

# Advocating for Detroit's Youth

Recommendations for expanding afterschool and summer learning opportunities



Youth  
Development  
Resource Center

Fall 2017

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## Dear Detroit Community Member:

Youth in Detroit are facing unprecedented instability and uncertainty. To help them cope with the many changes in their schools, neighborhoods, and families, including the trauma that some experience from living in tough conditions, it is often their youth workers and afterschool programs that give youth a safe haven and important opportunities to develop their skills. All of us, as Detroiters, need youth to achieve, to connect with caring adults, and to thrive.

We are making progress. For the past 20 years, The Skillman Foundation has generously granted funds to many youth development programs in Detroit, and more recently the Foundation has financed the work of the Youth Development Alliance (YDA) and Youth Development Resource Center (YDRC). YDA is a neighborhood-based collaborative that has brought together 175 youth programs across six Detroit neighborhoods – Brightmoor, Chadsey Condon, Cody Rouge, Northend Central, Osborn, and Southwest Detroit – that are committed to providing quality youth development programming to youths ages 8-18. YDRC provides training and data tools to support continuous quality improvement.

But even with Skillman's support and that of other funders, over 40% of youth in the six Good Neighborhoods did not have access to high-quality youth development programs in their neighborhoods in 2014. We can do better. It is time to put youth first and build a comprehensive system.

This advocacy paper explains the work we have done together, explains the ongoing challenges we face in meeting youth's needs, and lays out our recommendations for expanding out of school time learning opportunities for the City of Detroit. The keys are pooling resources and building a common vision and plan for youth's access to expanded learning opportunities in their City – in school, afterschool and in the summer.

The future of Detroit rests on the development of its youth. Working families need good quality care afterschool and in the summer, and we all need youth to be safe, off the streets, and engaged as productive citizens towards their and the City's betterment. Families, quality education, quality youth development programs, and employment opportunities prepare our young people for productive adulthood. We need to strengthen the pathways that will lead youth to success and ensure the continuous growth of our city.

If you care about Detroit's youth, talk to your neighbors, elected officials, and other influencers in the City, so we can begin to build momentum for a true youth development system as exists in other major cities.

Sincerely,

Detroit Youth Development Alliance and Youth Development Resource Center

#fund313afterschool #youth1stagenda

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# Timeline

**2007** The Skillman Foundation launched the Good Neighborhoods Initiative, shifting its invests to six neighborhoods where 30% of Detroit children lived.

**2010-2012** The Skillman Foundation launched a Request for Proposals to create neighborhood-based collaboratives initiatives focused on strengthening the systems of support and opportunities that affect youth ages 11-18 in the six Skillman Good Neighborhoods. Three lead agencies were awarded grants to plan and initiate the implementation of the Youth Development Alliance (YDA):

- Don Bosco Hall :Brightmoor and Cody Rouge (Youth Development Initiative)
- Youthville: Northend/Central and Osborn (Youth Development Collaborative)
- Southwest Solutions: Chadsey Condon and Southwest Detroit (Partnership for Youth)

The neighborhood partners created a name for their network and used a variety of strategies to increase access, quality and scale for youth development opportunities:

- Youth neighborhood opportunity mapping
- Identifying and screening neighborhood hubs
- Increasing neighborhood-school collaboration
- Training youth workers with the Child and Youth Care Basics course and testing a youth worker certification approach to quality improvement
- Testing a youth-led quality improvement model
- Running a healthy eating campaign to promote summer food programs
- Having youth review and make recommendations for program grants

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## Timeline, cont.

**2013** Skillman launched the Youth Development Fund Request for Proposals process. The Youth Development Resource Center was also seeded with the goal of building the capacity of youth development providers to deliver high-quality programs, to track and use data, and to engage in continuous quality improvement. Don Bosco Hall assumed the coordination of the initiative in Northend Central and Osborn neighborhoods and merged the work in the 4 neighborhoods under the umbrella of the Youth Development Initiative (YDI).

**2014** Creation of the *Standards for Quality Youth Development Programs* with youth and youth workers. YDRC choose the Weikert Center on Youth Program Quality's Youth Program Quality Intervention as a model for quality improvement.

