

# Connecting Baltimore's Opportunity Youth to Careers

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## I. Executive Summary

**Opportunity youth** are young adults ages 16-24 who are disconnected from school and work. As the name implies, opportunity youth can add tremendous value to the Baltimore Region if they reconnect to education and employment opportunities.

In the Baltimore Region there are approximately 42,000 youth ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor enrolled in school. These youth—referred to as **disconnected or opportunity youth**—are often optimistic about their futures and their career goals. However, they face barriers to success, including low educational attainment, low math and reading skills, homelessness, poverty, structural racism, a history of incarceration, and mental health issues.

Baltimore City is home to an estimated 18,000 of the region's opportunity youth—roughly one in five of the city's young people—one of the highest numbers in the nation. Their futures are not promising. Youth who have prolonged periods of disconnection

from work and school have far more difficulty building an economic foundation for independence. The devastating life-long impacts of disconnection from work and school results in costs for taxpayers, which are estimated at approximately \$13,900 per year or about \$235,680 over the course of a lifetime as a result of long-term unemployment, increased reliance on government supports, crime, and poor health status.<sup>1</sup> The taxpayer costs linked to all the opportunity youth in the Baltimore Region today amount to a staggering \$592 million per year and, for today's opportunity youth alone, taxpayers will shoulder a \$10 billion lifetime cost—an amount that increases with each successive generation of opportunity youth.

### Building Attainable Opportunities for Opportunity Youth

Disconnected youth are an untapped opportunity for Baltimore employers looking for skilled workers and connecting these youth to middle-skilled careers with a family-supporting wage can generate enormous economic benefits for the region. Building pathways into these careers is the region's challenge. A 2012 study of collective community impact for opportunity youth<sup>2</sup> by Foundation Strategy Group (FSG) found that opportunity youth need four things to be successful in school and career: re-engagement, educational momentum, connection to career, and youth development. Baltimore has built a reasonably large infrastructure of organizations that serve opportunity youth, but collectively, these organizations have not been able to connect a large portion of Baltimore's opportunity youth to careers. Doing that requires a two-pronged strategy: (1) delivering industry-based skills training that leads to employment and careers, and (2) delivering youth-friendly strategies that help opportunity youth overcome their unique barriers to success. There is a gap in the collective capacity of Baltimore's organizations to offer programs and services that bring these two competencies together.

Figure A: Best Practices Connecting Opportunity Youth to Careers



Closing the gap is costly and difficult. The costs for workforce development services for youth are considerably higher than they are for adults, and the outcomes are lower. This is even more likely to be true for workforce development targeting opportunity youth, because of the multiple, complex challenges they face. To achieve better outcomes, the stakeholders in Baltimore’s workforce development and youth development systems will need to combine collective best practices, expand capacities, and create regular channels of communication.

Based on a review of literature and interviews with successful opportunity youth workforce development organizations across the U.S., this report identifies 12 best practices for connecting opportunity youth to careers (see Figure A). Nationally, organizations that have been effective in connecting youth to careers have had to adapt their approaches. For instance, industry-based workforce development organizations that serve adults must incorporate strategies to support youth, whose needs and barriers are different. For high school-based training programs, there can be challenges in building the employer relationships needed to place students in internships and part-time and full-time jobs. For summer jobs programs, making the program accessible to out-of-school youth can be difficult and these programs—while youth-focused—are not ideally designed to meet the complex needs of opportunity youth.

Based on an environmental scan of Baltimore’s workforce development system for opportunity youth, this report makes seven recommendations to increase the number of Baltimore’s opportunity youth who successfully begin and sustain a career. A detailed discussion of these recommendations follows.

## Recommendations

1. Expand Baltimore’s infrastructure for *industry-based* workforce development to more effectively serve opportunity youth.
2. Build on Baltimore’s existing youth-oriented career resources to better serve opportunity youth.
3. Build system-wide interventions to address basic math and reading deficiencies.
4. Engage more employers and proactively improve perceptions of opportunity youth.
5. Build system-wide data collection and data-sharing capacity.
6. Improve funding for opportunity youth by adding to existing financial resources and braiding different funding streams for increased impact.
7. Build the organizational infrastructure needed for greater collective impact in Baltimore.

## II. Baltimore’s Opportunity Youth

As the name implies, opportunity youth are seeking opportunity, and according to national studies, most of these young people remain optimistic about their futures, despite challenges they face growing up. Nationally, 73 percent of opportunity youth report they are very confident or hopeful they will be able to achieve their goals in life, including their education and getting a job.<sup>3</sup> They are also called opportunity youth because these young people represent untapped opportunity for businesses seeking talent.

