

L.A. OPPORTUNITY
YOUTH COLLABORATIVE

IMPACT REPORT

20 20

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WHO WE ARE

Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative is a collaborative of over 100 partners from public agencies, community-based organizations, foundations, youth, and educational institutions.

WHO WE ARE

OUR MISSION

Building multi-sector partnerships to improve education and employment outcomes for transition age foster youth to thrive.

OUR VISION

Transition age foster youth in Los Angeles County have the knowledge and skills to allow them to **achieve economic mobility and flourish** in their personal lives.

The OYC builds partnerships across sectors to improve education and employment outcomes for transition age foster youth (TAY). **We work collaboratively with partners, including government agencies, education institutions, philanthropic and community-based organizations, youth and private sector employers.** Utilizing the five strategic priorities below, we believe we can improve the systems designed to support TAY through a long-term and sustainable collective impact approach:

MAKING CONNECTIONS

BUILDING CAPACITY

TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS

ELEVATING YOUTH VOICE

PROMOTING AWARENESS

“The Opportunity Youth Collaborative is a profound example of how cross-sector partnerships can create innovation. When everyone contributes, working together in concert, we can ensure our transition age foster youth leave care with the resources, skills and ability to achieve their dreams.”

ANGELA PARKS-PYLES

Department of Children and Family Services

OUR CO-CONVENERS

Alliance for Children's Rights is the backbone agency for the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative, and the OYC is co-convened in partnership with **UNITE-LA** and **John Burton Advocates for Youth**.

ALLIANCE
for **CHILDREN'S**
RIGHTS



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

Even in the midst of a global pandemic, economic crisis, and racial justice movement, the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative partners have made significant progress this past year, and our first impact report demonstrates the power of this collective.

When we see young people who have experienced foster care, we see their potential, their value, and limitless possibilities. Our young people are the key drivers to a thriving economic future. The best way to cultivate their talent is by providing opportunities for young adults to grow, learn, and develop the essential skills needed to persist through their educational journey and chosen career path. We also see young people leading the charge in reimagining how systems serve transition age foster youth and believe their voices play a vital role in co-creating more equitable programs and services to prepare young adults leaving foster care with the skills and support they need to achieve their dreams.

Together our collective achievements have worked to enhance and grow the number of opportunities available to foster youth and young adults—and the larger ecosystem of organizations serving foster, juvenile, justice, homeless and low-income youth. Our collaboration with the Department of Children and Family Services and the Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (LA P3) has amplified our impact.

We know that every young person who experiences foster care has the ability—and deserves the chance—to achieve their dreams. We look forward to working in collaboration with OYC partners agencies to innovate and create more opportunities.

The power of this collective is strong and together we are making a lasting impact on the future for Los Angeles youth.

In partnership and gratitude,

LAURI COLLIER

Director of the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative

MESSAGE FROM A YOUNG LEADER



Alicia Smith

Throughout my journey, I never had a clear vision of what my life could look like once I became an independent adult. From a young age, I always knew I wanted to help others, but I did not know in what capacity. I joined the Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative Young Leaders program as a sophomore at Cal State University, Dominguez Hills.

Over the past year, all of my lived experiences and my vision for the future finally became clearer, as I experienced different opportunities of social service through the program. I learned I am passionate about education, mental health, civic engagement, advocating for myself and my peers, and racial justice, and the OYC was there to support me along the way.

Through the program, I have learned essential advocacy skills such as public speaking, introspection, interpersonal communication, setting boundaries, and so much more. I am able to utilize these skills in the OYC events I participate in which, in turn, have yielded new connections for me. Because of the OYC, I have gotten several opportunities to strengthen my professional network and to advocate for foster youth in impactful ways. As young leaders, we are fortunate to be a part of the DCFS Directors Advisory Council where we work closely with supervisors within DCFS, community-based organizations, and other supportive adults in the lives of foster youth, and I have a well-deserved seat at the table to make change happen and to help bolster positive outcomes for foster youth.