**2015** Detroit PAL joined the YDA as a lead agency. YDRC pilots the *ACT'ing with Data Learning Community* and expands the quality improvement cycle to 29 youth programs.

**2016** The Skillman Foundation's 10-year Good Neighborhoods Initiative ends.

**2017** Currently the YDA has a membership of over 175 youth development program providers throughout the 6 neighborhoods. YDRC's quality improvement learning community is in its third cycle. The Youth Development Resource Center begins managing a citywide Youth Development Alliance Learning Network with combined monthly meetings.

# WE CAN AND SHOULD EXPAND AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DETROIT YOUTH



# “Detroit youth tell us they want...



**Opportunities to become leaders whose voices are heard**  
“Youth are put in leadership positions.”



**Structured, active programs that build their real world skills**  
“Youth are able to learn new things without feeling like they are in school.”



**Caring adults and mentors who listen and encourage**  
“Adults encourage you to better yourself. They have high standards for us.”



**Safe places and transportation**  
“There are no bullies and no negative teachers. There are no people cussing, no kids being left out, and no kids or staff being disrespectful or not caring.”



Standards for Quality Youth Development Programs, 2014

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# How Do Youth Development Programs Make a Difference?

Detroit's youth are the City's greatest asset. It is hard to imagine a true comeback for the City of Detroit if it does not prepare its future generation to be successful in school, resilient to the many challenges life offers, and ready for college and careers. We want our youth to not only survive but to thrive.

Twenty years of research has proven that high-quality youth development programs make an impact in the very areas Detroit is focused on improving:

**Improved School Attendance**

**Improved School Performance**

**Decreased Learning Gap and Summer Loss**

**Stronger Social-Emotional Skills**

**Safe Kids and Communities**

**College and Career Readiness**

**Job Creation**

**Support for Working Families**

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# Why Does Detroit Need Youth Development Programs?

## Improved School Attendance

Research showed that students who participated in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York's after school programs improved their average daily school attendance ([http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/after\\_out.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/after_out.cfm)).

## Improved School Performance

An analysis of 35 studies of at-risk youth found that youth development programs had a positive effect on reading and math achievement (Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Apthrop, Snow & Martin-Glenn, 2006).

## Decreasing the Learning Gap

By 6<sup>th</sup> grade, kids born into poverty are likely to suffer a 6,000 hour learning gap compared to their middle-class peers with the bulk of these hours coming from reduced access to enriched learning after school. Kids spend 80% of their waking hours outside of school (<http://www.expandedschools.org/the-learning-gap#sthash.GzqBiGpE.dpbs>).

## Safe Kids and Communities

The hours of 3pm to 6pm are the most dangerous time of the day for youth and are peak hours for juvenile crime, experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and sex (Fight Crime, Invest in Kids, 2002). Youth development programs provide safe spaces for children and youth. Researchers estimate that every dollar invested in LA's Best after school program saves the city \$2.50 in crime-related expenses (UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, September 2007).

## College and Career Readiness

Due to increasing demands on standardized tests, schools are often unable to provide the additional support that young people require to gain admission to college, financial aid, or career exploration support. Quality youth development providers infuse college-going culture and career readiness through campus visits, mentors, and supportive internships (<https://pasesetter.org/resources#/college-prep-milestones-a-guide-for-afterschool-practitioners>).

## Job Creation

Comprehensive after school programs employ Program Directors, Activity Specialists, Educators, and Support staff. The State of Vermont found that for every million dollars spent on child care, 35 jobs were created (24 direct and 11 indirect) (<http://www.vtlivablewage.org/econimpactreport7.02.pdf>).

## Support for Working Families

Parents in a New York study said that the program helped them balance work and family life. 60 percent reported they missed less work because of the program, 59% said it supported them in keeping their job, and 54% said it allowed them to work more hours (Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 2004).