### **The Baltimore Region Has More Than 42,000 Opportunity Youth, and Baltimore City Has One of the Highest Concentrations of Opportunity Youth in the Nation**

In 2013, the Baltimore-Towson Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)—an area spanning Baltimore City and Baltimore, Howard, Anne Arundel, Harford, and Carroll Counties—was home to approximately 42,600 opportunity youth, representing about 11.3 percent of the region’s youth aged 16 to 24.<sup>4</sup> Baltimore City has a much higher concentration of opportunity youth. More than one in five young people (20.4 percent), ages 16 to 24, in Baltimore City is disconnected from work and school. That figure gives Baltimore City one of the nation’s highest percentages of young people who are disconnected from work and school, with Memphis as the only city with a higher concentration, 21.6 percent. While the exact number of opportunity youth fluctuates from year to year, between 2006 and 2013, the number of Baltimore City youth ages 16-24 who were disconnected from school and work averaged nearly 18,000 young people.<sup>5</sup>

This figure is larger if it includes young people on the margins of disconnection. A portion of Baltimore’s youth are “under-attached” youth who go temporarily work or take part in education or training but then slip back into disconnection. While precise statistics are not available for Baltimore City, the number of under-attached youth is likely to be high. According to the Working Poor Families Project, a quarter (24.2 percent) of Maryland’s young people ages 18-24 were unemployed, marginally attached to the labor market, or employed part-time for economic reasons in 2014.<sup>6</sup> This equates to 302,472 Maryland young people with limited connections to careers.

# Profile of Baltimore City's Opportunity Youth

**17,910**  
Opportunity Youth

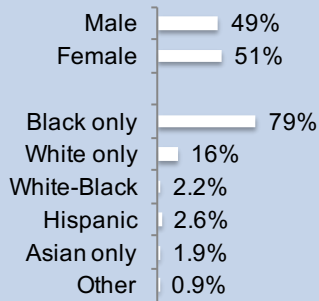
Baltimore City population 16 to 24 years, not participating in the labor market or are unemployed, and not enrolled in school, Average 2008-2012

Between 2006 and 2013, 18%-25% of all Baltimore City Youth Age 18-24 were Opportunity Youth

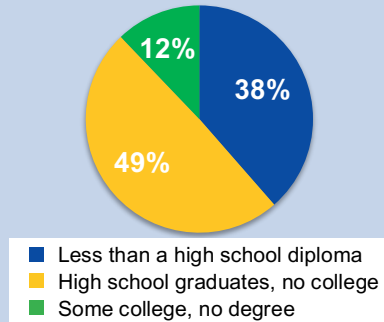


Source: American Community Survey

## Demographics \*



## Educational Attainment \*

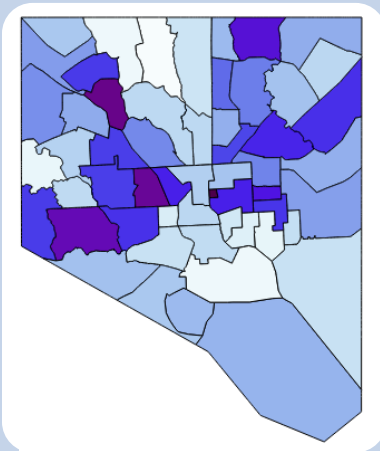


## Selected Barriers

OY Average Reading Level**	7th Grade
OY Average Math Level**	5th Grade
Referred to Juvenile Justice Services (FY2012)***	4,402
Convicted and Admitted to Prison (FY2013)****	631
Have Children*	3,751
Birthing Mothers Age 16-24†	3,667
Without H.S. diploma/GED	849
Not US Citizens*	526
Homeless (2010-2011)‡	593

Sources: \* Current Population Survey, \*\* YO! Baltimore Members at time of Registration, \*\*\*Kids Count, \*\*\*\*DPSCS, † Bureau of Maternal and Child Health (includes all birthing mothers) ‡ JHU Center for Adolescent Health, Bureau of Maternal and Child Health (incl. unaccompanied youth 16-24 on their own, apart from parents or guardians. Young people living in shelters and in transitional housing. †Youth without stable housing who are couch-surfing. Young people who were in foster care or juvenile justice custody, but have left the system without placement)

## Geography



## By Selected Neighborhoods

985 Unassigned – Jail	370 Northwood
835 Southern Park Heights	360 Clifton-Berea
Sandtown- Winchester/Harlem Park	350 Penn North/Reservoir Hill
720 Allendale/Irvington/S. Hilton	340 Howard Park/West Arlington
630 Loch Raven	315 Glen-Fallstaff
595 Madison/East End	310 Orangeville/East Highlandtown
550 Oldtown/Middle East	285 Dorchester/Ashburton
550 Upton/Druid Heights	280 Harford/Echodale
540 Belair-Edison	275 Claremont/Armistead
514 Cedonia/Frankford	275 The Waverlies
510 Southwest Baltimore	265 Brooklyn/Curtis Bay/Hawkins Point
500 Patterson Park North & East	250 Cherry hill
490 Pimlico/Arlington/Hilltop	250 Chinquapin Park/Belvedere
485 Beechfield/Ten Hills/West Hills	234 Morrell Park/Violetville
480 Greater Mondawmin	230 Laurenvill
480 Greater Rosemont	225 Greenmount East
460 Midway/Coldstream	215 Cross Country/Cheswolde
400 Greater Govans	215 Westport/Mount Winans/Lakeland

Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012, Custom Tabulation for the Family League of Baltimore; Analysis by Baltimore City Opportunity Youth Collaborative



## **A Complex Mix of Factors Contribute to Baltimore’s Number of Opportunity Youth**

National research has shown that a complex set of factors lead youth to leave school before graduating and disconnect from the labor force. In their own words, youth describe these factors to include absent parents, the impact of violence close to home, negative peer influences, and a sense of responsibility for others. Compared to youth currently enrolled in school, youth who are not enrolled report they are more likely to be abused (30%), be homeless (22%), or spend time in juvenile detention (18%).<sup>7</sup> Factors that influence the decision to leave school include lack of support and guidance from adults, incarceration, death in the family, health challenges in the family, gangs, school safety, school policies, peer influences, and becoming a parent. For many of these youth, life in a toxic environment with overwhelming life circumstances pushes completing school far down the priority list.<sup>8</sup>

**Structural racism** is one of several factors contributing to Baltimore City’s high opportunity youth population. Four out of five opportunity youth in Baltimore City are black and 84% are minorities.<sup>9,10</sup> Racial segregation in housing has been a persistent, long-term problem in Baltimore<sup>11</sup> and predominantly black neighborhoods in East Baltimore, West Baltimore, and the Cherry Hill area have seen chronically high rates poverty for decades (see Figure 2). Housing segregation is a result of local and federal policies that date back over a century including “redlining” in which the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) refused to insure mortgages in black neighborhoods.

**Structural poverty along racial and neighborhood lines** results in an environment where young people of color are cut off from opportunity. Young people in poor neighborhoods have few role models of adults attaining higher education or successful careers. This results in communities where young people of color have no personal social network of successful working adults. Connections with working adults are often instrumental in helping youth find entry-level job opportunities. Moreover, low-income neighborhoods often lack many resources due to reduced investment in schools, public resources including libraries and parks and as a result offer limited educational and job opportunities to residents.

**Poor basic math and basic reading skills** are another complicating factor that stands out for Baltimore’s opportunity youth. National studies often cite low basic math and reading skills among opportunity youth—often at or below the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. Youth Opportunity (YO!) Baltimore, Baltimore’s largest program serving opportunity youth, reports that the average reading level of their members is 7<sup>th</sup> grade and the average math level is 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the time that young people become members. Since this program serves youth ages 16-21, this is significantly below the expected grade level. Without basic skills, Baltimore’s opportunity youth face great difficulty completing a GED or high school diploma. This barrier affects a large portion of Baltimore City opportunity youth; 38% of youth ages 18 to 24 have neither a high school diploma nor a GED.<sup>12</sup>

**Contact with the criminal justice system** is a major factor distinguishing opportunity youth in Baltimore City. According to one study, Baltimore City African American youth experience “exorbitantly disproportionate” rates of arrest for drug charges when compared with white youth in Baltimore City.<sup>13</sup> Baltimore City has the highest percentage of the population in jail of any large city in the U.S.,<sup>14</sup> and nine out of 10 people in Baltimore jails (89%) are African American. In 2012 alone, more than 4,400 Baltimore City youth were referred to the juvenile justice system. Moreover, many youth come into contact with



the criminal justice system, leading to a criminal record that will become a major—and potentially lifelong—barrier to career opportunities.