What makes the OYC special is its focus on elevating foster youth voices. Although professional practitioners are trained to support a young person in the child welfare system, it is the young people themselves who have the innate understanding and lived experiences that can authentically inform what that support should truly look like. The OYC understands this, practices this, and teaches this to other organizations because they recognize the incredible impact it could have to actually see a dynamic group of innovative youth leading us into a progressive future.

In service and with gratitude,

ALICIA SMITH

OYC Young Leader

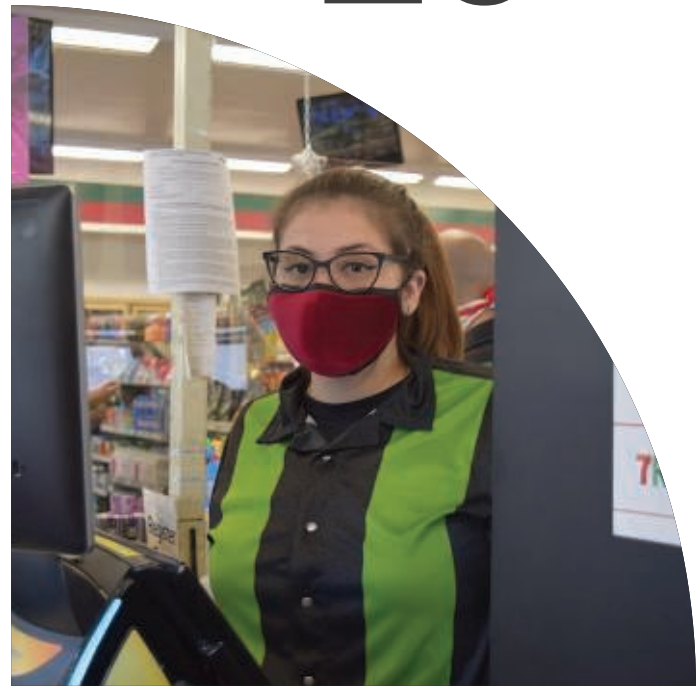
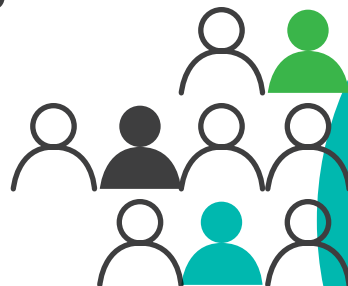
HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020

OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The OYC reached
more than

1,600
young
adults

across our
three campaigns.



"There was a time in my life when I felt I wasn't good enough because life was beating me up back and forth, but now I have the power to speak up for other people."

Eustolia Farias
OYC Young Leader



866
youth

in foster care were
placed in paid
work experience,
an increase of
over 15% from
the previous year.



\$32.4
millions
dollars

in funding for
youth housing
and employment
successfully
advocated for
by the OYC
Young Leaders



70
organizations

including FFAs and
STRTPs, FFAs and
STRTPs are now
required to include
college and career
exploration in their
programming and
provide trainings to
caregivers.



Increase from 33% to

68%
FAFSA

completion among
high school seniors



TRAININGS AND CONVENINGS

The OYC hosts trainings and convenings throughout the year to support transition age youth in foster care and empower the partners and providers who work with them.



28
**trainings
and
convenings**
for practitioners
with

3,652
**total
attendees**
372% increase in
attendees from 2019

64
convenings

connecting
young adults who
experienced foster
care to systems
leaders with

3,963
**practitioners
and youth
attendees**



INCREASING AWARENESS

42%
increase

in newsletter
engagement



During a year when access to resources is critical, the OYC remained a steady source of information for foster youth and partners.



64,800+
contacts

reached by the
OYC newsletter



"The OYC unites the many and varied voices working to support our young people transitioning from foster care. Their collective power to affect change cannot be underestimated."

Karen Bass
Congress-member

Fact sheets created to support TAY youth during COVID reached

6,600+
youth

The OYC also launched a social media presence to connect TAY with resources



"We must all believe in the capabilities and capacities of all of our young people, especially those in the foster care community. OYC not only believes, but builds pathways for educational and professional success for all."

