichment for participants. One such experience was a trip to a buffalo farm, where participants learned about Indigenous peoples' "sacred relationships to nature, animals, and the creator." One participant described this as "such an important field trip to the whole experience of the program." Another field trip was to a camp, where participants interacted with people from different countries, learning together for two weeks.

**Speakers.** Some programs invited speakers as part of their relationship to the broader community: "[The program] tries to get involved with the community to bring in speakers." Other participants shared that the speakers provided information on career pathways, cultural knowledge, or inspiration for the future. They enjoyed having these speakers expand their worldview. One participant said they enjoyed a particular speaker who talked to them about "staying in touch with your culture and not losing it."

**Work sites and volunteering.** For some programs, placement in a school allowed them to tap into the deep well of cross-sector partnerships the district has established over the years. Other programs were able to successfully partner with businesses and organizations that gave young people the opportunity to work or volunteer. The variety of volunteer opportunities was noted by one participant, who described "so many kinds" of ways they could volunteer through participation with their program.



The field trips are so inspirational, cause it gives me a bigger vantage point of where I could go in the future for jobs.



It's always good to have somebody that's been through it and that has that job or has been through this experience, so they can relay their story on to us, so we know more about that concept.

## Research Question 8

# In their own words, how did youth describe the impact of Opportunity Reboot on their lives?

The impact narrative protocols flowed from a discussion of the four Opportunity Reboot model features (see Research Question 7) into a conversation about how opportunity youths' participation in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model have impacted their lives. These data were gathered both through the semi-structured interview protocols and the "Three-Act Play" activity used as part of the focus group protocols.

The impact portion of these interviews and focus groups was coded using grounded theory, and thus was not limited to focusing only on the same short-term youth outcomes targeted in the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey. That said, there was strong alignment between many of the qualitative impact themes that emerged and the three overarching categories used to organize the short-term youth outcomes named in the logic model (see Figure 2); thus, the findings for this research question are organized around these same three categories as well as one additional category that emerged: Commitment to Learning. Many of the specific qualitative impact themes align with the quantitative outcome metrics, adding a rich layer of nuance embedded in youths' own words.

The major themes for each of the four overarching qualitative impact categories are presented first. This is followed by a summary of how participants explicitly represented how their relationships with school and work had (or had not) changed over the course of the program via their drawings and supporting narrative around the "Three-Act Play" activity.



## Positive Identity

**Confidence about the future.** For many participants, feeling that they would be able to be successful in the future was a positive outcome of their programs. One participant said, “It helps me realize how far I’ve made it and how far I can go, or how more far I can go.” Another participant described that they felt confident in what they needed to do for success in the future: “I know my responsibility. I know my goal...I know what I gotta do for the future.”

**More comfortable with themselves.** One participant shared that they felt “more confident in myself now.” Others cited a higher level of confidence overall. In particular, they felt confident interacting with others and being less shy. One participant discussed that they are now “more focused and in tune with myself.” Being confident in their own skin led to greater confidence when talking and working with others.

**Ability to speak in front of others.** Several participants shared that their program had pushed them to try speaking in front of groups. At first, many participants were hesitant or scared. However, after trying it a few times with support, they felt excited to continue. One participant said, “You feel like, more confident for you to talk.” Another said, “After I’m done talking, I feel like, ‘Oh, I wanna go one more time! Give me one more choice, one more opportunity...I have lots to tell the audience!’”

**Pride in accomplishments and identity.** The activities in Opportunity Reboot programs provided opportunities for participants to take ownership and feel a sense of pride for their contributions. One participant vowed to make their contributions permanent: “[I’m] gonna get a tattoo of the candles logo I helped create.” Besides their work or volunteer efforts, several participants were proud of how far they had come in their education and who they were as an educated person: “Never thought that I could have a better education. That’s how I’m proud of myself.” For others, working through adversity strengthened their pride in their ability to persevere: “I’m most proud of, you know, even though I had many problems to come through...I can stand by myself. I don’t have to stay by other people, so I’m proud of myself.”

**Developing and living by values.** Some participants talked about outcomes using value-laden language. “[The program] helped what values I have and stuff like that. It taught me better values,” said one participant. Some attributed these values to who they will be in the future: “Now that I’ve developed these other values, it’s like, now I can actually move on in life and be able to be a very positive and very helpful person in the community.”



I’m most proud of, you know, even though I had many problems to come through, I have to change and I can stand by myself. I’m proud of myself..

## Social-Emotional Competencies

**Improved communication.** Several participants discussed how their communication with peers or other program members has improved greatly. As an example, many participants described how they were explicitly taught to be active listeners, and how this is “actually following what they were saying, showing commitment to what they were saying.” Others shared that their communication allowed them to “think about how the other person will feel about what I have to say.” Communicating across cultural differences was another example.

**Ability to better manage emotions.** Some participants noticed that they had changed in the ways they could now control outbursts, calm themselves down, or move on when someone had irritated them. One participant said, “I still get really annoyed, do you ever get that feeling, ‘I just wanna slap ‘em?’ but you can’t, you won’t. It just helps you keep that thought more in your head.” Another said, “I got to meet really cool people who helped me cope with talking to people.” Others noted that they feel more patient, or are better with managing their anger.

**Working as a team.** Effective teamwork was a skill that several participants discussed during interviews. One of the ways this was achieved was through social competence, understanding how honesty and respect can help a team achieve mutual goals. One participant said, “Before this, we couldn’t work as a team, we wouldn’t be positive to one another.” Another shared this story: “We wouldn’t care about the other person’s feelings. So, the soft skills class helped us out...Our teacher was like, ‘You know, you all really worked good as a team, you helped each other out. When someone was down, you all were supportive and you helped ‘em out.’”

**Soft skills.** Many participants also reflected on “soft skills” that they developed through their work experience in Opportunity Reboot programs. People skills, such as “patience with a customer” or “how to work and ask people questions” was an important soft skill outcome. Critical thinking was a component of these skills, with one participant noting that “when a challenge arose, [I am able] to overcome that challenge and find a different solution.”



Helped us learn that if you work as a team and you’re respectful and honest with your teammates or your coworkers, you all can achieve some great things in life. The more time you work as a team, the more you can get stuff done.



## Skills for Systems Navigation

**Financial literacy.** Several participants referenced financial literacy as an outcome of participation in Opportunity Reboot programs. Of these participants, a greater.”

understanding of how businesses manage money and how they could pay for basic needs were the main themes. One participant said, “I’m more mindful at my house about keeping the lights on.” Another said, “I realize how much money goes into [a business].”

**Technical skills.** The majority of workplace skills that participants discussed in interviews were related to job-specific technical skills. Many participants connected their experience of learning these skills to an advantage they would have when applying to jobs in the future. Some of these technical skills and training that participants experienced included building solar panels, OSHA training, certification in Minnesota Career Digital Literacy, and CPR. In addition to job-specific skills, participants also cited exposure and learning of management skills, time management, and learning “how a job actually works...what the future would be like and how I’m gonna succeed.”

**Accessing needed resources.** Several of the examples that participants shared were ways the Opportunity Reboot staff or programs had facilitated access to resources that would fulfill basic needs. For instance,

participants shared that they had “got my own apartment” or learned how to take a bus where they needed to go. One participant described how a staff member taught them how to use a map so they would be better able to go home from the program or go to school.

**Asking for help.** Participants appreciated that they could count on staff members to guide them or help them when they needed to navigate systems.

“[The program] really cares where you come from and what you’re doing, just tell them you need help and they’ll help you,” said one participant. Another said, “If I weren’t in [the program]...I wouldn’t have any idea what to do, since my parents aren’t really a help, but thanks to [the program], I have more opportunities. They know what to do, while I don’t.”

**Learn about future jobs, how to apply for them.** As detailed previously, several participants described various activities in their programs that taught them how to create materials for applying to jobs, find jobs, and interview for jobs. In general, “[projects in Opportunity Reboot] inspired me to think about my career choice,” as noted by one participant. Others described what they learned, such as “if you interview, you have to make eye contact,” and “how to find a job, how to figure out applications.”



[Staff] can help you look for colleges, or if you’re stuck, they help...If you have questions about a certain type of job after high school, they can help you with the requirements.

## Commitment to Learning

**Academic improvement.** Several participants noted that their participation in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model had helped them improve their grades. Some youth enthusiastically noted in interviews, “My grades are better,” or “my grades are very good.” One participant said, “I don’t wanna say I didn’t care [before], but now, I care more about my grades.” Participants also expressed how they were able to improve in academic skills, in tandem with receiving better grades. “I got better in math,” said one participant.

**Greater motivation to work hard.** Participants were able to identify that they were “back on track” after participation with Opportunity Reboot programs. Many attributed this to feeling more motivated. “Yes, it does help me work harder,” said one participant. Another said, “This internship has just made me wake up and remember what I actually care about and my career goals.” Some noted that they felt motivated because they knew that an upcoming test could be tied to their grades or a future job: “This is about the test...if I don’t try or if I don’t motivate myself to do the test good, as well, I’m not gonna pass.”

**Desire to graduate, go to college.** For many of the opportunity youth interviewed, the goal of graduating from high school or entering college was an exciting one: “When I turn that tassel, it’ll be a very, very fun experience.” Their belief that they could graduate was bolstered by their program. As some participants said, “[Dual credits] helped me out a lot. I wouldn’t be where I am today without those...I didn’t even see it as possible, of graduating with my class.” Others noted that they were looking forward to now being able to earn a GED or apply for colleges.

## Representing Change in Three Acts

As noted above, in addition to sharing pictures or journal entries demonstrating their experiences in Opportunity Reboot programs, participants also showed how they had grown through a storyboard activity where they looked at their life as a “Three-Act Play.” Through this activity participants thought about where they were before the program and how things had changed for them as a result of their participation and how that played into their future goals. In the following section, we explicate several of those themes beyond the outcomes already shared. Each section begins with an illustrative participant quote.

**The past: “I wasn’t really making any forward progress.”** Participants talked about feeling “depressed” or “lost” before the programs they participated in. Some described themselves as “not very social.” Others said they often got into trouble in their schools or communities and generally felt “unmotivated” to do well in school or work. Several participants talked about the jobs that they did have as “meaningless” or “not worth the time.”



... I actually care about my grades. I used to not care. I guess I didn’t really care about what I was gonna do in the future, as long as I was alive.