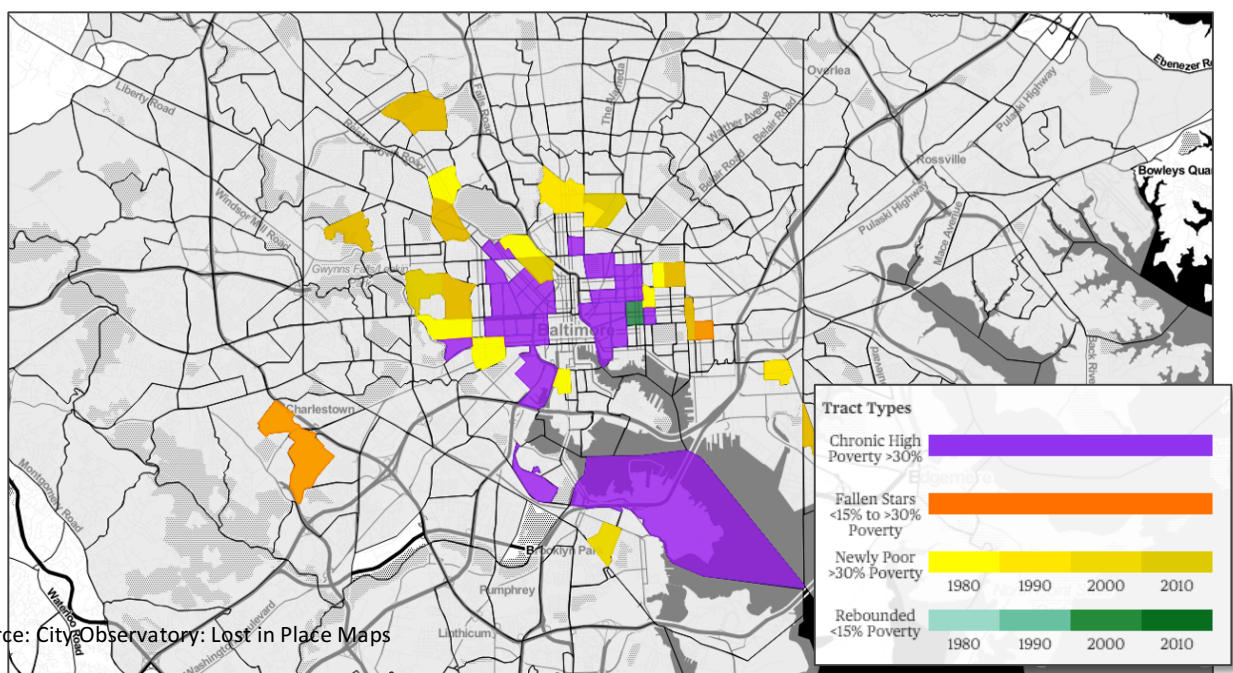
**Job opportunities are scarce.** The industrial composition of the Baltimore Region’s economy poses challenges because most jobs in the region fall into two categories: (1) high-skill, high-paying jobs that carry requirements for a bachelor’s degree or higher, and (2) low-skill, low-paying jobs with few opportunities for advancement. Research by the Opportunity Collaborative found that only a narrow band of jobs in the Baltimore Region pay a family-supporting wage of \$22 per hour while requiring less than a bachelor’s degree.<sup>15</sup> In 2013, youth unemployment in the Baltimore Region was 25% for youth aged 16 to 19 and 18% for youth ages 20 to 24. Even among working youth, most employed Maryland youth were earning low wages. In 2014, 70.9% of all employed Maryland youth ages 18 to 24 earned wages of \$12.96 per hour or less.<sup>16</sup> The region’s high youth unemployment and abundance of low-wage job opportunities reflect the limited career pathways available to young people hoping to progress into higher-paying jobs and sustainable careers.

In addition to these barriers, a variety of other factors also affect the job prospects of Baltimore’s opportunity youth. These barriers include:

- Long travel times for public transit to get to work, training, and childcare;
- Lack of access to affordable childcare;
- The urgent need to generate daily income for survival, which often limits individuals’ ability to pursue further training and education to improve job prospects; and
- Mental health issues and the need for emotional support from caring adults.

Factors that have contributed to Baltimore City’s high concentration of opportunity youth are complex, and effective solutions to help these youth succeed must take all of these factors into account.

**Figure 2: Changes in Percentage of Population Living Below the Poverty Line in Baltimore City Neighborhoods 1980-2010**



Source: City Observatory: Lost in Place Maps

### III. Baltimore's Infrastructure Serving Opportunity Youth

Baltimore has a long history of engagement with opportunity youth and there are many Baltimore organizations serving their distinct needs.

#### YO! Baltimore

**YO! Baltimore** is the largest organization in Baltimore that has an intensive focus on meeting the needs of Opportunity Youth. YO! Baltimore delivers services through a center in West Baltimore, operated by the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, and an East Baltimore center operated by the Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition (HEBCAC), one of the city's longest-serving community development organizations.

YO! Baltimore follows a youth development model that reconnects youth with work and/or school, while also providing services that youth need for success, such as connecting them to caring adults and providing access to transportation, childcare, mentoring, and personal development services. Service delivery is coordinated through over 150 partners, including several public agencies and a range of other nonprofits.

#### YO! Baltimore key partners include:

##### Government Partners

- The Mayor and City Council
- Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
- Baltimore City Police Department
- Maryland State Department of Juvenile Services
- Baltimore City Health Department
- Juvenile Courts Division

##### Social Services and Mental Health Partners

- Baltimore City Department of Social Services
- Safe and Sound
- Baltimore Homeless Services
- The Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health
- Baltimore Mental Health Associates
- The Stone Foundation

##### Education Partners

- Baltimore City Public Schools
- Baltimore City Community College
- Maryland State Department of Education

##### Workforce Development Partners

- Civic Works
- Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition (HEBCAC)
- Sinai Hospital

##### Other Key Partners

- Center for Law and Social Policy
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Baltimore City Family League
- The Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

YO! Baltimore sponsors programs for both in-school and out-of-school youth. Some of the key programs include:

- **Youth Opportunity (YO!) Academy**, which is designed to serve 120 students and provide career-related education, non-paid and paid work experience, and performance incentives. The academy is an alternative high school satellite in the Alternative Options Program (AOP) operated by Baltimore City Public Schools.
- **A Pre-Adjudication Coordinating and Training (PACT) Evenings Reporting Center** which serves up to 15 male youth, ages 14-17, who would otherwise be in juvenile detention with the Department of Juvenile Services. PACT helps these opportunity youth to address underlying issues that lead to anti-social or deviant behavior and a portion of the program includes career exploration, life skills and job readiness training.