ROBERT SAINZ

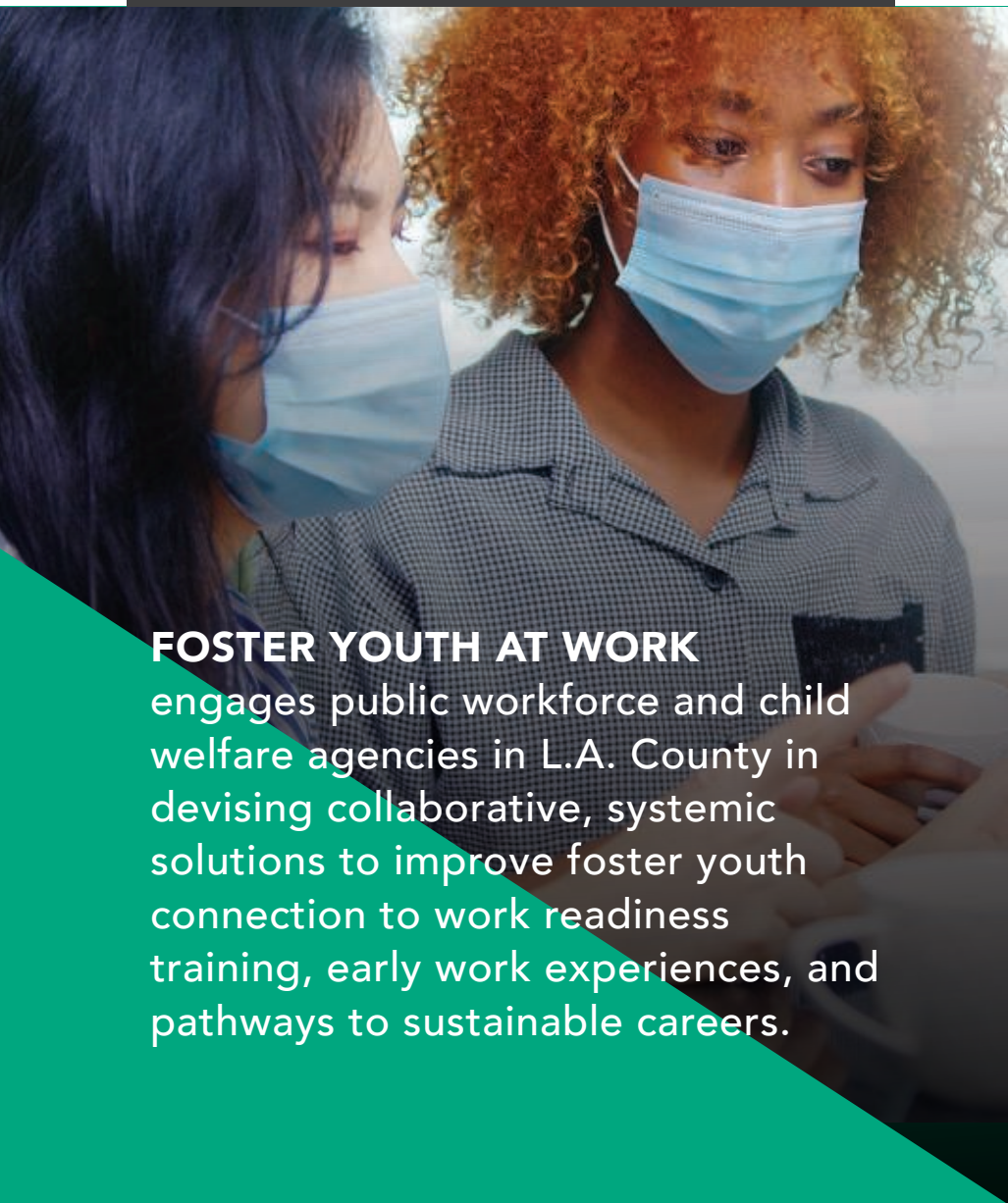
President and Executive Director, New Ways to Work



FOSTER YOUTH AT WORK

Campaign launched
by the OYC in 2013

Convened by the
Alliance for Children's
Rights and UNITE-LA



FOSTER YOUTH AT WORK
engages public workforce and child
welfare agencies in L.A. County in
devising collaborative, systemic
solutions to improve foster youth
connection to work readiness
training, early work experiences, and
pathways to sustainable careers.