She’s been able to just push past things and be able to more or less make us learn, even when we don’t want to. That’s just a really good motivational thing for a lot of us students....She never gave up.

**End of the program: “Now I’m focused on both school and life.”** Participants talked about feeling more comfortable being around others, making friends and feeling less alone. They felt “accomplished,” “proud,” and “successful” because of their time in Opportunity Reboot programs. Some said it was what helped them get sober and find meaning in their work. Others noted that they were excited to have received college credit or landed their first job.

**Looking ahead: “I can see myself in the future as a strong bird who can fly through the storm.”** Youth who had completed programs saw a bright future for themselves. Many saw themselves as college graduates, something they had never imagined before. Living in a community and owning a house and a car felt realistic. Others talked about specific goals such as getting a degree in environmental studies or joining a nursing program. They saw themselves as more resilient and able to take on whatever came their way and they knew where to access supportive resources.

## Research Question 9

# What percent of youth in the Opportunity Reboot group able to secure employment? How is this similar or different from the comparison group?

Working in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the evaluation team conducted the employment and wage attainment study, which provide access to data sources maintained by the state of Minnesota. The comparison group for this study were Minnesota youth who were similar on select sociodemographic factors to youth in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model; however, youth in the comparison group were *not* receiving services and supports from eligibility-based programs. The data focus on five time points: 2018 Quarter 3 (which approximately aligned with endline administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey; July to September), 2018 Quarter 4 (October to December), 2019 Quarter 1 (January to March) and 2019 Quarter 2 (April to June).

### *Box 2: Use of “Persons of Color vs. Race Categories in DEED Analyses*

DEED attempted to use race as a matching variable when identifying the comparison group using propensity score matching (PSM) techniques. However, their analysis revealed the youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were distinct from same-race youth that were in the comparison group. For example, youth who identified as Asian in the comparison group had much higher educational attainment, on average, than Opportunity Reboot’s Asian (mostly Karen refugees) participants. In consultation with the evaluation team, DEED elected to combine all non-white individuals into a single person of color (POC) category in their analyses.

As illustrated in Figure 5, the overall employment rate of youth in the Opportunity Reboot group generally increased or remained stable during the four quarters after the endline survey was administered (from 59% to 67%). A similar, albeit less linear, trend was observed among Opportunity Reboot Youth of Color (see Box 2) from 56% to 70% (see Figure 6). When the employment data were disaggregated by employment type (i.e., full-time vs. part-time; see Figure 7), some encouraging trends were noted. First, **Opportunity Reboot youths’ full-time employment rate increased linearly across all four quarters** (from 3% at the endline youth survey, to 27% at the end of the first quarter following the endline survey, and 36% the following summer). **Similarly, their part-time employment rate also declined**, from 50% at endline to 37% across all four quarters. Given that the overall trend of increasing employment over time, it is reasonable to infer that most of the youth were successful at converting their part-time positions to full-time positions. These data also suggest that Opportunity Reboot youth were, on average, finding jobs in sectors that were generally insulated from seasonal fluctuations. According to DEED, the drop in 2019 Quarter 1 employment rates seen in the comparison group, compared to the quarter immediately before it, is an expected and recurring annual trend.

Figure 5 Percent of Youth Employed Over Time

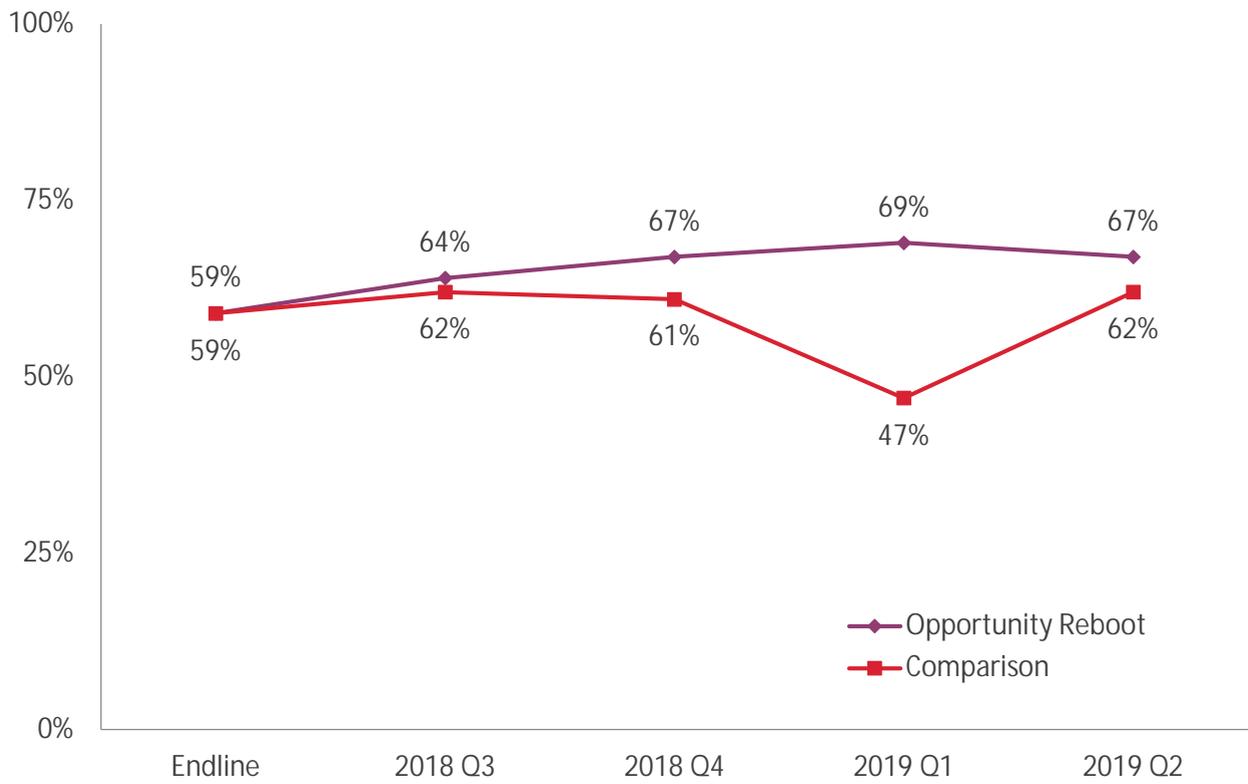
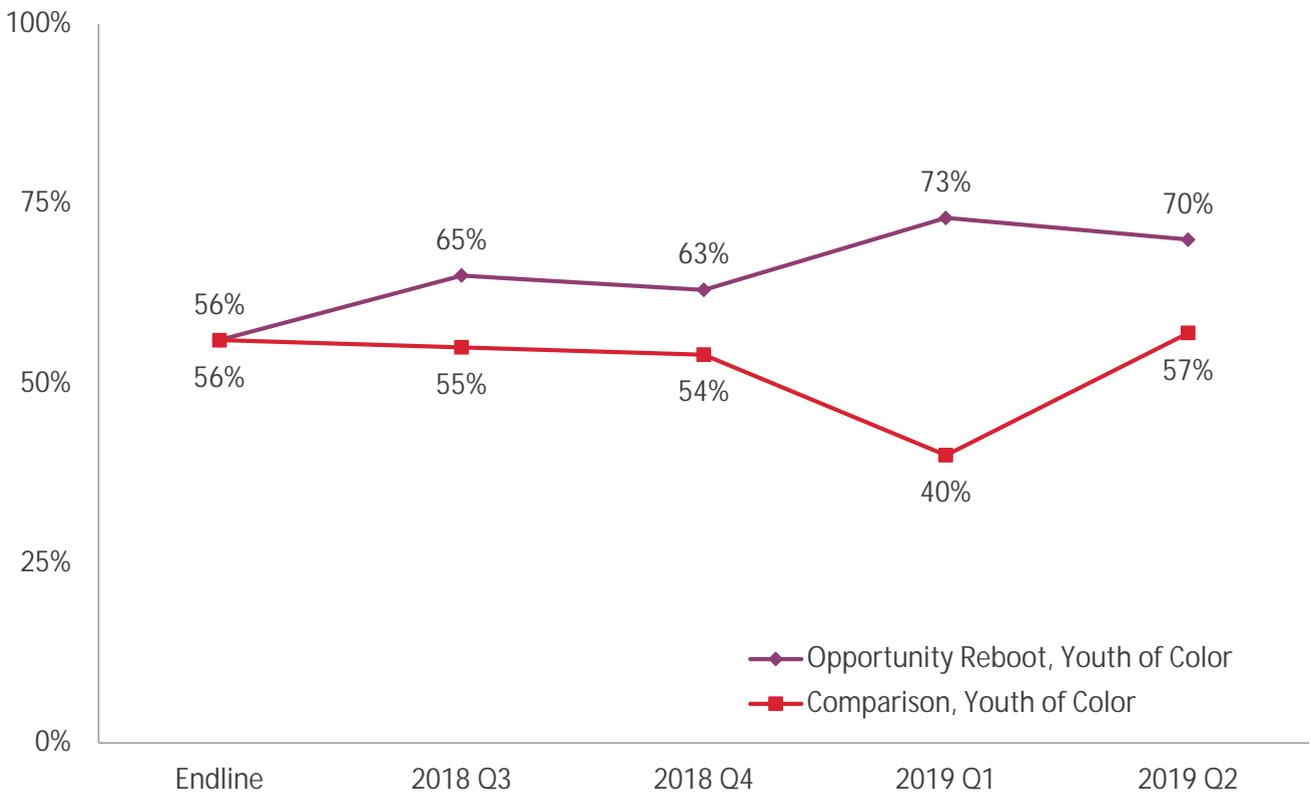
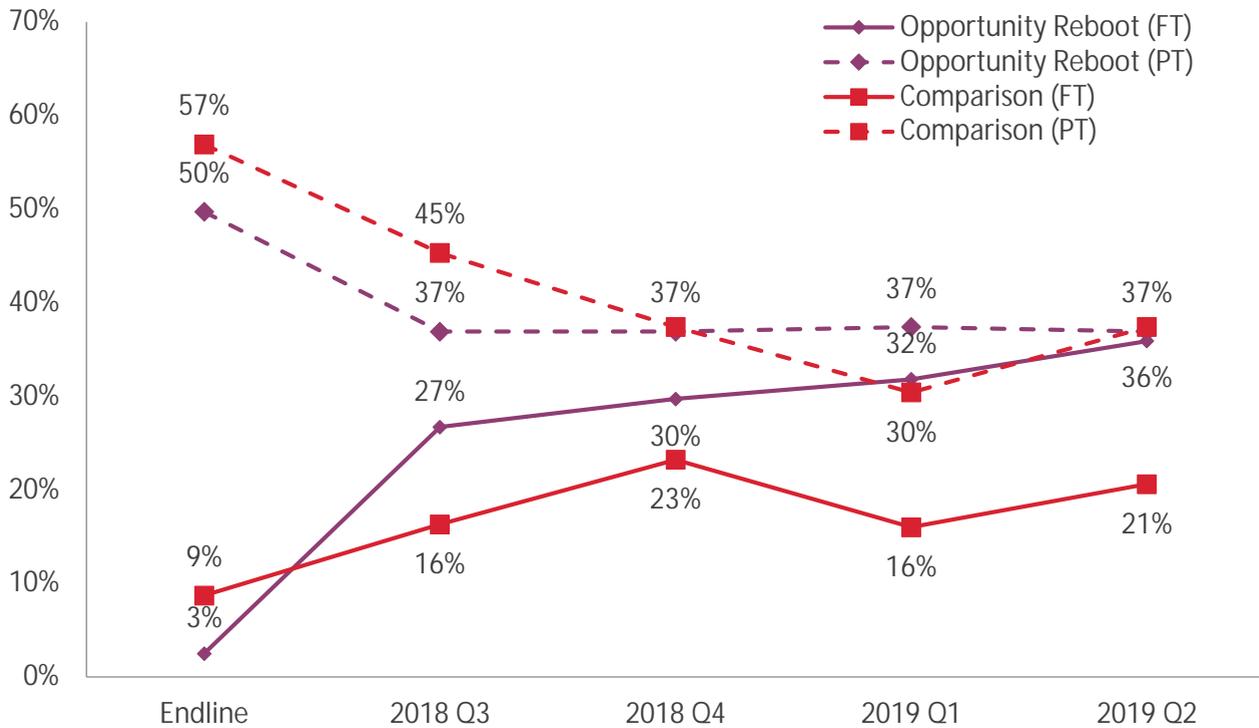