### **YouthWorks Summer Jobs**

Baltimore City operates YouthWorks, a summer jobs program. In 2015, YouthWorks served more than 8,000 youth, ages 14 to 21, by placing them in summer work experiences with nonprofit and city and state government employers. Participants work in a variety of industries and gain basic workforce readiness and career-specific skills. According to city staff and other workforce development stakeholders, the program fills an important gap by giving youth an opportunity to gain workplace experience and also functions to reduce crime by offering youth a positive alternative summer experience. Stakeholders report that while the workplace experience is beneficial, it may not be the kind of experience that leads directly to a career in a field related to the summer work experience. In addition, while the program targets youth, it is unclear how accessible the YouthWorks program is to opportunity youth who are disconnected from work and school—or whether these youth are even considered part of the population served by the YouthWorks program.

### **The CONNECT: Baltimore City Opportunity Youth Collaborative**

The CONNECT, formerly known as the Baltimore City Opportunity Youth Collaborative (BCOYC), is a cross-sector collaborative of government agencies, service providers, educational institutions, employers, and non-profits engaged in a collective impact effort to connect or reconnect Baltimore's opportunity youth to the economic life of Baltimore by creating and enhancing pathways into post-secondary education, credentialing, and careers leading to family-supporting wages. The Ingoma Foundation and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Adolescent Development/Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence both serve as backbone organizations for the collaborative by coordinating the organizations and agencies that are in the collaborative.

The BCOYC has received funding from the Aspen Institute to plan and implement system-level changes related to opportunity youth, with the intention of creating collective impact strategies that have better outcomes. A recent survey of workforce and social services organizations performed by The CONNECT found that more than 35 organizations in Baltimore provide workforce development, career readiness skills, and wrap-around support services for opportunity youth (see list on page 12). Collectively, YO! Baltimore, YouthWorks, and Baltimore's community-based organizations represent a significant number of organizations that are addressing opportunity youth needs.

## IV. Making Connections to Careers for Opportunity Youth

A 2012 study of collective community impact for opportunity youth<sup>17</sup> by Foundation Strategy Group (FSG) found that opportunity youth need four things to attain education and career success: re-engagement, educational momentum, connection to careers, and youth development services.

Baltimore has built significant infrastructure that provides for re-engagement, educational momentum, and youth development. While more can be done in each of these areas, the third area—connection to careers—is potentially the area where Baltimore’s youth employment system serving opportunity youth has the greatest opportunity to improve.

### What Works for Connecting Opportunity Youth with Careers

The National Roadmap for Opportunity Youth (Civic Enterprises, 2012) is one of the most comprehensive documents identifying strategies for connecting opportunity youth with school and work. The roadmap reports that opportunity youth need many of the same services and supports that are needed by adults, such as career navigation, remedial basic education, college preparation, coaching, mentorship, wraparound supports, and access to opportunities to gain relevant work experience. But in addition to these services, opportunity youth need different infrastructure than adults in order to succeed. Because of their developmental stage, youth often lack the capacity for regulating emotions and controlling impulses; they need help to strengthen self-management and perseverance and develop better decision-making skills. Opportunity youth also need positive learning and work experiences, within a youth-friendly system that clearly communicates that they are valued and provides the right mix of resources and networks to support their success.

Based on a review of the National Roadmap for Opportunity Youth and similar literature, coupled with recent interviews with some of the nation’s leading workforce development organizations, several best practices have been identified that improve labor force attachment and career development among opportunity youth.

#### What Opportunity Youth Need to Attain Education and Career Success

**Re-engagement:** Identifying youth who have been disconnected from education and careers on a local level, understanding the specific needs of the population, and closely with youth to connect them to programs and supports that help them surmount their individual challenges.

**Educational Momentum:** Helping youth reach early and frequent education milestones in addition to attaining long-term education goals, such as completing a high school degree, GED, and postsecondary credential or degree.

**Connection to Career:** Connecting youth with relevant work experiences to help them gain the credentials and connections that will facilitate their entry into family-supporting careers.

**Youth Development:** Developing the leadership skills and addressing the social and emotional needs of youth to help them become engaged and productive members of their communities.