"When this campaign was first launched, only 80 foster youth were enrolling in the County's youth jobs program each year. This year, 866 foster youth participated in a paid work experience thanks to the collaborative leadership of L.A. County's child welfare and workforce systems. UNITE-LA is proud to continue to convene this impactful campaign with the Alliance for Children's Rights."

David Rattray
President & CEO, UNITE-LA

PARTNERS

Alliance for Children's
Rights

Foothill Workforce
Development Board

iFoster

Los Angeles City Economic
and Workforce Development
Department

Los Angeles County
Office of Child Protection



UNIVERSAL REFERRAL PROCESS

OYC Foster Youth at Work successfully created, piloted, and launched the Universal Referral Process, which is now a web-based automated referral system to improve connections between DCFS and the county's seven workforce boards.

From July 2019 - June 2020, **866 youth in foster care were placed in paid work experience, an increase of over 15% from the previous year.**

The OYC partnered with the South Los Angeles Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z) Foster Youth Committee to learn about the universal referral process from the ground up. The committee is **working toward increasing foster youth enrollment in subsidized work experience by 50%**. As of quarter two, of the fiscal year (July 2020 - June 2021), SLATE-Z has reached 100% of the goal.



ADVANCING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID

Working with Los Angeles County's workforce system, we successfully advocated to maintain youth employment funding despite the county's billion dollar-shortfall. While subsidized work experiences have halted for many workforce providers, OYC partners successfully advocated for the County Board of Supervisors to maintain the **\$20.8M budget for the Youth@Work program**, with **\$2.5M** earmarked for youth in foster care.



GOING ONLINE WITH TAY WOW CURRICULUM

Historically, TAY completed 20 hours of the TAY WOW work-readiness curriculum and 100 hours of work experience at a worksite. In March, the entire curriculum was converted to a virtual format by providing technical support to **56 sites, reaching 141 workforce system practitioners.**

Los Angeles County
Workforce Development,
Aging & Community
Services Department
(WDACS)

Pacific Gateway Workforce
Development Board

Southeast L.A. County
Workforce Development
Board

South Bay Workforce
Investment Board

UNITE-LA

Verdugo Workforce
Development Board

MADONNA'S STORY

OYC Young Leader, Madonna Silver, participated in the Youth@Work program the summer after she finished high school.

Through the Youth@Work Program at Glendale Youth Alliance, Madonna received her first job at the Treasurer's Office of the Glendale Department of Water and Power. During her time in the Treasurer's Office, Madonna gained valuable office skills and first-hand knowledge of how governmental offices operate on a day-to-day basis. Equally important, Madonna's network grew, and the relationships she formed helped her land a work-study job at UCLA.

In her testimony to the Board of Supervisors in July 2020, Madonna cited her experience during the program and said, "the Youth@Work program must remain funded because, now

more than ever, unemployment is disproportionately impacting foster youth, who are highly susceptible to financial insecurity. The continuation of this program would provide foster youth like myself equal opportunity to succeed in the workplace and secure a means of financial stability."

The repercussions of cutting the Youth@Work program would set back an entire generation of young people, but with the fierce advocacy of the workforce development system, and the OYC Young Leaders, a motion passed to restore the entire \$20.7 million budget.

Shortly after, the Glendale Youth Alliance offered Madonna a position at Viper Staffing Services, a remote outreach position, providing her with financial independence and allowing her to persist through her educational goals with financial stability.