Figure 6 Percent of Youth of Color Employed Over Time



**Figure 7** Percent of Youth Employed, by Full-Time (FT) and Part-Time (PT) Work Status, Over Time



**Youth in the Opportunity Reboot group, as well as just the POC subgroup, tended to have better overall employment outcomes compared to comparison youth; furthermore, these better outcomes were consistent over time.** When disaggregating by employment type, Opportunity Reboot youths’ full-time employment rate exceeded that of the comparison group from the first post-endline quarter onward, providing evidence that program sites’ activities were in fact efficacious at helping youth secure employment. Results are somewhat mixed for youth in the Opportunity Reboot group who were employed part-time: despite starting out with lower part-time employment rates when compared to the comparison group, the proportion of youth employed part-time were fairly similar between both groups.

In addition to reporting the youths’ employment rates, DEED also ran difference-in-differences (DiD) analyses to test for statistically significant differences between the Opportunity Reboot sample and the comparison sample on four outcomes: (1) any employment, (2) any employment (with person of color sub-sample), (3) full-time employment, and (4) part-time employment (Table 23; see Imbens & Wooldridge, 2009). DiD analyses were conducted using the diff Stata package obtained from the Boston College Statistical Software Components (SSC) archive of user-contributed programs. DEED specified logit-estimated Kernel-based propensity score difference-in-difference analyses on the area of common support (i.e., the range of propensity scores where the probability of observing treatment and control cases overlap). The following covariates were included in each of the four models: age, gender, educational attainment, and the interaction between age and gender. The covariates of persons of color and the interaction term of persons of color by prior employment were also included in the three models that were not limited to the person of color sub-sample.

While propensity score matching (PSM) seeks to match control and treatment individuals with similar attributes, there is always the concern that there are unobserved differences between the two that could affect outcomes (such as wages). The added benefit of the DiD approach is that as long as the observed differences between control and treatment participants are consistent, changes in their differences (i.e., the difference in the difference between the groups being compared) can be reasonably attributed to the intervention (i.e., Opportunity Reboot). DiD controls for both time and group effects, thereby isolating the program effect (Bendewald, Maryns, & Robertson, 2016).

Across the four models, there were significant differences between the Opportunity Reboot and comparison sample for any employment, full-time employment, and full-time employment among persons of color sub-sample during the first quarter of 2019, such that a greater percentage of Opportunity Reboot participants, on average, were employed relative to the comparison sample. There was also a greater percentage of Opportunity Reboot participants employed full-time at endline and during the second quarter of 2019 relative to the comparison sample. It is unsurprising that most of the differences and DiD analyses were not statistically significant, given the short time frame of the follow-up periods. Findings from previous studies suggest that observed effect sizes tend to be small in the year immediately following an intervention, and that these program effects tend to rise over time (Card et al., 2011; 2015). This is consistent with the current evaluation, as the effect sizes were generally negligible across the employment outcomes. It was, however, encouraging to observe small to moderate effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = .299 - .519$ ) for participants' full-time employment rate this quickly after endline (Cohen's  $d = .20$  is considered small but meaningful;  $d = .50$  is considered moderate; Cohen, 1992; Durlak, 2009). These effect sizes suggest there is indeed a practical and significant difference in the percentage of Opportunity Reboot participants who were able to secure full-time employment in Q1 and Q2 of 2019 relative to the comparison sample. This data supports emerging moderate evidence of the Opportunity Reboot model.

Although the DiD analyses revealed few statistically significant differences between Opportunity Reboot and comparison group participants, Opportunity Reboot participants' employment numbers exhibited encouraging trends. Opportunity Reboot youth appear to be successful at securing employment – notably in jobs that seem to be insulated from seasonal fluctuations. Encouragingly, employment trends for Youth of Color tracks the overall trend and compares favorably to the trends observed among the Youth of Color in the comparison group. Furthermore, Opportunity Reboot youths' full-time employment rate increased consistently across the four quarters after endline survey administration.



**Table 23** Difference-in-Difference (DiD) Results between Comparison and Opportunity Reboot Samples' Quarterly Employment Rates

	Follow-Up Periods				
	Endline	2018 Q3	2018 Q4	2019 Q1	2019 Q2
<b>Any Employment</b>					
Opportunity Reboot	.585	.636	.667	.692	.672
Comparison	.594	.616	.606	.469	.618
Difference	-.009	.019	.061	.229*	-.009
(SE)	(.114)	(.088)	(.094)	(.093)	(.095)
Difference-in-Difference		.029	.070	.238+	.064
(SE)		(.147)	(.133)	(.133)	(.133)
Cohen's <i>d</i>		.012	.029	.096	.026
<b>Any Employment - Persons of Color Only</b>					
Opportunity Reboot	.563	.651	.692	.728	.698
Comparison	.559	.554	.544	.401	.567
Difference	.004	.097	.149	.327**	.132
(SE)	(.107)	(.115)	(.106)	(.091)	(.112)
Difference-in-Difference		.092	.144	.322*	.127
(SE)		(.166)	(.153)	(.126)	(.146)
Cohen's <i>d</i>		.044	.068	.153	.060
<b>Full-Time Employment</b>					
Opportunity Reboot	.025	.267	.297	.318	.359
Comparison	.087	.163	.232	.160	.206
Difference	.062**	.103	.065	.158**	.153**
(SE)	(.020)	(.072)	(.343)	(.059)	(.065)
Difference-in-Difference		.041	.003	.096	.092
(SE)		(.075)	(.074)	(.065)	(.069)
Cohen's <i>d</i>		.391	.299	.519	.507
<b>Part-Time Employment</b>					
Opportunity Reboot	.497	.369	.369	.374	.369
Comparison	.569	.453	.374	.304	.374
Difference	-.071	-.084	-.004	-.071	-.004
(SE)	(.082)	(.095)	(.093)	(.081)	(.093)
Difference-in-Difference		-.012	.067	.142	.067
(SE)		(.122)	(.120)	(.131)	(.120)
Cohen's <i>d</i>		.007	.039	.082	.039

Notes. + $p \leq .10$ . \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . SE = Standard Error. The reported effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) compares the mean of each follow-up period with the endline mean.

## Research Question 10

### What percent of youth in the Opportunity Reboot group able to secure living wage employment? How is this similar or different from the comparison group?

Drawing on data from the employment and wage attainment study, the findings to Research Question 9 suggest promising employment trends for youth in the Opportunity Reboot sample. However, while securing any kind of employment is an important step to economic independence, skill development, and opportunity, it is also important to consider wage attainment. Towards this end, living wage employment (see Box 3) — and the patterns in this threshold of employment — were examined. Figure 8 graphically illustrates the trends in living wage employment for the Opportunity Reboot and comparison group.

#### Box 3: Definition of Living Wage Employment

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) defines living wage employment as employment that results in \$30,900 a year (or \$7,725 a quarter) in earnings assuming full-time employment, or an hourly wage of \$14.86 or greater. This figure is DEED's yearly estimate of the basic-needs cost of living in the state of Minnesota, assuming that the individual is single and has no children — which is the case for nearly all study youth.

**The percent of youth in the Opportunity Reboot group who were able to secure living wage employment was relatively small, and — while the percentage generally increased over time (+9%) — at the last data point (2019 Quarter 2) only about 1 in 7 Opportunity Reboot youth were making a living wage.**

Across all five time points, the data show that youth in the Opportunity Reboot sample are less likely to have secured living wage employment (see Box 3) than their peers in the comparison group. However, the trend for the Opportunity Reboot group generally increased across the first four time points (+9%), while the trend for the comparison group was flatter (+3%). Interestingly, the percent of youth in the comparison group earning a living wage increased sharply in 2019 Quarter 2 (16% to 22%) while the Opportunity Reboot group stayed about the same (15% to 14%).