Source: FSG

## What Works: Best Practices in Connecting Opportunity Youth to Careers



### Best Practices in Connections to Careers for both Youth and Adults

- (1) Industry-based workforce development:** These programs are built around the human resource needs of an industry or sector. The programs focus on the occupational skills that are needed for specific job classifications that are in demand by the program’s employers. Many programs combine technical training and work experience that lead directly to entry-level jobs that have opportunity for advancement within the same industry. Youth-oriented industry-based workforce organizations serve two clients—employers and youth—and are able to sell and deliver a compelling value proposition to employers while also implementing training that meets the needs of opportunity youth. Employers play a leading role in these programs. For instance, Starbucks and 16 other large employers in the U.S. recently launched the 100,000 Opportunities Initiative,<sup>18</sup> which has a goal of being the nation’s largest employer-led coalition committed to creating pathways to meaningful employment for at least 100,000 opportunity youth ages 16 to 24 who face systematic barriers to jobs and education. Employer-led coalitions like the 100,000 Opportunities Initiative use a combination of apprenticeships, internships, training programs, and full-time and part-time jobs to engage youth, implementing these through existing local community-based workforce development organizations.
- (2) Career Pathways Approaches:** Career Pathways are “a well-articulated sequence of quality education and training offerings and supportive services that enable educationally underprepared youth and adults to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in a given industry sector or occupation.”<sup>19</sup> The career pathway approach reorients existing education and workforce services from a myriad of disconnected programs to a structure that

focuses on the individuals in need of education and training and their career paths, and it provides clear transitions from step to step coupled with strong supports that ensure youth have access to transportation, professional attire, and workforce professionalism training that prepare and enable them to succeed at work.

- (3) Contextualized and Accelerated Learning that Links Basic Education with College Credit and Career Training:** Programs like the Maryland Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (MI-BEST) quickly boost students' literacy and work skills so that students can earn credentials, get living-wage jobs, and put their talents to work for employers. MI-BEST uses the proven I-BEST model that pairs two instructors in the classroom—one to teach professional/technical or academic content and the other to teach basic skills in reading, math, writing or English language—so students can move more quickly through school and into jobs. As students progress through the program, they learn basic skills in real-world scenarios offered by the college and career part of the curriculum. I-BEST challenges the traditional notion that students must complete basic education before they can start on a college or career pathway – an approach that often discourages students because it takes extended time—while giving participants the opportunity to start earning college credits immediately. The MI-BEST training courses are driven by employer demand with assured employment available at many sites.<sup>20</sup>
- (4) Access to Work Experience:** Relevant work experience is a requirement for most jobs and successful programs incorporate on-the-job work experience in several ways. Some programs use simulated work environments in which new students are learning skills in a format similar to a real-world work environment through on-the-job training from more experienced students and supervisors. Other programs provide relevant work experience through internships or apprenticeships. For instance, Year Up, a new workforce development program now operating in Baltimore, places workers in a six-month paid internship following completion of six months of technical training. The work experience helps students to more successfully transition from training into attachment to the labor force.



## Best Practices in Connections to Careers, Specifically for Opportunity Youth

- (1) Re-engagement:** Youth need to know that they are valued and that there are opportunities and resources available to help them to reconnect to school, work, or both.
- (2) Earn and Learn:** For many opportunity youth, the immediate need to make money through legitimate work or other means is essential for daily survival. As a result, many opportunity youth are unable to complete a training program—even a free program—because of the lost income. Several of the nation’s model programs for opportunity youth offer a “earn and learn” approach in which youth earn a stipend during their training to meet their basic needs. For opportunity youth who are parents or must contribute to family incomes, earn and learn approaches provide a channel through which they can maintain financial stability while making progress toward a family-supporting career.
- (3) Access-Granting Networks:** Opportunity youth often grow up in communities with few role models of working adults who have successful careers. As a result, these youth have limited connections into the job market, limited opportunities for internships and entry-level positions, and limited awareness of how to begin and sustain a career. Successful programs provide internships, apprenticeships, mentoring programs, and employer engagement strategies, all with the intention of helping opportunity youth connect to resources that can meet their needs, which change as they progress through training and careers.
- (4) Support from Caring Adults:** As opportunity youth make progress in career development, they often face pressures and require emotional support and affirmation to continue to make progress.
- (5) Youth Involvement and Peer-to-Peer Mentoring:** Opportunity youth report the benefits of having peer mentoring and connections with other opportunity youth who are further along the career development pipeline. Youth involvement—both in mentoring and in program design—is a hallmark of effective programs.
- (6) Interventions to Change Negative Perceptions of Opportunity Youth:** As shown in the Starbucks-led 100,000 Opportunities Initiative, employers’ attitudes toward opportunity youth can mean the difference between seeing these young people as an untapped asset or a high-cost burden. Employers who understand the untapped potential in opportunity youth are better equipped and motivated to engage them and create youth-friendly career paths that lead to a stronger bottom line. By comparison, employers with limited positive experiences with young, low-income youth may be reluctant to offer them employment, even if the youth has completed a high-quality training program and attained workforce readiness skills. Unconscious negative biases against opportunity youth can lead to unequal access to the labor market for these youth, and because



the majority of Baltimore’s opportunity youth are Black, these biases can perpetuate racial group inequity. Successful career programs for opportunity youth positively shape employers’ perceptions of opportunity youth and alert employers to the opportunity they represent. They invite employers to engage opportunity youth in multiple ways by providing tools to change hiring and advancement practices and help employers engage and retain youth as employees.