OYC YOUNG LEADERS

Campaign
launched by the
OYC in 2015

Convened by
the Alliance for
Children's Rights

THE OYC YOUNG LEADERS

PROGRAM is a one-year leadership program for young adults in leadership development, public speaking, advocacy, and more. We believe young adults should join us as equal decision makers to co-create and implement the services programs that serve them. The OYC works to clear the path for young adults to exercise their power, and we offer our platform as a means to amplify their voices and vision.

"As the backbone for the LA OYC, the Alliance for Children's Rights has had the privilege of witnessing the growth trajectory of the OYC Young Leaders. Their fierce dedication and impact as advocates—speaking from their own lived experience—demonstrates the importance of using our platform to amplify the voices and vision of the young people in our communities."

Jennifer L. Braun

*President & CEO,
Alliance for Children's Rights*

PARTNERS

Coalition for Responsible
Community Development

Los Angeles County Department
of Children and Family Services

Los Angeles Reproductive Health Equity Project

National Foster Youth Initiative

United Friends of the Children

Even more critical during a challenging year, the OYC young leaders attended county meetings, panels, and focus groups to advocate for the needs of transition age foster youth.



ADVOCATED FOR \$32.4M IN FUNDING FOR HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

The Young Leaders provided testimony to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors about the struggle of foster youth and the need to increase Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention funding for TAY from 8% to 18%, resulting in \$11.7 million dedicated to TAY housing and supports, which was unanimously approved.

Nine weeks into the pandemic, California's unemployment rate rose to a record high and Los Angeles County was facing a \$1 billion budget shortfall. The Young Leaders provided testimony to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors about the importance of employment programs. The Board unanimously approved funding for Youth@Work following the Young Leaders testimony, resulting in \$20.7 million dedicated to the Youth@Work program, with \$2.5 million for foster youth.



PARTNERING WITH YOUNG ADULTS TO INFORM SYSTEMS

The DCFS Director's Advisory Council Meeting is co-facilitated by the Young Leaders and DCFS and has created a forum to hear directly from young adults who experience foster care and co-create recommendations to enhance DCFS policies and practices.

"The OYC gave me a clear perspective on how I can contribute. I started feeling like it was possible for me to do some real change."

Dimitri Dunn
OYC Young Leader



AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IS PRIORITIZED

The Young Leaders have led panel discussions for 68 agencies and networks at the local, state, and national level reaching more than 3,900 attendees to promote authentic youth engagement and empowerment of youth who experience foster care. In addition, we have advocated for the equitable compensation of young adults, whose expertise is lived experience in the Los Angeles child welfare system.



REACHING WIDER YOUNG AUDIENCES

In addition to launching a social media page to connect young adults to other resources, our team created and distributed fact sheets to help youth understand the support and services available to them during the pandemic, reaching over 22,000.

A portrait of a young Black woman with long, dark braids accented with yellow and orange threads. She is wearing a dark blue shirt with a white grid pattern. The background consists of horizontal white slats, possibly from a window blind. The image is partially overlaid by a large teal shape on the left and bottom, and a dark grey shape in the bottom left corner.

TANEIL'S STORY

Taneil started her advocacy journey younger than most. When she was in foster care, she often had to advocate for her education and placement needs to be met.

After all, she knew what was best for her. However, like so many others in care, her voice was hushed by adults in the room. Now an OYC Young Leader and sophomore at LA Trade Technical College (LATTC) with Project Tipping Point, Taneil has dreams of becoming a lawyer and advocating for people who are often silenced.

In January 2020, Taneil was asked to provide her testimony in front of the LA County Board of Supervisors to support increased funding to prevent youth homelessness. Taneil jumped


at the opportunity and provided the Board of Supervisors with a compelling argument they could not disregard. As a result, the motion was passed.

This victory set the tone for the rest of the year. Eager to utilize her voice and enact change within several foster youth spaces, Taneil showed up with enthusiasm, and her heart for justice became apparent every time she spoke. She led focus groups, participated in three panels, and became a vital voice of the DCFS's Director's Advisory Council. Her advocacy has sparked several conversations regarding the engagement of youth in care, explicitly addressing racial inequities within the child welfare system. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Taneil's determination did not falter despite suddenly losing her job. She maintained good grades and kept her commitment to the OYC. Despite the hardships, Taneil always came ready to address the issues, spark conversations, and collaborate in order to create a brighter tomorrow for the youth who come after her.