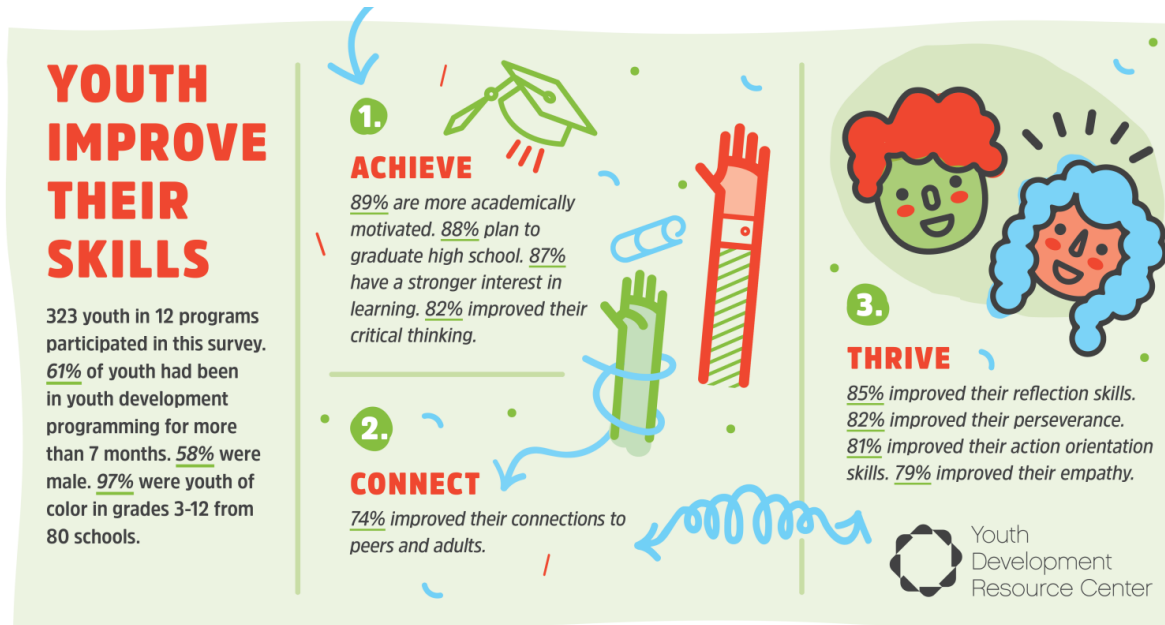
# We explored and measured youth's academic and social-emotional skill development so we could support youth to Achieve, Connect & Thrive

We use the **Achieve, Connect, Thrive Framework**, originally developed by Boston Afterschool & Beyond. Some programs also used a survey called the Holistic Student Assessment to help us know how youth programs improve youth's skills.

**Achieve:** The skill sets necessary for youth to achieve tasks and succeed academically, focusing on literacy and math proficiencies.