- (7) System-wide data collection:** A unified data system that is used by all service providers can help regional networks of service providers to better track and understand the gaps in services to youth—as well as identify strategic areas for improvement. The Unified Data System Pilot Program in New Orleans connects community colleges, workforce development organizations, social support service providers, and schools serving opportunity youth. It helps programs to give youth “warm hand-off” referrals to other service providers based on each youth’s individual circumstances and barriers, while matching the young person to useful services based on his or her readiness. The “warm hand-off” entails making personal connections for the youth with other service providers and following up with the partner organization (and youth) to ensure the connection is made.
  
- (8) Coordination of Services for Collective Impact:** One challenge for serving opportunity youth is to expand a program’s reach. Regions improve the effectiveness of individual programs serving opportunity youth by reducing duplication of services, increasing the number of entry-points through which opportunity youth can gain access to services, and braiding multiple different resources and funding sources together into comprehensive solutions. Regions that have a powerful central coordination body are able to attain better collective impact of member organizations for more opportunity youth.

## V. Recommendations for Baltimore to Increase Connections to Careers for Opportunity Youth

Based on a review of best practices and an environmental scan of Baltimore’s existing system, the following recommendations are made to improve and strengthen the collective impact of the system serving Baltimore’s opportunity youth.

### 1. Expand Baltimore’s Infrastructure for Industry-Based Workforce Development to Serve Opportunity Youth

Baltimore’s industry-based workforce development programs are uniquely suited to provide the combination of training and experience workers need to begin careers, and sector-based programs have been shown to have better and longer-lasting outcomes, compared to other approaches to workforce development.<sup>21</sup>

Interviews with Baltimore area organizations revealed that there are few career-training programs that focus *exclusively* on the needs of opportunity youth. Indications are that a small percentage of the clients for many of Baltimore’s leading industry-based workforce development programs are youth and a review of a subset of workforce development programs by the Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative found that only 8% of individuals enrolling in funded industry-based workforce development programs between 2007 and 2014 were youth (See Table 1). Furthermore, it is unclear how many of the youth served by industry-based workforce development programs are actually disconnected from both work and school. Regardless, the number of youth served by these programs is too small to effectively address even a fraction of Baltimore’s large population of opportunity youth.

Table 1: Youth Served by Selected Workforce Development Organizations 2007-2014 Cumulative, Unless Otherwise Noted

Organization	Youth	Total Participants	Youth % of Total
Civic Works/ Baltimore Center for Green Careers (data are for one year)	26	162	16%
Saint Vincent De Paul/ Next Course (data are for two years)	29	127	23%
JumpStart/ Job Opportunities Task Force	42	594	7%
BioStart & Lab Associates/ BioTechnical Institute of Maryland	40	337	12%
Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Health Care	15	747	2%
Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Health Care/EARN (one year)	20	171	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>2138</b>	<b>8%</b>

Source: Baltimore Workforce Funder’s Collaborative Analysis of annual reporting to the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. Note: These data are not inclusive of all programs partner organizations might operate that involve young people -- only those directly supported by the Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative.

There are several likely reasons for the low level of youth and opportunity youth served in industry-based workforce development.

- Many industry-based programs are not readily accessible to opportunity youth due to prescreening criteria that align programs with employer hiring requirements and practices. Programs may require a minimum of a high school diploma to enter the program (effectively disqualifying one in five Baltimore opportunity youth), or they may require a math or reading pre-screening exam, which can disqualify more youth, even those who have a high school diploma. While some programs offer skills-bridging programs to help young people upgrade their basic reading and math skills, there is not a robust contextualized basic-skills-upgrading component integrated into the majority of these programs.
- Some of Baltimore’s industry-based workforce programs are not designed to incorporate recognized best practices for workforce development among opportunity youth, such as:
  - providing intensive youth-oriented support services
  - connecting youth to caring and supporting adults
  - providing contextual learning opportunities that combine basic math and reading education with career training
  - providing financial stipends that enable youth to meet their immediate needs while participating in the program
- Some program managers of industry-based workforce development programs who were interviewed for this study reported that their programs do not intentionally target youth – or opportunity youth - for recruitment.
- Finally, there are relatively few industry-based workforce development programs in Baltimore (see Table 2) and their collective capacity to serve opportunity youth is limited (see youth totals in Table 1). More can be done to increase the number of youth and opportunity youth entering and completing these programs.