FOSTER YOUTH COLLEGE ADVANCEMENT PROJECT (FYCAP)

Campaign
launched by the
OYC in 2017

Convened by John
Burton Advocates
for Youth (JBAY)



FYCAP is committed to increasing postsecondary educational attainment for youth in the foster care system, whether it be career technical education or a 2-year or 4-year degree.

"JBAY is proud to have led the efforts alongside our partners to develop long term systems change solutions that will impact youth in LA County for years to come."

Amy Lemley

*Executive Director,
John Burton Advocates
for Youth*

PARTNERS

Alliance for Children's
Rights

Children's Law Center
of California

Foster and Kinship Care
Education

Los Angeles County
Department of Children
and Family Services

Los Angeles County
Office of Education

Los Angeles County
Department of Mental
Health



INCREASING FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION RATES

In partnership with key county departments, school districts and stakeholders, JBAY spearheaded an initiative that successfully improved the rate of FAFSA completion for high school seniors in the foster care system from **33% to 68%**. This exceeded the statewide rate of completion amongst the general population at 57%.

COLLEGE AND CAREER GOALS EMBEDDED IN DCFS CONTRACTS AND FORMS

Over 70 organizations, including FFAs and STRTPs, are **now required to include college and career exploration in their programming**. This includes a 3-hour training requirement for all caregivers on college-planning and matriculation.



TRAINING RESOURCE PARENTS ON COLLEGE PLANNING

As a result of a new training requirement, 1,700 Resource Parents were trained on the Turning Dreams into Degrees curricula. An independent evaluation of the curricula showed a positive impact, with findings such as a **96% increase in resource parents' belief that college can be a path for all students**.

CONNECTING STUDENTS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

JBAY and the LA County Department of Mental Health established free on-campus mental health services for foster youth students at eight community colleges to increase college persistence. In collaboration with the California Community College Chancellor's Office, best-practices from this innovative model were compiled into a toolkit for colleges and providers.



TRAINING SOCIAL WORKERS TO INCREASE COLLEGE-READINESS

JBAY and DCFS partnered to evaluate the efforts of the College Bound Antelope Valley Pilot, which provided targeted training, social work specific tools, and on-going coaching to a cohort of social workers and supervisors to better support their youth into postsecondary educational pathways showing positive results.

"For the students who have received mental health services, it has been really productive for them. I can see the difference in them. It's been a nice addition for our foster-youth program to be able to help the student holistically."

Dora Lozano

College of the Canyons

Los Angeles County
Probation Department

Los Angeles County Office of
Child Protection

Los Angeles Unified
School District

UNITE-LA

United Friends of
the Children

Los Angeles County Workforce
Development Aging and
Community Services

*All 30 campus-based foster
youth support programs across
Los Angeles County's public and
private colleges and universities*



TOBIAS' STORY



Every year, billions of dollars in federal and state financial aid go unused because eligible students do not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA).

In 2017, JBAY launched the Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge, a statewide initiative to increase financial aid applications among high school seniors in the foster care system. One of those applicants, 17-year-old Tobias Herrera, said he wasn't aware of how much aid he could

receive until a counselor at Palmdale High School in Los Angeles County contacted him about being a foster youth.

"I knew FAFSA was just free money, but I didn't know a lot of people actually got it," he said. "I thought I had to go through some grueling process for a couple of thousand bucks to pay for books."

Herrera didn't learn until that moment that he had been in foster care since age 15. While he lived with his grandparents, he wasn't aware they were also his legal foster parents. His counselor encouraged him to indicate his foster youth status on the FAFSA, which opened up more aid and opportunities for him when he attended Antelope Valley College in Fall 2020. Herrera received the full Pell Grant award of \$6,345.