In light of the low rates of living wage employment, median quarterly earnings were also examined to understand the wages opportunity youth were actually earning. Figure 9 graphically illustrates the median quarterly earnings for the Opportunity Reboot and comparison groups. The data show that **youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were, on average, successful at increasing their wages across the four quarters** (save for a dip during the 2019 Quarter 1) immediately following the endline administration of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey. Further, the rate of increase appears sharper than that experienced by youth in the comparison group. However, median wages for both groups still fall far below the threshold for living wage employment (\$7,725 per quarter) in Minnesota.

Figure 8 Percent of Youth Earning a Living Wage

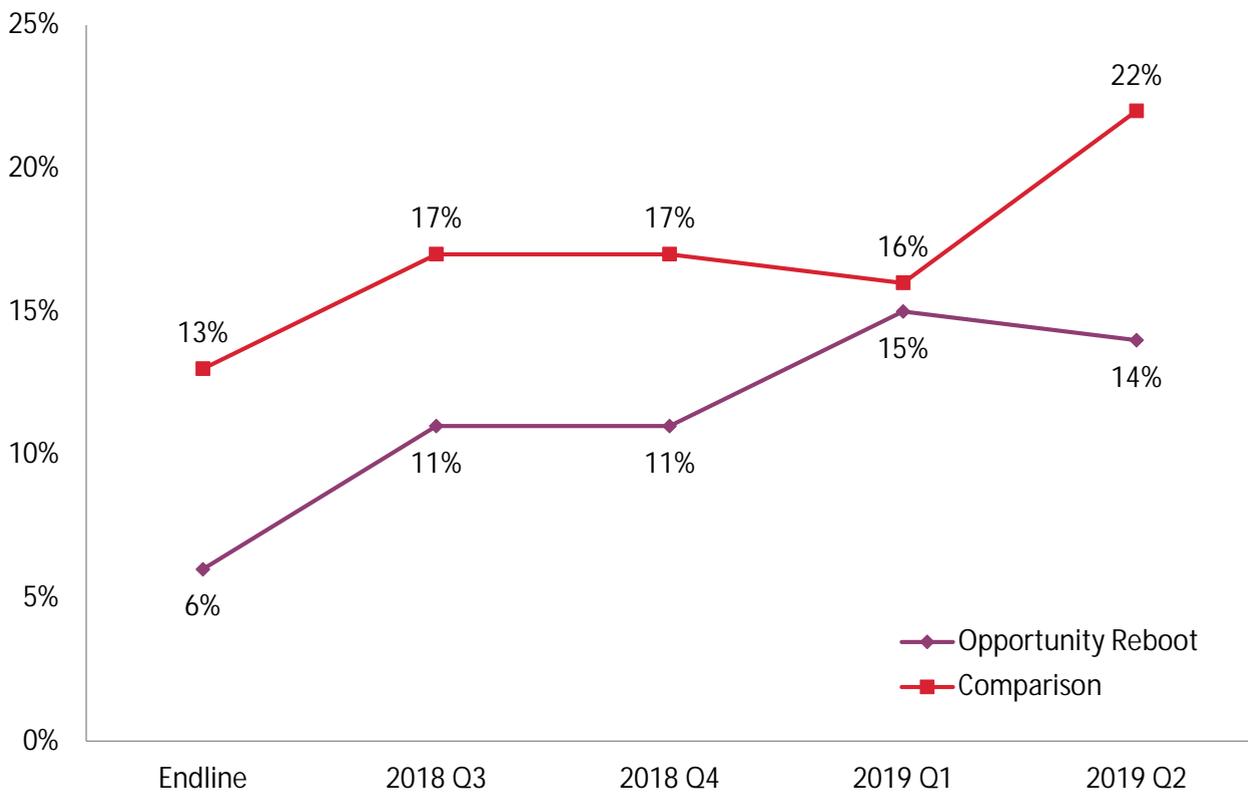
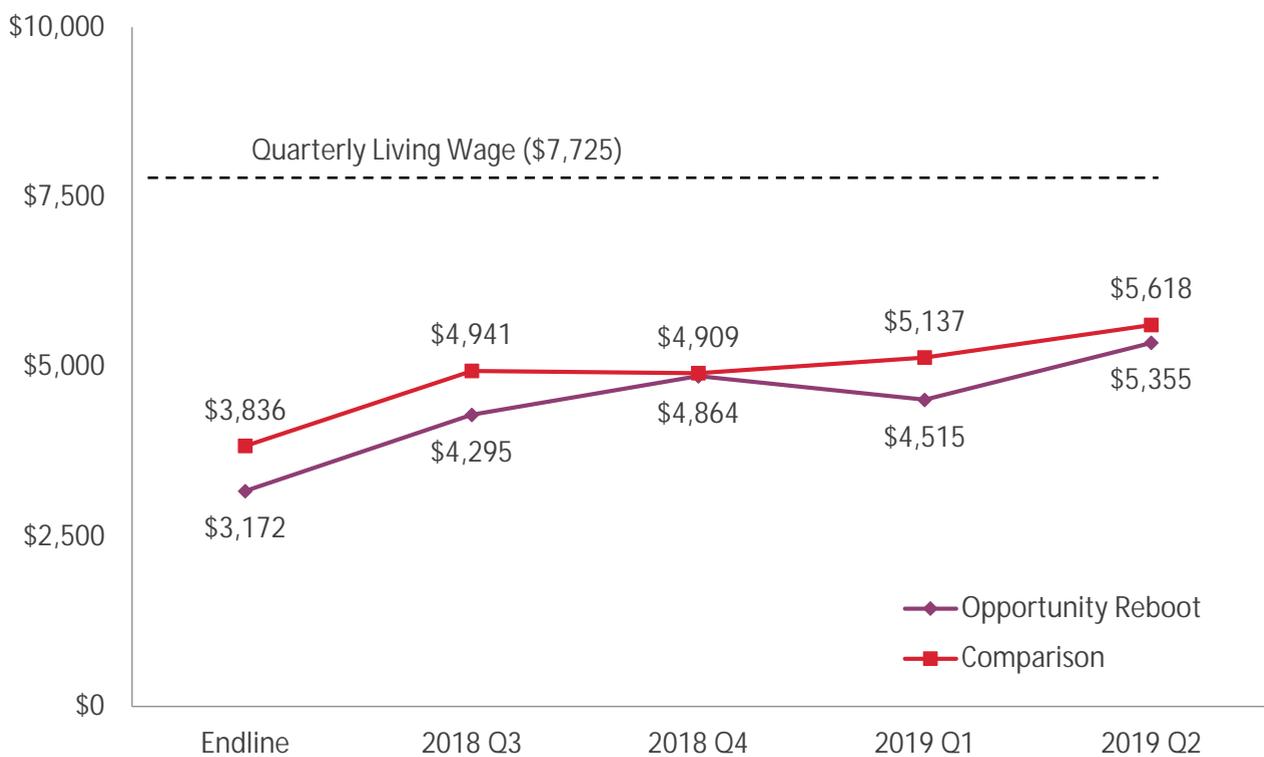


Figure 9 Youths' Median Quarterly Earnings



**Collectively, these data show that the number of youth in the Opportunity Reboot sample who secured living wage employment increased over time; however, these data do not show that this increase is greater than that experienced by the comparison group.** That said, while below the living wage threshold, Opportunity Reboot youth did experience an increase in their median quarterly wages.

There are a number of reasons that might explain this trend. For some of these youth, they might still be in the Opportunity Reboot programs and have limited time to work, or they might be pursuing other educational opportunities that appropriately limit their ability to earn more. Those would be good reasons. However, this trend might also signal a larger systemic problem in Minnesota of having insufficient opportunities for youth — like those in these groups — to secure jobs that provide the financial resources required to meet their most basic needs. Future research should explore these trends and group differences over a longer time frame.



Section 4

# Conclusions And Contributions

The implementation and impact evaluations sought to elevate the level of preliminary evidence of the Opportunity Reboot model. To do this, the evaluation was intentionally designed in close collaboration with community partners to ensure a deep understanding of: (a) how this program enhancement model was being integrated into existing programming, (b) how to gather high quality data from opportunity youth; and (c) the impact of the Opportunity Reboot model features on the lives of opportunity youth. In pursuit of these goals, the evaluation studies yielded a number of key findings that led both to real-time and future suggested refinements to the Opportunity Reboot model as well as preliminary evidence of model impact.

## Key Finding # 1

### Program enhancement models like Opportunity Reboot hold promise.

The implementation and preliminary impact evaluations collectively point to the promise of models, like Opportunity Reboot, that can be infused across a variety of programs and populations as a way to enhance (rather than replace) existing programs. Youthprise merged a set of features, concepts, and strategies that have surfaced as empirically-supported practice to boost program effectiveness into a cohesive Opportunity Reboot model, then worked closely with community partners to integrate these enhancements into their existing programs. Inherent in this process was the acknowledgement and celebration of the expertise and innovative approaches partners were already utilizing to forge deep, transformative relationships with the opportunity youth in their communities. The success of these kinds of program enhancement models hinges on honoring community partners' existing work, and finding points where the enhancement model goes deeper with existing program principles. When this happens, it offers a way forward through an improvement model to utilize new research and practices, rather than putting program leaders in a position where they feel they have to abandon an existing program or approach for new ones, retraining staff and investing in totally new materials in the process.

## Key Finding # 2

### The multi-pronged system of support built around the Opportunity Reboot model is critical to implementation.

The innovation of the Opportunity Reboot model does not lie in any one of the model features, each of which, alone, already has preliminary or moderate evidence of impact on important youth development outcomes. Rather, the innovation comes from integrating these features in a coherent model and providing expert technical assistance to guide infusing the model into existing programming and supporting the intentional implementation of each feature.

The multi-pronged system of technical assistance led by Youthprise relied on biweekly technical assistance calls, quarterly in-person convenings for partners to learn and share with one another, annual site visits, and access to mentoring trainings to keep community partners focused on the critical aspects of the Opportunity Reboot model. Over time, the by-products of these activities included an active learning community among partners where resource-sharing and collective problem-solving commonly took place, and a shared vision – bigger than any one partner alone had ever imagined possible – of how, collectively, their organizations could positively disrupt the life trajectories of opportunity youth in Minnesota.