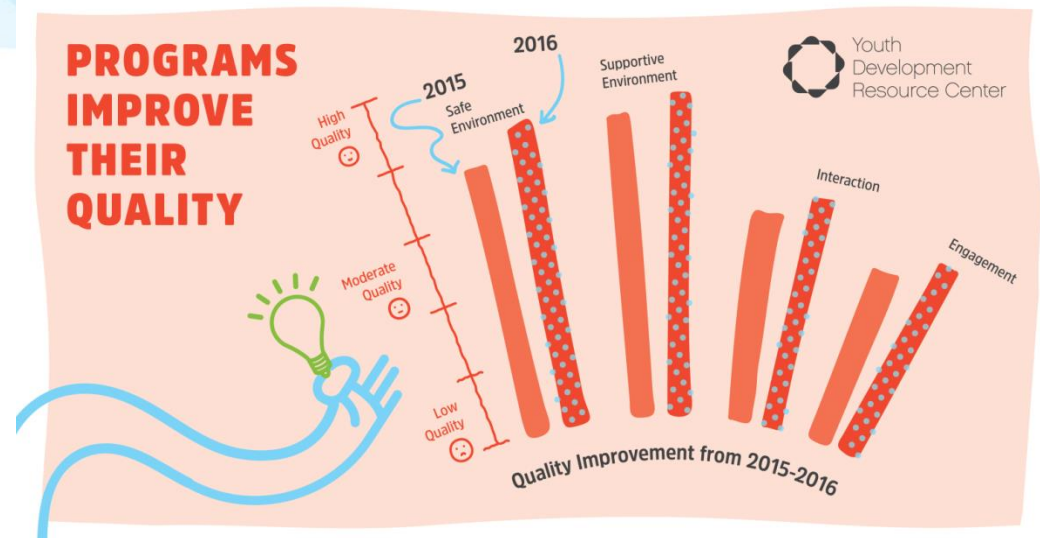
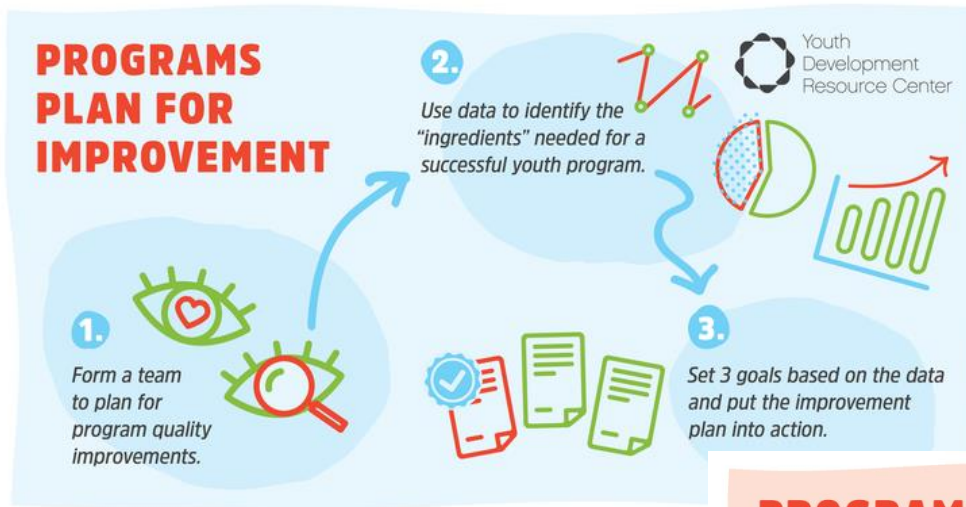
**Connect:** Skills that help students develop supportive relationships.

**Thrive:** Perseverance, self-efficacy, and the resilience necessary for youth to maintain the effort to succeed.

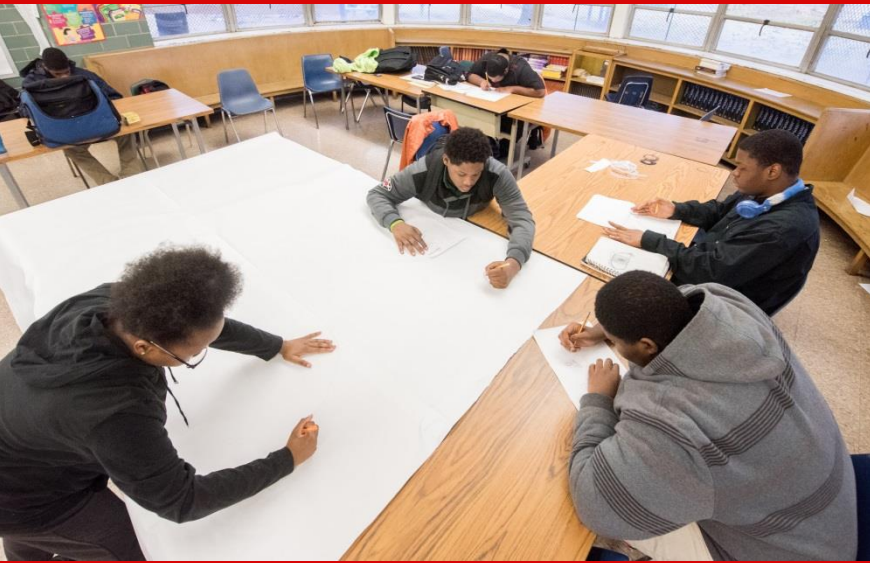


# We measured program quality and attended training together, so we could improve our programs for youth.

Some youth programs have used the **Youth Program Quality Assessment** to measure and improve their program quality. After staff made a quality improvement plan and attended training, their youth program quality scores increased!



# OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EXPANDED YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM



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## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

### Detroit Kids Need a Citywide System for Year-Round Youth Programs, as Exists in Other Major Cities

Detroit has a system for youth employment (Grow Detroit's Young Talent) and an intermediary for youth sports (Detroit PAL), but no system for comprehensive, coordinated afterschool and summer programs to address the needs of the whole child. Even in the six Skillman Good Neighborhoods, over 40% of youth did not have access to high-quality youth programs in 2014.

Youth and parents also don't have good enough information on what programs are available to them. We can do better to reach all Detroit youth with high-quality learning opportunities beyond school hours.

We ask Detroit city government, schools (public, charter, higher ed), funders, and program providers to come together to solve this problem. Youth and parents also must be at the table, shaping the system to work for them!

To build a continuum of high quality afterschool and summer opportunities for Detroit's youth, we recommend:

#### 1. Continue A Commitment to Quality and Skill Building

- A. Focus on youth's skill development and active learning anytime and everywhere
- B. Invest in program quality and professional development so youth workers can best support youth's needs

#### 2. Build a Dedicated, Stable Fund to Establish a High-Quality Youth Development System

- A. Fund a comprehensive range of youth programs across the city, particularly in neighborhoods where kids live
- B. Expand and stabilize program funding so consistent, high quality programming is possible

#### 3. Convene a Coordinating Body to Design a System and to Communicate Opportunities Across the City

- A. Improve the coordination of school-community afterschool and summer learning partnerships
- B. Improve youth access through marketing and communication
- C. Address access, youth transportation and safety to and from youth programs afterschool

# RECOMMENDATION 1:

## Continue A Commitment to Quality and Skill Building

In 2014, we defined what high quality programs look like to youth and to youth workers and released *Standards for Quality Youth Development Programs*.

Youth told us what great youth programs look like to them. Since then, many programs have spent time together improving their program's quality. Let's expand Detroit's commitment to quality for youth.

### PROGRAM QUALITY PRACTICES

Positive Relationships

Safe & Supportive Climate

Active, Engaged Learning & Skill Building

Youth Voice, Choice & Leadership



### MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Quality Staff & Support

Intentional Program Design & Improvement

Diversity, Access & Inclusion

Family, School & Community Engagement

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## Focus on Youth's Skill Development and Active Learning

Youth spend the majority of their day outside of school. As the educators work to impact school attendance, school performance, and the learning gap, we also need to think about engaging youth in learning at Detroit's many community assets: museums, theaters, libraries, and neighborhood based afterschool providers. Youth can learn anytime and anywhere.

Our youth need:

- **Hands-on projects, real-world experiences, and supportive mentors** that can help students engage in learning, persist in school, and succeed in college and career.
- **Wide range of services that acknowledge the trauma youth have experienced** and provide them with supports they really need.
- **Youth development programming that is easily accessible** and near where youth live and go to school.
- **A system of education that activates the development of youth in all environments.** The Achieve, Connect, Thrive Framework and Standards for Quality Youth Development Programs should be integrated wherever and whenever learning takes place.

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# Invest in Program Quality and Professional Development So Youth Workers Can Best Support Youth's Needs

It is important that afterschool and summer youth program staff are provided with consistent and quality opportunities to grow their skills. Quality improvement planning, program implementation, and teaching strategies are central to achieving learning outcomes.

Our youth and youth development providers need:

- **Skilled youth development practitioners supported by free and low cost training.** Providers want continued training in Youth Work Methods as well as training on quality program and management practices.
- **Quality programs that are accountable.** The work of the Youth Development Resource Center on self-assessment and external assessment using the Youth Program Quality Assessment tool is critical to ensuring that youth achieve the best outcomes from their experience in programs and it should be continued. Accountability for delivering quality programming should get stronger as public funding becomes available. Programs should have access to quality coaching and technical assistance.
- **An opportunity to build organizational capacity.** Just as Detroit is investing in entrepreneurs, grassroots organizations and smaller program providers need an opportunity to grow to their next level. Training in strategic planning, fund development, and longer-term learning communities, “train-the-trainer,” coaching opportunities specific to fundraising are needed.