Thank You to Our Partners & Supporters

We are proud to recognize the many public agencies, community-based agencies, young leaders, networks, and foundations that have championed our collective work last year.

OUR STEWARDSHIP GROUP:

Alliance for Children's Rights
Coalition for Responsible Community Development
City of Los Angeles Economic & Workforce
Development Department
First Place for Youth
iFoster
John Burton Advocates for Youth
LA County Department of Children and Family Services
Los Angeles County, Workforce Development,
Aging and Community Services
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Los Angeles LGBT Center
Los Angeles Unified School District
Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative
Young Leaders
South Bay Workforce Investment Board
United Friends of the Children
UNITE-LA

OUR SUPPORTERS

We appreciate our generous partners who make our work possible. Our deepest gratitude to this dedicated community of funders.

America's Promise Alliance
Angell Foundation
The Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions
Ballmer Group
Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation **
Goodwin Family Memorial Trust
Hire Opportunity Coalition
Los Angeles Areas Chamber of Commerce Foundation
LAX Integrated Express Solutions
Pritzker Foster Care Initiative **
The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
The Stuart Foundation

OUR PARTNERS

A Sense of Home	Los Angeles County Department of Human Resources
Alliance for Children's Rights** ^^	Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Antelope Valley College	Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection
Antelope Valley America's Job Center of California (JVS)	Los Angeles County Office of Education**
Anthony & Jeanine Pritzker Family Foundation	Los Angeles County Probation Department
Archdiocese Youth Employment	Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services**
Aspen Forum for Community Solutions	Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board
Brotherhood Crusade	Los Angeles Harbor College
Cal Poly Pomona University	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
Cal State University Dominguez Hills	Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative Young Leaders**
Cal State University Long Beach	Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot
Cal State University Los Angeles	Los Angeles Pierce College
California Opportunity Youth Network	Los Angeles Reproductive Health Equity Project
California Youth Connection	Los Angeles Southwest College
CASA-Los Angeles	Los Angeles Trade Tech College
Cerritos College	Los Angeles Unified School District
Children's Hospital Los Angeles	Los Angeles Valley College
Children's Institute	Loyola Marymount University
Children's Law Center of California	Mount Saint Mary's College
Citrus College	Mt. San Antonio College
City of Los Angeles Economic & Workforce Development Department**	National Center for Youth Law
Coalition for Responsible Community Development**	National Foster Youth Institute
College of the Canyons	New Ways to Work
Compton College	Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	Olive Crest
East LA College	Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network
El Camino College	Para Los Ninos
Extraordinary Families	Pasadena City College
Faith Foster Families Network	Peace4Kids
First Place for Youth**	Public Council
FirstStar	Ready to Succeed
Foothill Workforce Development Board	REDF
Foster and Kinship Care Education	ReLAY Institute (ReConnecting Los Angeles Youth)
Foster Care Counts	Rio Hondo College
Foster Ed	Safe Place for Youth
Foster Nation	Santa Monica College
Foster Together Network	School on Wheels
Friends of the Children - Los Angeles	Seen and Heard
Glendale Community College	South Bay Workforce Investment Board**
Glendale Verdugo Workforce Development Board	South East Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board
Glendale Youth Alliance	South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z)
Goodwill Southern California	St. Anne's
Hathaway-Sycamores	The Academy Project
Happy Trails for Kids	The Community College Foundation
Hillsides	The Emporium
Hire Opportunity Coalition	The Imprint
iFoster**	The Rightway Foundation
John Burton Advocates for Youth** ^^	Think of Us
Journey House	UCLA YouthSource Center
L.A. Compact	United Friends of the Children**
LA Gay & Lesbian Center**	UNITE-LA** ^^
LA Tech	University of California Los Angeles
Learn4Life	University of Southern California
Long Beach City College	Verdugo Workforce Development Board
Long Beach Forward	Walden Family Services
Los Angeles City College	Wayfinder Family Services
Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office	Wellnest Los Angeles
Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services**	West Los Angeles College
	Yes2Jobs
	Yo Watts

** denotes Stewardship Board ^^ denotes co-convener