### Key Finding # 3

## Community partners implemented the Opportunity Reboot model with increasing fidelity over time.

Data from the initial administration of the Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool at the outset of this partnership showed that only one of the community partners was “mostly aligned” with the Opportunity Reboot model. However, by the final administration, all six community partners were determined to be “mostly aligned.” The Implementation Evaluation section describes – in great detail – partners’ alignment by model feature. The mapping tool was used as a multi-purpose and engaging approach to measuring fidelity and as a mechanism for capturing the varied tactics community partners used to operationalize the features in ways that made sense for their community and the youth they served.

Increased fidelity can be attributed to the willingness of community partners to be thorough and transparent in sharing their organizational tactics with Opportunity Reboot core partners, and, subsequently, other community partners within the cohort. The data were used to identify technical assistance and capacity-building needs that, when fulfilled, would enhance alignment. Partners with particular strength in implementation of specific features of the Opportunity Reboot model were encouraged — and provided with a platform — to share and consult with other community partners about their practices. The practice of assessing needs and monitoring progress in implementation strategies became a concrete roadmap for community and core partners to adhere to and realize.



## Key Finding # 4

Youth reported experiencing the Opportunity Reboot model features and were generally satisfied with the program.

The fact that community partners in this evaluation were integrating the Opportunity Reboot model into their existing programs was often *completely* unknown to program participants. And yet, participants overwhelmingly self-reported on the survey that they were — indeed — experiencing the features of the Opportunity Reboot model. Youth also reported high levels of satisfaction with the overall program quality. Youth reported feeling physically and emotionally safe, respected, and believed that program staff were trying to help them.

## Key Finding # 5

Youth participants experienced measurable and significant gains across a number of critical short-term outcomes; however, these gains were not experienced equally by all youth.

Positive changes were made across the outcomes in all three developmental domains, these included: positivity in the face of challenge, goal-setting skills, self-awareness, responsible decision making, relationship skills, financial literacy, job-seeking skills, and resource identification skills. Female participants and youth who identified as non-heterosexual made gains across more short-term outcomes than their counterparts. Youth with diverse racial and ethnic identities (i.e., those in the Other race/ethnicity group) also experienced markedly more positive growth across short-term outcomes.

Qualitatively, youth described the positive impact that the Opportunity Reboot program had on their lives in several key developmental and skill-based areas.

- **Positive identity:** Youth mentioned having greater confidence about the future, they felt more comfortable with themselves, were more confident speaking in front of others, had more pride in accomplishments and identity, and felt that they were developing and living by their values.
- **Social-emotional competencies:** Youth felt that they improved their communication, were better at managing emotions, working as a team, and had greater intrapersonal skills.
- **Commitment to learning:** Youth felt that through the program they made academic improvements, had greater motivation to work hard, and a desire to graduate or go to college.
- **Systems navigation:** Youth developed financial literacy skills, greater workplace skills (technical and soft), were able to access resources, ask for help, and learn about future jobs and how to apply for them.

## Key Finding # 6

Strong relationships with program staff and new mentoring relationships with adults outside of the program were core to the improved positive values, self-perceptions, and skills youth experience, and had a transformative impact on the lives of opportunity youth.

We all need relationships in our lives that support us, challenge us, and help us grow. Opportunity youth are no different. Yet, strong relationships may be even more important when other systems and supports have failed these young people. There is truth in the cliché “it’s who you know,” and having limited access to social capital can limit all kinds of opportunities.

Add unjust systems and under-resourced communities to the list of barriers, and you quickly see that those relationships become paramount to ensuring success for these youth who clearly have the odds stacked against them.

The strongest and most consistent empirical finding to emerge from this evaluation is that relationships matter. The survey data show that opportunity youth who build strong relationships with program staff are more likely to show positive gains in the skills required to navigate systems: financial literacy, job-seeking skills, and resource identification



skills. And when they build strong relationships with other adults outside of the program that support their growth, they are more likely to show positive gains – over and above all of the other model features – on ALL of the social-emotional competencies and systems navigation and skills outcomes targeted in this evaluation. New mentoring relationships with adults outside of the program are also significant linked to gains in their orientation towards the future and civic efficacy.

These quantitative findings are reinforced in the qualitative interview and focus group data in which youth revealed through their personal stories and experiences the subtleties of what makes these relationships so powerful. For many of these opportunity youth, the relationships they formed with mentors (within and outside of the program) were qualitatively different from others in their lives. Prior relational trauma could make it difficult for opportunity youth to build trusting, healthy relationships. Mentors, particularly those interviewed at the partner sites, took seriously the responsibility of teaching (and showing!) program participants that the relationship they formed together could – and would – be different: it would be safe and healthy; there would be no quid pro quo; they would be challenged to reflect, grow, and learn; and the relationship would be dependable. Evidence of mentors’ success in achieving these kinds of relationships is resoundingly strong in the narratives youth shared.

Finding that relationships were so predictive of outcomes is great news, because relationships are malleable and, while they are hard work, they are cost-effective. Relationship-building does not require an expensive program or equipment, it simply requires time and attention.

## Key Finding # 7

# Mentoring relationships are gateways to other important supports.

Many of the pictures and journal entries youth provided in the impact narrative activities depicted key relationships with mentors and peers. Opportunity youth rarely talked about ways they had changed or grown without ascribing that change to an important relationship. Yet, mentoring relationships are not the cure-all.

Most of the opportunity youth being served by Opportunity Reboot community partners are facing complex issues that require equally complex solutions and interventions. Mentoring relationships are vital for accessing many of these. The qualitative data from this study illustrate the variety of ways this plays out.

Mentoring relationships:

- **Motivate** opportunity youth to come back to safe spaces where they can get the help and support they need when they are ready, and where they can access critical health, education, and career resources.
- **Teach** opportunity youth what a healthy relationship looks and feels like, and how youth can positively contribute to maintaining and strengthening these kinds of relationships both within and outside of the program.
- **Open** doors to new educational and career opportunities and resources.
- **Build** the foundational trust required for opportunity youth to engage in productive and sustained goal-setting conversations about their well-being, educational goals, and career aspirations.

Relationships are necessary, but not sufficient. The added-value of relationships is reaped when relationships open doors to other opportunities and resources, with that resulting relationships-plus-resources combination representing strong social capital that promotes educational and occupational mobility.



The teacher support. . . makes you wanna come back the next day, it makes you feel like you can do it. It's empowering, you know, to know that there's at least one adult in the school that will care about you and help you.

## Key Finding # 8

Individualized goal-setting supports and career pathways supports did not predict short-term youth outcomes in the quantitative data; yet, they are fundamentally important in the lives of opportunity youth.

The regression models showed evidence of the association between the individualized goal-setting supports and the career pathways supports features of the Opportunity Reboot model on only one outcome (over and above the variance predicted by change in within program mentoring and outside of program mentoring): growth in job-seeking skills. This association was negative for the individualized goal-setting supports feature, and positive for career pathways supports feature. As argued above, the negative association – which, although not significant, is seen across the regression models – may be an artifact of the phenomenon that youth who require the most support setting goals also have more urgent short-term needs than those captured by the targeted outcomes in this evaluation. Reassuringly, the experience of being in a program that provides career pathways supports was a strong positive predictor of job-seeking skills.

The absence of significant empirical associations between individualized goal-setting supports, career pathways supports, and short-term youth outcomes should not be interpreted as evidence that these features of the Opportunity Reboot model are unimportant. In fact, the impact narratives give voice to how critically important these features were to helping youth see new possibilities for themselves and propel their lives forward. Relationships are the entry point for many of these goal and career supports. Through the impact narrative activities, youth talked at length about the many ways their mentors helped to connect them to: (a) people who were in careers that they were interested in learning more about; (b) resources to meet basic physical and mental health needs; and, (c) financial assistance programs to pursue their education and career goals. More nuanced goal-setting and career pathways supports measures should be explored in future research.

## Key Finding # 9

Youth in programs using the Opportunity Reboot model secured employment at higher rates than demographically similar youth who were not in these programs, with a particularly noteworthy advantage to opportunity Youth of Color.

Opportunity Reboot participants were more likely than similar peers not participating in these programs to secure full-time employment over the period of a year, and to avoid the seasonal dip in employment often seen during Minnesota's winter months (2019 Quarter 1). This was particularly true for Youth of Color in the Opportunity Reboot group. While this finding holds promise, the data suggest very few opportunity youth (whether in the Opportunity Reboot or comparison groups) secured living wage employment and — although their wages did increase over time — they still fell below the state-defined threshold to support the costs of stable housing, food, and other basic necessities in the state of Minnesota.

# Elevating the Level of Evidence

Extant research has established preliminary or moderate evidence of the impact of each of the Opportunity Reboot model features on important youth development outcomes. Yet, evidence had not previously been established of how these features impact youth when: (a) implemented in concert via an enhancement model to existing programs; (b) with a multi-pronged system of technical assistance supports; and (c) with opportunity youth residing in urban and rural regions of Minnesota. The data collection activities in the preliminary impact phase of the evaluation sought to attain this foundational level of evidence for the Opportunity Reboot model.

The results of the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey administered at baseline and endline (i.e., a single group non-experimental outcome evaluation design) established associations between opportunity youths' experiences of the four core features of the Opportunity Reboot model and growth in their positive identity, social-emotional competencies, and ability to navigate systems. As described above, the within and outside-of-program mentoring features of the model were the strongest and most consistent predictors of these short-term youth outcomes. Although the individualized goal supports and career pathways supports features were not shown to be consistent predictors of change (over and above the impact of mentoring), the qualitative impact narratives demonstrate the value and benefits opportunity youth reaped by accessing these supports in their respective programs.

Building on this evidence, the employment and wage attainment study employed a quasi-experimental design to empirically demonstrate that youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were more likely, on average, than youth in the comparison group to be employed in the four quarters after the endline survey: Q3 +2%; Q4 +6%; Q1 +22%; Q2 +5% (favoring the Opportunity Reboot group). This finding is even stronger when comparing Youth of Color in the Opportunity Reboot group to those in the comparison group: Q3 +10%; Q4 +15%; Q1 +33%; Q2 +13% (again, favoring the Opportunity Reboot group). Although findings were only statistically significant for Q1 and Q2, the Opportunity Reboot participants' employment numbers show encouraging trends that demonstrate emerging *moderate* evidence. Opportunity Reboot youths' full-time employment rate increased consistently across the four quarters. Youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were also more likely to be employed in full-time, rather than part-time, positions and over this same period, more youth in the Opportunity Reboot group were earning a living wage (although the absolute percentage was still low).