**The majority of youth in Detroit are experiencing trauma and don't know how to cope with it. We need trained staff to support youth who are dealing with this.**

- Southwest Neighborhood Network Member

**We need low cost or free trainings. This is a must. Sites have no budgets for training, yet staff need to be trained if we are truly going to help youth.**

- Cody Rouge Neighborhood Network Member





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## RECOMMENDATION 2:

# Build a Dedicated, Stable Fund to Establish a High-Quality Youth Development System

Currently, funding dedicated to Detroit's afterschool programming is short-term (one year or less), scattershot, and inconsistent. Funding may be available one year and then no longer available the next year. Funding priorities are narrowly focused on the arts, sports, or on a particular neighborhood. Afterschool providers constantly struggle to ensure consistent programming in the same location to the same students.

To serve youth consistently, and effectively, we need:

- **A supportive system of grant-making** that meets providers' current capacity, but also supports them in their growth. A dedicated fund could provide a ladder of program funding opportunities from skilled instructors, to start-up organizations, to a scaled-up youth program serving multiple locations.
- **Youth to be involved in the grant decision process.** Youth advisories can set priorities at the city and school levels to ensure the programs that are funded are programs that youth want to attend. The Youth Development Alliance has implemented these youth-driven spaces and we want to see them continued in a future youth development system. We need youth voice at every level of decision-making and implementation.
- **A multi-year funding stream** (3+ years) that allows for continuity in programming and location so that youth can connect and build stable relationships with youth workers. Performance and standards can be built into multi-year contracts to ensure quality.
- **Requests for Proposals for funding that align to an annual program calendar.** Providers should know if they have funding several months in advance of starting up their fall, spring and summer programming so they can hire staff and train them.
- **Support from Detroit businesses.** Private philanthropy and public dollars cannot be the only supports of a sustainable youth development system. Businesses benefit when youth are prepared for work and engaged positively in their communities.

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# Fund a comprehensive range of youth programs across the city, particularly in neighborhoods where kids live

## Fund a Network of Safe Play and Learning Centers

**Safe Play and Learning Centers** offer youth a comprehensive mix of activities afterschool and in the summer :

- Structured play through sports, recreation, and academic games
- Drop-in hands-on learning activities with art, music, STEAM, and literacy
- Tutoring time
- Family groups, resources and events
- Field trips

**Examples:** Schools and community sites, like Boys & Girls Clubs, Clark Park, Detroit Recreation Centers, Don Bosco Hall Community Resource Center, Downtown Boxing Gym, LA SED, Libraries, Matrix Center, Say Detroit Play Center, etc..

## Fund Youth Talent Explorer Clubs and Camps

**Talent Explorer Clubs and Camps** expand the offerings at the “Safe Play and Learning Centers” through structured programs that youth register for ahead of time. The goals are to expand youth’s interests, to help them actively apply academic learning out of school time, and to develop their social-emotional skills:

- Intentional learning focus
- 8-12 week sessions that meet at least twice a week over 4 seasons – Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer
- Use project-based learning
- Skilled trained instructors can offer an Explorers Club, without needing a 501(c)3 status
- A youth advisory board could select priority program topics to fund like robotics, STEAM, entrepreneurship, arts, theater, dance, fashion design, cooking, or literacy

## Fund Youth Leadership and Apprenticeship Clubs

**Apprenticeship Clubs** offer youth a sequenced yearlong experience that culminates in a performance, a summer job or an internship:

- Programming for high-school age youth looking to deepen their skills, mastery, and leadership in a particular area.
- Youth apply learning in real world settings
- Meets 1-2 times a week for a minimum of 30 weeks
- Youth have access to professional mentors in their field of apprenticeship (group or individual mentors)

**Examples:** Midnight Golf, College for Creative Studies Community Arts Partnership, Detroit Food Academy, Atlantic Impact, YMCA Youth in Government, RaquetUp, Mosaic Main Stage, Living Arts Dance Collage, etc..