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the Opportunity Reboot model has strong preliminary evidence and emerging moderate evidence of impact on key developmental and employment outcomes for opportunity youth residing in Minnesota.



# The Future of the Opportunity Reboot Model

Youthprise continues to support and make improvements to the Opportunity Reboot model and is actively seeking sustainable funding streams to pay for the multi-pronged system of support (see Figure 2, Inputs) required to implement the full model and expand it to other community partners.

The evaluation findings have prompted several refinements and improvements to the Opportunity Reboot model. Forthcoming changes include:

- § The Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool, an instrument originally developed to support evaluation efforts aimed at tracking fidelity and model alignment, will be routinely administered by future partners – as part of the multipronged system of technical assistance undergirding the implementation of Opportunity Reboot – with future partners to promote ongoing dialogue about integration of the model into existing programming.
- § The development of a larger suite of mentoring-focused trainings for community partners. Possibilities in discussion include new trauma-informed mentoring training and tapping into the learning opportunities available through the National MENTOR network.
- § Ongoing quantitative and qualitative data collection remain an important part of the Opportunity Reboot model beyond the CNCS-funded evaluation; however, pieces of the preliminary impact evaluation described in this report will be retained but the process and approach will be revised to more fully meet the desires of community partners for real-time, local data that can be used to drive continuous program improvement.
- § The development of an Opportunity Reboot toolkit that describes the model in detail and provides example strategies, resources, tools, ideas, and reflections from partners. This toolkit will serve as a guide for program leaders, implementers, and coordinating team members of workforce development programs on how to infuse the model features and guiding principles into their programs.

In sum, there was considerable evidence in this mixed methods implementation and preliminary impact evaluation that the Opportunity Reboot model could make a positive disruption in the lives of opportunity youth. The evaluation was not an experimental design, but the combination of single group longitudinal surveys, qualitative impact narratives, and a quasi-experimental study of employment and wage attainment nevertheless provided a robust portrait of both positive effects and the mechanisms by which those effects were achieved. Youth in Opportunity Reboot were found to improve in positive identity, social-emotional skills, skills for systems navigation, employment, and wages among a demographically diverse sample of program participants, largely because of the quality of the positive mentoring that was at the center of the partners' programs. The developmental relationships that opportunity youth experienced through the program built on the strengths individual youth already had, in order to add confidence, technical and emotional skills, system savvy, and connections to create educational and career possibilities that otherwise would have been unavailable to such historically marginalized young people.

Moreover, the evaluation demonstrated that these enhanced outcomes could be realized through a program enhancement model that marshals the best of what individual youth-serving organizations are doing currently, with training and other partnership supports to help the organizational partners get even stronger in their leveraging of key relationships for youth and in learning from each other. The uniqueness of the combined implementation and preliminary impact evaluations has been that it was made clear that dedication to fidelity of model implementation mattered: It is doubtful that the level of relationship quality youth experienced, that was key to enjoying the positive outcomes, could have been achieved absent the commitment to and ongoing assessment of, the partners' attentiveness to aligning their program activities with the key features of the Opportunity Reboot model.

Finally, a meta-lesson for future research of this kind is apparent throughout this evaluation report: Just as the effects documented among Opportunity Reboot youth required trust to be built and honored daily among the organizational partners, and among youth and their case managers and others at the individual programs, so a deep well of trust among the researchers and all the other organizational, staff, and youth partners in the evaluation needed to be constructed and nurtured. The level of early and ongoing involvement of staff and youth in helping to shape the evaluation designs and construct the items and protocols used in the evaluation, and not simply to respond to questions and prompts, was considerable and enduring. Throughout this report, there is displayed a high level of mutuality of respect, cooperation, and commitment to opportunity youth among all parties to the evaluation, that was maintained from beginning to end. This feature does not show up in regression models or even necessarily in focus group quotes, but there is little doubt that it was, like the impact of relationships on youth outcomes, another dimension of relationship quality writ large that made the evaluation possible to conduct with rigor, even with its complexity and challenges.

In the end, too, it is well to emphasize the meaning of the observed impact. Most of the quantitative effect sizes, while statistically significant, were in the range conventionally described as "small." Yet the qualitative narrative impact quotations from youth themselves made clear how "large" those so-called "small" effects really were, in the lived experience of those opportunity youth. Even a small improvement in confidence, technical or emotional skills, system savvy, or connections can make the difference in imagining oneself in a particular job or career or not, in knowing how to apply for school admission or for employment, in understanding the unwritten rules and social norms of educational and workplace culture which often remain systematically hidden from opportunity youth. Life-changing decisions are made in moments when confidence, emotional maturity, technical skills, street smarts, and connections combine to create opportunities, and then allow young people to believe they can do it. The biggest positive disruption Opportunity Reboot made was in this hard-to-quantify contribution, to help opportunity youth to allow themselves to dream bigger, and to know they now have a newly-realistic chance of one day realizing those dreams.

For up-to-date information on the Opportunity Reboot model or to inquire about potential collaborations, please contact Youthprise (<https://youthprise.org/contact-us>).





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# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Changes to the Approved Evaluation Design

In March 2017, the Corporation for National and Community Service Social Innovation Fund (SIF) approved Youthprise's SIF Evaluation Plan for an implementation evaluation. The original plan included three major phases: (a) developmental evaluation; (b) capacity building; and, (c) pilot testing for the forthcoming impact evaluation. This work was due to be completed in July 2018. The original plan was to incorporate and use the findings from the implementation evaluation to prepare a high-quality, contextually-informed Impact SIF Evaluation Plan, which was due to be submitted in July 2017. When SIF was defunded by the United States Congress, Youthprise worked closely with their SIF program officer to reimagine ways existing funds could be leveraged for maximum benefit. This resulted in three significant changes to the evaluation design. These changes, and the justification for each, are articulated below.

**Change 1. Truncating the capacity-building phase of the implementation evaluation.** The capacity-building phase of the evaluation was adapted to reflect the newly accelerated timeline of the preliminary impact data collection activities. While initially envisioned as a phase to build data capacity and streamline data management and collection systems within each community partner, the activities in the reimagined phase, by necessity, were instead refocused to highlight the current state of data collection and detail the supports that were needed from the evaluation team to create and implement the preliminary impact evaluation. These activities were critical to the success of our community partners in collecting all of the needed evaluation data in a manner that limited research participant attrition and promoted data quality and standards.

**Change 2. Streamlining research questions.** The revised evaluation plan converted the pilot test of the youth measures to a longitudinal assessment of those measures across two time points, now serving as the basis for the preliminary impact evaluation. The research questions were adapted to reflect the change in objectives. Youthprise's approved SIF Evaluation Plan for the implementation evaluation contained four research questions, none that posed questions of impact on participants. Given the insertion of a preliminary impact evaluation, new research questions were required that addressed impact and attainment of outcomes named in the logic model. These questions serve as the organizing structure for Section 3 in this report.

**Change 3. Adding more robust methods to test for preliminary impact.** The approved SIF evaluation plan focused almost-exclusively on implementation, with some activities focused on pilot testing and troubleshooting: (a) the processes needed to track and collect survey data from opportunity youth, and (b) the psychometric properties of the survey metrics across diverse populations and over time. The accelerated timeline for measuring impact required us to forgo these pilot testing activities and, instead, roll out these data collection processes and metrics untested. Additional data collection support was provided by Search Institute to ensure the highest quality data was collected. As described in the Measures and Instruments subsection of the Quantitative Data Collection section in the Preliminary Impact section, the youth-level survey metrics were largely found to have high reliability.

In addition, two other changes were made to maximize the level of evidence generated with the existing funds. First, a qualitative impact narrative piece was added (see discussion of Qualitative Impact Narrative Activities subsection under Section 3). As a complement to the youth-level survey data, the qualitative impact piece were added to draw out rich, descriptive narratives from participants about their experience in programs utilizing the Opportunity Reboot model and to explore — more open-endedly — the impact their

participation has had on their lives. Second, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) was contracted to provide (1) employment and wage data for study participants for four quarters following youths' program participation, and (2) a comparison group from state-level data using propensity score matching (see Employment and Wage Attainment Study subsection under Section 3). The intent behind contracting these two services was to measure impact: the employment and wage data provides some evidence that program participation translated to success in the workforce; similarly, the comparison group provides some insight into whether program participants achieved better wage and employment outcomes than similar youth who did not participate in similar programs.



## Appendix B

# Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool

Below is an excerpt from the Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool. This excerpt includes the instructions, as well as the portion of the tool focused on assessing Feature 1 (Positive Mentoring Relationships), Concept 1A (Mentoring Mindset) of the Opportunity Reboot model. The full version of the tool applied the same questions and format to the other model features and concepts.

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### Program Mapping Process to Measure Community Partner Fidelity to the Opportunity Reboot Model

The goal of this mapping tool is twofold: (1) Help Youthprise and the Opportunity Reboot evaluation team understand more deeply how features of this model are actually “lived out” in each of the community partners; (2) Help partners think through their implementation of the Opportunity Reboot model and set goals to improve programming.

Each of the worksheet columns aims to solicit different information:

**Column 1** à Provides an outline of each of the Opportunity Reboot strategies.

**Column 2** à Answer: “What are you doing in your program to implement this strategy?” Here you list the specific activities or tactics being used by your program.

**Column 3** à Reflect on Column 2, then answer: “How would you describe your program’s current alignment with this strategy?” Use this alignment scale: 0 = Not Aligned; 1 = Minimally Aligned; 2 = Mostly Aligned; 3 = Strongly Aligned

**Column 4** à For strategies scored 0-2 in Column 3, answer: “What plans, if any, do you have to more fully implement this strategy? By when? What resources or assistance do you need, if any, from Youthprise to do this?”

**Column 5** à Answer: “Once tactics identified in Column 4 are in place, how well aligned will the program be with this strategy?” Use the same alignment scale: 0 = Not Aligned; 1 = Minimally Aligned; 2 = Mostly Aligned; 3 = Strongly Aligned

**Additional Activities** à At the bottom of the worksheet for each feature, answer: “What additional activities in your program support this feature that are beyond what is captured in the Opportunity Reboot strategies?”

We encourage you to get input from other staff, as needed, and type responses into this document.