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# A Dedicated Fund Needs High Accountability So Dollars Are Well-Spent and Quality for Youth Is Ensured

## Component 1: Attendance-Tracking Data System

Currently, there is no citywide youth development data system that tracks youth's enrollment, attendance, and retention in afterschool and summer programs. Afterschool data systems exist in other cities and are useful for seeing where supply and demand is for programming, as well as for linking students' participation to academic outcomes, such as school attendance and graduation.

Research shows that youth who consistently attend afterschool programs are also more likely to consistently attend school, and youth who attend school consistently are more likely to do well in academics and graduate.

## Component 2: Performance-Based Contracts

Youth program providers can respond to RFPs and enter into contracts where the terms of service are defined, such as:

- number of participants/enrollees
- average daily attendance rate
- sessions offered and hours of service
- youth retention rate
- Youth/parent satisfaction
- Social-emotional and academic skill growth

If providers are below their targets, they can enter into an improvement plan. If enrollment and retention does not improve, the funder can discontinue service with a particular provider.

Because youth programs are voluntary, consistent youth attendance is a strong "high-stakes" funding criteria as youth often "walk with their feet" if a program is low-quality.



**“Youth don’t want to sign-up if they don’t know you’re going to be around. Staff want a long-term job. It is tough to recruit someone for just one year. How can we be supported with a millage or an entertainment tax like the DIA was, like the businesses Downtown are? Even a \$1.00 tax on each ticket could be transformational.**

- Southwest Neighborhood Network Member

**These programs build communities and neighborhoods. Businesses need strong communities to be successful. Businesses need talented staff to work for them. These programs develop the future of Detroit’s talent.**

- Osborn Neighborhood Network Member



## Recommendation 3: Convene a Coordinating Body to Design a System and to Communicate Opportunities Across the City

While partner organizations have benefited from networking with members of the Youth Development Alliance, they acknowledge that many more partners are needed to truly develop a supportive citywide system for Detroit's youth.

Schools and city government are critical partners. In most cities, the Mayor is a champion for afterschool and summer programs, in addition to youth employment. And while some schools have funding for afterschool programs or a Community School Coordinator who manages partnerships, most do not. Afterschool providers find it difficult to support and enhance the school day learning without trainings, meetings, shared curricula, shared culture, and consistent communication. Funders could also come together to pool funding, rather than working in silos.

### Partners Needed for Citywide Afterschool and Summer Programs

<b>Foundations</b>	<b>Mayor of Detroit and City Council</b>	<b>Charter Schools</b>	<b>Detroit Public Schools Community District</b>
<b>Social Service Organizations</b>	<b>Mental Health Organizations</b>	<b>Homeless Support Services</b>	<b>Recreation Centers</b>
<b>Hospitals</b>	<b>Non-Profits</b>	<b>Parent Groups</b>	<b>Summer Youth Employment</b>
<b>Libraries</b>	<b>Churches</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Museums and Parks</b>
<b>School Management Companies</b>	<b>Public Safety and Detroit Youth Violence Prevention</b>	<b>Juvenile Justice System</b>	<b>Child Welfare System</b>
<b>County Government</b>	<b>Michigan State Government</b>	<b>State Representatives</b>	<b>Universities</b>

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## Improve Youth Access Through Marketing and Communication

The Detroit community needs a sustainable platform to coordinate and communicate youth development opportunities and their value to the City's youth and families. Programs also need to be better coordinated across the city, in schools and in neighborhoods.