Once the worksheet is complete, your evaluator and a representative from Youthprise will meet with you in-person or via conference call to discuss the completed worksheet. That conversation will seek to answer the following:

- § For Opportunity Reboot strategies identified in Column 4 on the worksheet, what plans are currently in place to move towards that goal?
- § How can Youthprise and your program work together to further strengthen this area and document the process for others?
- § What additional activities in your program are critical to this work but are outside of the current Opportunity Reboot features, concepts, and strategies?

## Opportunity Reboot Mapping Tool Excerpt

Feature 1. Positive Mentoring Relationships				
Concept 1A. Program staff engaged with youth adopt a mentoring mindset grounded in best practices of culturally responsive informal mentoring and relationship building.				
Column 1 Opportunity Reboot Strategies	Column 2 What are you doing in your program to implement this strategy? List your specific activities (or, tactics).	Column 3 Current Alignment*	Column 4 What plans, if any, do you have to more fully implement this strategy? By when? What do you need to do that?	Column 5 Targeted Alignment**
Strategy 1Ai. Program staff receive customized, ongoing technical assistance in informal mentoring best practices that supports continuous professional development.				
Strategy 1Aii. Program staff develop and implement a plan for incorporating relevant informal mentoring best practices to maximize positive relationships between youth and adults (includes employers, when applicable).				
What additional activities at this site support this feature but are beyond what is captured in the OR strategies?				

\* How would you describe your program's current alignment with this strategy? Use this alignment scale: 0 = Not Aligned; 1 = Minimally Aligned; 2 = Mostly Aligned; 3 = Strongly Aligned

\*\* Once tactics identified in Column 4 are in place, rate your anticipated level of alignment with the strategy.

# Appendix C

## Opportunity Reboot Model Alignment Assessments

### Feature 1. Positive Mentoring Relationships

Concept 1A. Program staff engaged with youth adopt a mentoring mindset grounded in best practices of culturally responsive informal mentoring and relationship building.

Partners	Strategies			
	S 1Ai. Program staff receive customized, ongoing technical assistance in informal mentoring best practices that supports continuous professional development.		S 1Aii. Program staff develop and implement a plan for incorporating relevant informal mentoring best practices to maximize positive relationships between youth and adults (includes employers, when applicable).	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●

Notes. GAP is short for the Guadalupe Alternative Program; OYOD is shorthand for Opportunity Youth of Duluth.

Key:

- 0 (Not Aligned) to 1 (Minimally Aligned)
- 1.5 to 2 (Mostly Aligned)
- 2+ to 3 (Strongly Aligned)

# Feature 1. Positive Mentoring Relationships

Concept 1B. Youth are prepared for mentoring experiences and develop skills to identify and engage informal mentors

Partners	Strategies					
	S 1Bi. Youth understand their rights, responsibilities and have appropriate expectations of a mentoring relationship.		S 1Bii. Youth learn how to identify informal mentors.		S 1Biii. Youth receive support from program staff in order to maximize the impact of informal mentors.	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●	●	●

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- 2+ to 3 (Strongly Aligned)

## Feature 2. Individualized Goal Supports

### Concept 2A. Programs assess youth's needs and strengths

Partners	Strategies					
	S 2Ai. Program staff leverage internal and external resources to meet youth's needs, such as healthcare, housing, and transportation.		S 2Aii. Program staff and youth engage in a visioning process about current and future goals that is strengths-based.		2 Aiii. Youth learn to identify their strengths, potential support networks, and resources.	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●	●	●

Notes. GAP is short for the Guadalupe Alternative Program; OYOD is shorthand for Opportunity Youth of Duluth.

Key:

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- 1.5 to 2 (Mostly Aligned)
- 2+ to 3 (Strongly Aligned)

## Feature 2. Individualized Goal Supports

Concept 2B. Youth develop an individualized education and work plan in achieving their goals with assistance from program staff

Partners	Strategies					
	S 2Bi. Youth learn to set attainable and measurable goals within the plan that have short-term, intermediate, and long-term milestones.		S 2Bii. Youth and program staff identify their roles and responsibilities within the plan.		S 2Biii. Opportunity youth learn to identify and address barriers, including modifying their plan if necessary.	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●	●	●

Notes. GAP is short for the Guadalupe Alternative Program; OYOD is shorthand for Opportunity Youth of Duluth.

Key:

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## Feature 2. Individualized Goal Supports

Concept 2C. Programs support youth in tracking progress, recognizing and learning from setbacks, and reaching their goals

Partners	Strategies							
	S 2Ci. Program staff motivate and encourage youth to attain short-term, intermediate and long-term milestones.		S 2Cii. Program staff assist youth in revising and expanding goals when appropriate.		S 2Ciii. Program staff provide informal and formal assistance, including helping youth reflect on the overall goal-setting process and address barriers to achieving goals.		S 2Civ. Program staff and youth celebrate successes in attaining milestones.	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

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## Feature 3. Coordinated Career Pathways Supports

Concept 3A. Programs create opportunities for career exploration that are grounded in connecting youth with employers in high growth and high demand local industries

Partners	Strategies					
	S 3Ai. Program staff facilitate exploration of career interest inventories and labor market information related to high growth- high demand occupations. information about occupations in demand.		S 3Aii. Program staff create linkages with specific employers in high demand industries to deepen youth participants' understanding of career options including hands-on work experiences with employers.		S 3Aiii. Program staff arrange opportunities for youth to participate in on-site secondary, post-secondary and/or on-the-job training leading to industry/employer recognized credentials.	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●	●	●

Notes. GAP is short for the Guadalupe Alternative Program; OYOD is shorthand for Opportunity Youth of Duluth.

Key:

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- 2+ to 3 (Strongly Aligned)

## Feature 3. Coordinated Career Pathways Supports

### Concept 3B. Programs assist youth with career preparation and planning

Partners	Strategies					
	S 3Bi. Program staff engage youth in occupational aptitude and basic skill assessments to develop and implement an agreed upon education and work plan that aligns with their career goals.		S 3Bii. Program staff provide youth with programming aimed at improving financial literacy and money management.		S 3Biii. Program staff prepare youth to successfully navigate a job search, application process, interviews, and other processes associated with their identified career path.	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●	●	●

Notes. GAP is short for the Guadalupe Alternative Program; OYOD is shorthand for Opportunity Youth of Duluth.

Key:

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- 2+ to 3 (Strongly Aligned)

## Feature 3. Coordinated Career Pathways Supports

Concept 3C. Programs provide culturally appropriate wraparound services that include multiple support structures pre- and post-employment to promote retention and encourage continuing education

Partners	Strategies			
	S 3Ci. Program staff provide training aimed at promoting critical job retention and academic success, including social-emotional competencies, work readiness and life skills.		S 3Cii. Program staff have regular contact with youth to discuss barriers to maintaining employment and academic success and identify specific resources to address those barriers.	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●

Notes. GAP is short for the Guadalupe Alternative Program; OYOD is shorthand for Opportunity Youth of Duluth.

Key:

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- 1.5 to 2 (Mostly Aligned)
- 2+ to 3 (Strongly Aligned)

## Feature 4. Impactful Cross-Sector Partnerships

Concept 4A. Programs regularly interact with diverse stakeholders to implement strategies and increase capacity to serve youth.

Partners	Strategies					
	S 4Ai. Cross-sector partners are identified and establish a clear vision and goals for collaboration.		S 4Aii. Cross-sector partners agree on specific roles and responsibilities as it relates to serving youth.		S 4Aiii. Cross-sector partners maintain and strengthen collaboration through regular interactions and share successes and lessons learned.	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Compass	●	●	●	●	●	●
GAP	●	●	●	●	●	●
MIGIZI	●	●	●	●	●	●
OYOD	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prior Crossing	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tri-City Bridges	●	●	●	●	●	●

Notes. GAP is short for the Guadalupe Alternative Program; OYOD is shorthand for Opportunity Youth of Duluth.

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- 1.5 to 2 (Mostly Aligned)
- 2+ to 3 (Strongly Aligned)

## Appendix D

# Human Research Participant Protections

Recognizing that our youth participants are individuals who are drawn from vulnerable populations by virtue of their youth, socioeconomic disadvantage, and/or juvenile records, the evaluation team took several steps to ensure that participants' identities and their data were protected.

1. All researchers who either worked directly with youth participants or performed analysis on data collected from them were required to undergo background checks - consisting of FBI criminal (with fingerprinting), Child Protection Background, and Predatory Offender checks.
2. Youth participants were assigned project IDs at the earliest opportunity after they enrolled in their respective programs; site partners were encouraged to use these project IDs in any communications regarding the youth, instead of their names.
3. We assigned our qualitative researchers to specific partner sites, so that youth only interacted with the same individuals during their time in their programs. This limited the number of research staff who interacted with (and could identify) participating youth, as well as provided an opportunity for the researchers and youth to establish familiarity, rapport, and trust. All qualitative staff were trained to attend to the emotional state of adults and youth participating in the research, to inquire about adverse reactions, and to provide opportunity for recovery.
4. A single individual on Search Institute's evaluation staff was designated to ensure compliance with the study's consent and assent requirements - in other words, only one person had access to the files linking *all* project IDs to individuals' names. To safeguard against inadvertent or malicious unauthorized access to these files, the files were stored on a secure server, in a directory that could only be accessed by this individual. Emails containing files with personally identifying information were deleted (and the Trash directory purged) immediately after being downloaded and moved to this secure directory; USB flash drives were immediately wiped and formatted after the data they contained were saved to this directory.
5. Our partnership with DEED required the collection of birthdates and Social Security numbers from study youth, so that DEED could track their post-program exit wage and employment outcomes. The individual mentioned previously in (4) was also responsible for collecting and securely storing the birthdate and Social Security data. This individual was Search Institute's primary contact with DEED, and was responsible for securely transmitting these data (via encrypted message sent in a secure environment-based client) to the department so that they could work on the analyses needed for their report.

Search Institute also retained the services of Chesapeake IRB (which became Advarra in November 2017), a commercial IRB accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP), to conduct a thorough review of our research materials and protocols.