- **A youth-facing brand for youth development opportunities.** Many Detroit youth are aware of Grow Detroit's Young Talent and Detroit PAL and apply for those opportunities. A brand is also needed to tie together afterschool and summer learning opportunities, so that youth and parents can identify and enroll in the programs that are right for them.
- **A “one-stop shop” for youth development opportunities.** For parents and youth, a centralized hub can map after-school learning opportunities, facilitate enrollment, and communicate what youth are learning through their participation. For youth development providers, a centralized hub can facilitate planning and partnership, training, funding opportunities, hiring, and data collection. For concerned citizens, a centralized hub can help them volunteer or financially support great work that is growing Detroit's future.
- **A diverse and far-reaching communication and advocacy strategy that speaks to Detroiters about the value of afterschool and summer learning.** This would include a website, flyers, billboards, bus advertisements, and PSAs that educate the entire community about the value of youth development and existing opportunities. This would also include round table conversations with school staff, parent-teacher groups, and neighborhood associations.

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## Marketing, cont.

- **Positive press about Detroit's youth.** Too often the dominant Detroit narrative misses the positive actions happening in our neighborhoods. Relationships with news organizations need to be developed so that Detroit's positive stories have a voice.
- **Neighborhood Networks that encourage collaboration and learning among diverse partners.** As multiple youth-focused entities partner with each other, opportunities to build common understanding, align goals, and share resources are needed. Monthly neighborhood meetings, like the YDA model, should be the foundation for future structures.
- **A Citywide model that recognizes the diversity of neighborhoods** but has set standards for programs (i.e. types of activities offered or hours offered each week) so youth and parents can easily know what opportunities exist. A consistent calendar for programming that would allow for Citywide enrollment of youth and recruitment/training of staff.

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# Solve for Access, Transportation and Safety Needs of Youth to and from Youth Programs

The footprint of Detroit, the safety concerns of neighborhoods, and the fact that the majority of Detroit students do not attend local schools makes it very difficult for after-school providers to ensure safe passage. While a dedicated transportation system for programs would be ideal, the cost of such a system well exceeds current funding. The lack of safe passage home after programming forces many students to stop attending. Programming planning must address these barriers to program access.

## Day-to-Day Detroit Youth Transportation Challenges

- For some students, their school may be only five blocks away from a center-based program, but that is too far for a 7 or 8 year old to walk by themselves.
- If kids go to school in the suburbs, they get to the center late. This makes it difficult to schedule appropriately.
- If a school doesn't serve the local community, 80% of students may leave at the end of the day on a bus... but that bus isn't taking them to a program, it's taking them to bus stops.
- If a program ends at 7:00pm, it is dark out. No one wants to walk in the dark, it isn't safe.
- One high school dismisses early on Monday. Another high school doesn't dismiss until much later in the day. How do you schedule programming for conflicting schedules?



“ We are trying to secure funding to build an app that would allow after-school providers to access buses, vans, and cars that are not being used during the hours we need them. This would allow the vehicle owner to make some revenue while allowing after-school providers a more affordable transportation option than we currently have.

- YDA Network Member

They only cover the negative things that happen in Detroit. We need a way to get our story out. We need a way of letting parents, youth, and schools know that we are here.

-North End Neighborhood Network Member



### Case Study – The Youth Transit Alliance

Between 2013 and 2015, the Detroit Bus Company and Partnership for Youth / Southwest Solutions worked together, with Skillman Foundation funding, to pilot a Youth Transit Alliance.

The lessons learned were that:

- Due to safety concerns, youth needed door to door service versus designated safety pick up and drop off spots.
- Transit is expensive, especially in a city as expansive as Detroit.
- A private foundation or individual youth programs cannot solve or fund the transportation problem alone. Public solutions are needed.

## **Acknowledgements:**

Consultant: Andrea Magiera-Guy, Youth Development Solutions

Youth Development Alliance Staff: Kimberly Johnson (formerly Newberry), Sonja Johnson, Terry Whitfield, Helena Lazo

Youth Development Resource Center Staff: Sara Plachta Elliott, Monica Marie Jones

Youth Development Alliance Lead Agencies: Don Bosco Hall, Southwest Counseling Solutions

Data Partners: Weikert Center on Youth Program Quality, Harvard University/McLean Hospital PEAR Institute

Funder: The Skillman Foundation

And most importantly: The youth development providers who are committed to quality and who work with Detroit's young people day in and day out to give them a safe and supportive space to thrive and opportunities to grow and develop their skills and talents.



# #fund313afterschool #youth1stagenda