## Appendix E

### Psychometric Properties of Opportunity Reboot Metrics

A series of psychometric assessments were made on each of the metrics measuring the model features and the short-term youth outcomes in the Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey. The following were performed on all metrics that were assessed at both baseline and endline youth surveys, with three exceptions: Responsible Decision Making, which is a single-item: "I think about what might happen before making a decision"; Outside of Program Positive Mentoring Relationships, which is also a single item: "During my time at [name of program inserted], I formed a relationship with an adult outside of the program who supports my growth. This might include, for example, a boss, mentor, neighbor, church members"; and Coordinated Career Pathways Supports, which is made up of two items (a minimum of three items is required for these psychometric assessments): "At [program], I had opportunities to explore education and career options" and "[Program] helped me make a plan to reach my career or education goals."

Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was calculated to determine each metric's internal reliability – how closely related the items making up the measures are, or how well the items are at measuring the same construct. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1;  $\alpha$  coefficients that are greater than or equal to .70 and generally deemed acceptable.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) models were then run to determine the measurement properties of these constructs. CFA models are particularly useful for showing each item's relative contribution to the construct, and whether certain items are more influential than others. Standardized factor loadings are reported in this document, which range from 0 to 1; factor loadings greater than .40 are deemed acceptable.

All measures were specified as two-factor CFA models, where each factor represents each time point ( $T_1$  = baseline Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey;  $T_2$  = endline Opportunity Reboot Youth Survey); with the one exception of Individualized Goal Supports, which was only assessed at  $T_2$ . The  $r$  column reports  $T_1$ - $T_2$  Pearson's correlation coefficients. Each model comes with a set of model fit indices, which provides an indication of how good the overall construct is, based on the collected data:

**$\chi^2$**  (Chi-square): Lower values (and higher  $p$  values) indicate better fit. Non-significant  $p$  values are ideal, although rarely seen; hence it is rarely helpful for making decisions about model fit. It is typically reported due to convention. As this is antithetical to conventional statistical rules-of-thumb, it may be helpful for some to think of the  $\chi^2$  test of model fit as a "badness-of-fit" test (where  $p \leq .05$  is undesirable). The model's number of degrees of freedom ( $df$ ) are reported, also due to convention.

**RMSEA** (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation): Lower values indicate better fit. Values lower than or equal to .08 are acceptable; values lower than or equal to .05 are ideal.

**CFI** (Comparative Fit Index): Larger values indicate better fit – ideally, .90 or greater.

**TLI** (Tucker Lewis Index): Larger values indicate better fit – ideally, .90 or greater.

**SRMR** (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual): Smaller values indicate better fit – ideally lower than or equal to .05.

Each of the model fit indices discussed above are based on a unique sets of assumptions – therefore, each index has different strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, any given CFA model's fit cannot be properly assessed by evaluating just one or two of the indices – overall fit assessment requires a holistic approach. Please note that the determination of overall fit assessment entails some subjectivity: (a) it is sometimes the case that some of a model's indices fall very close to the rule-of-thumb thresholds; and, (b) when comparing two or more models (which is what we do in this document), the models are often assessed on their fit *relative to each other*.

**Table E1**  
CFA Model for Within Program Mentoring

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2	
	T1	T2		
How often do these people show you that you matter to them?	.83	.84	.12	
How often do these people push you to be your best?	.88	.77	.09	
How often do these people help you get things done?	.91	.85	.11	
How often do these people listen to your ideas and take them seriously?	.89	.87	.28**	
How often do these people connect you with new people or services that help you?	.87	.78	.09	
	$\alpha$	.94	.92	.50***

Model Fit Indices:  $\chi^2=65.69$ ,  $df=29$ ,  $p=0.000$  ; RMSEA=0.08; CFI=.98 ; TLI=.96 ; SRMR=0.03  
 Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

**Table E2**  
CFA Model for Individualized Goal Supports

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2	
	T1	T2		
When I am at [program], staff work to meet my personal needs That is, staff figure out what your specific needs and interests are and then help you.	—	.80	—	
[Program] helped me identify what I am good at and areas where I may need help.	—	.74	—	
The staff at [program] checked in with me regularly about my goals.	—	.80	—	
The staff at [program] want me to reach the goals I set.	—	.89	—	
	$\alpha$	—	.88	—

Model Fit Indices:  $\chi^2=9.29$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.010$  ; RMSEA=0.14; CFI=.98 ; TLI=.94 ; SRMR=0.02  
 Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

**Table E3**  
CFA Model for Positive Self-Worth

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2
	T1	T2	
I like myself.	.92	.90	.07
I am glad I am me.	.92	.92	.32**
I believe in myself.	.80	.90	.07
$\alpha$	.91	.93	.65***

Model Fit Indices  $\chi^2=10.23$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.069$  ; RMSEA=0.07 ; CFI=1.00 ; TLI=.98 ; SRMR=0.02

Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

**Table E4**  
CFA Model for Positivity in the Face of Challenge

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2
	T1	T2	
I try to stay positive even when I am facing challenges.	.73	.73	.17*
When I fail at something, I tell myself there is something positive I can learn from it.	.83	.82	-.10
When something is hard to learn, I tell myself I can get better at it.	.79	.85	.34***
A	.82	.84	.55***

Model Fit Indices  $\chi^2=5.00$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.416$  ; RMSEA=0.00 ; CFI=1.00 ; TLI=1.00 ; SRMR=0.02

Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

**Table E5**  
CFA Model for Goal-Setting Skills

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2
	T1	T2	
I set goals for myself.	.70	.73	.15
I stay focused on reaching my top goals.	.79	.81	.10
Once I set a goal for myself, I try to find out how to reach my goal.	.79	.81	.11
I try to learn skills that can help me reach my goal.	.76	.75	.15
If something goes wrong, I try to figure out another way to reach my goal.	.78	.76	.27**
If I find it hard to reach a goal, I break that goal down into smaller steps.	.65	.62	.36***
A	.88	.88	.56***

Model Fit Indices  $\chi^2=61.93$ ,  $df=47$ ,  $p=0.071$  ; RMSEA=0.04 ; CFI=.99 ; TLI=.98 ; SRMR=0.03

Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

**Table E6**  
CFA Model for Future Orientation

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2
	T1	T2	
I have hope for success in my future.	.79	.70	.41***
When I make a decision, I consider the effect it will have on my future.	.88	.91	-.45
I think about who I will be in 5 years.	.73	.71	.12
$\alpha$	.84	.82	.59***

Model Fit Indices  $\chi^2=1.93$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.859$  ; RMSEA=0.00 ; CFI=1.00 ; TLI=1.02 ; SRMR=0.02  
 Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

**Table E7**  
CFA Model for Civic Efficacy

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2
	T1	T2	
I believe I can have a positive impact on someone else's life.	.64	.75	.35***
I believe I can improve my community by doing things like volunteering, or helping a neighbor.	.82	.89	-.11
I can help others by involving myself in political activities (examples may include voting, participating in marches or protests, or writing to public officials.)	.71	.60	.31***
$\alpha$	.77	.78	.30***

Model Fit Indices  $\chi^2=8.18$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.147$  ; RMSEA=0.06 ; CFI=.99 ; TLI=.97 ; SRMR=0.04  
 Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

**Table E8**  
CFA Model for Self-Awareness

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2
	T1	T2	
I know what matters most to me.	.72	.79	.04
I can list my strengths and weaknesses.	.77	.67	.25**
I know who I am and what I believe in.	.85	.81	.14
$\alpha$	.83	.80	.37***

Model Fit Indices  $\chi^2=1.32$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.932$  ; RMSEA=0.00 ; CFI=1.00 ; TLI=1.03 ; SRMR=0.01  
 Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

**Table E9**  
CFA Model for Relationship Skills

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2
	T1	T2	
I listen to other people's opinions, even if I disagree.	.60	.47	.37***
When I talk to someone, I think about how I would feel if I were in their place.	.52	.43	.28***
I get along with other people.	.63	.63	.39***
I can share what I am feeling with other people.	.56	.69	.41***
I am good at making friends who have a positive influence on me.	.74	.67	.14
	$\alpha$	.75	.71
Model Fit Indices $\chi^2=35.26$ , $df=29$ , $p=0.196$ ; RMSEA=0.03 ; CFI=.99 ; TLI=.98 ; SRMR=0.05			
Note. * $p \leq .05$ . ** $p \leq .01$ . *** $p \leq .001$ .			

**Table E10**  
CFA Model for Resource Identification Skills

Items	Standardized Factor Loadings		rT1-T2
	T1	T2	
I can find the answers to questions I have about services available.	.89	.81	.38***
I can find services that can help me.	.84	.82	.12
When I have a problem finding the services I need, I know who to talk to.	.83	.82	.15
	$\alpha$	.89	.85
Model Fit Indices $\chi^2=3.57$ , $df=5$ , $p=0.612$ ; RMSEA=0.00 ; CFI=1.00 ; TLI=1.01 ; SRMR=0.02			
Note. * $p \leq .05$ . ** $p \leq .01$ . *** $p \leq .001$ .			

# Appendix F

## Developmental Relationships Framework

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Search Institute has identified five elements — expressed in 20 specific actions — that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives.

Elements	Actions	Definitions
<b>Express Care</b> Show me that I matter to you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be dependable</li> <li>• Listen</li> <li>• Believe in me</li> <li>• Be warm</li> <li>• Encourage</li> </ul>	Be someone I can trust. Really pay attention when we are together. Make me feel known and valued. Show me you enjoy being with me. Praise me for my efforts and achievements.
<b>Challenge Growth</b> Push me to keep getting better.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expect my best</li> <li>• Stretch</li> <li>• Hold me accountable</li> <li>• Reflect on failures</li> </ul>	Expect me to live up to my potential. Push me to go further. Insist I take responsibility for my actions. Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.
<b>Provide Support</b> Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navigate</li> <li>• Empower</li> <li>• Advocate</li> <li>• Set boundaries</li> </ul>	Guide me through hard situations and systems. Build my confidence to take charge of my life. Stand up for me when I need it. Put in place limits that keep me on track.
<b>Share Power</b> Treat me with respect and give me a say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect me</li> <li>• Include me</li> <li>• Collaborate</li> <li>• Let me lead</li> </ul>	Take me seriously and treat me fairly. Involve me in decisions that affect me. Work with me to solve problems. Create opportunities for me to take action.
<b>Expand Possibilities</b> Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspire</li> <li>• Broaden horizons</li> <li>• Connect</li> </ul>	Inspire me to see possibilities for my future. Expose me to new ideas, experiences, places. Introduce me to people who can help me grow.

*Note.* Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.

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