**Table 2: Baltimore's Sector-Based Workforce Development Programs Serving Baltimore's Six Opportunity Industries**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Job Training Programs</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	Jane Adams Resource Corporation (JARC)	Fundamentals of Manufacturing, CNC Fast Track, Welding Fast Track
	Humanium	Maryland Offshore Wind Strategic Industry Partnership
<b>Construction</b>	Job Opportunities Task Force	Project JumpStart
	Civic Works' Baltimore Center for Green Careers	Energy Retrofit Training Program, Brownfields Remediation Training Program
	Group Ministries Baltimore CDC	Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program
	YouthBuild /Baltimore Housing	YouthBuild
<b>Healthcare &amp; BioScience</b>	Towson University Division of Innovation and Applied Research	BIM Technology for Incumbent Workers in the Construction Industry
	Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare	1st Span Training Program, Pre-Allied Health Bridge Program, BACH Fellows Program
	Caroline Center	CAN/GNA Program, Pharmacy Technician Program
	St. Vincent de Paul	Phlebotomy Technician
	Humanim	Start on Success (SOS)
<b>IT/ Cybersecurity</b>	BioTechnical Institute of Maryland	BTI Laboratory Associates Program, High School Summer Program, BioSciConcepts Workshops
	Year Up!	Year Up!
	UMBC Training Centers	Cybersecurity Academy
	Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation	Central Maryland Cyber/IT Consortium
	Community College of Baltimore County	Health Information Technology Strategic Industry Partnership
	Howard County Community College	m-Health Focused Health Tech SIP
	<b>Transportation and Logistics</b>	Maryland New Directions
Marine Trade Association of Maryland		Marine Trades Industry Partnership

Baltimore's industry-based workforce development organizations that primarily serve adult clients will need to make changes to their programs if they are going to effectively serve opportunity youth. Two case studies were identified through interviews with industry-based organizations that effectively serve opportunity youth: Per Scholas, which undertook significant changes in their organization to intentionally increase the number of opportunity youth who are able to access their program, and Year Up. Year Up is a New-York based organization that is now operating in Baltimore, offering students a one-year training and internship program.

**Per Scholas Example:  
Improving Opportunity Youth Access to Industry-Based Training Programs**

Bronx-based IT training program, Per Scholas, wanted to increase the number of youth ages 18-24 who participate in their program. Through a self-assessment, the organization identified that more than 500 youth were being screened out of their program because they lacked the English language and numeracy skills needed for a career in networking. They also found that program outcomes for youth were below that of adults: youth had a lower graduation rate, lower placement rate, and earned lower wages than adults. To increase matriculation and improve outcomes, Per Scholas made several changes to their program:

- ✓ **They invited an outside organization to perform a program evaluation** to assess how Per Scholas could become more youth-friendly.
- ✓ **They adjusted and increased the ways in which they perform outreach and target recruitment of youth through referrals.**
- ✓ **They created a YouthBridge boot camp** designed to provide youth who meet the other screening criteria for the program (such as curiosity and ability for self-directed independent learning) an opportunity to upgrade their basic English and math skills.
- ✓ **They added a youth-oriented case manager to their staff.** The case manager was equipped to help youth navigate issues with housing, pressures from peers, family problems, child care for young children, and other factors that became barriers to completion and success.
- ✓ **They changed the ways they support youth enrolled and after graduation:** This included much more proactive “prodding” of youth to encourage and motivate them to perform in the program, more preparation for interviews, more simulations, and more intensive support that is appropriate to the level of brain development of youth.
- ✓ **They introduced youth-to-youth peer mentoring** from youth that had completed a year of training and work experience.

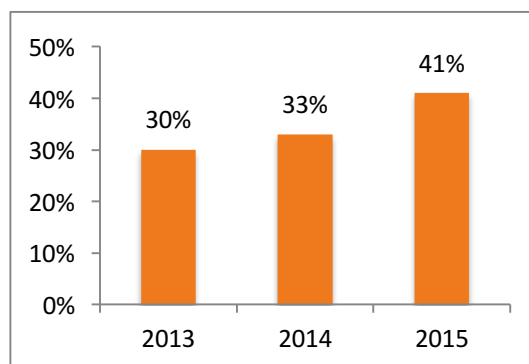
**Table 3: Per Scholas Outcomes for Youth**

Youth Age 18-24	CY 2013-2014
<b>Enrolled</b>	258
<b>Graduated</b>	214 (83%)
<b>Placed*</b>	147 (57% of enrollees)
<b>Average Wage</b>	\$15.07

\*Expected to reach 70%. 2014 Placement was underway at the time of measurement.

Source: 2014 Highlights – Young Adults at Per Scholas

**Figure B: Percent of Enrollees Who are Youth Ages 18-24**



## **Year Up: Best Practices in Industry-Based Workforce Development for Opportunity Youth**

Year Up is a one-year, intensive training program that provides low-income young adults, ages 18-24, with a combination of hands-on skill development, college credits, corporate internships, and support. The first six months of the program focus on intensive technical training coupled with professional training to deliver workforce readiness skills; the latter six months are spent in a corporate internship with an employer that provides real-world experience.

**The program's success is rooted in a dual-customer approach meeting the needs of both employers and workers.** For employers, Year Up delivers a diverse talent pipeline of skilled workers. (For one employer, Year Up adds training in COBOL, a legacy computing language that the employer needs and cannot find in the other pools of entry-level IT talent). Employers hosting interns make a \$24,000 contribution to Year Up per intern. That investment provides employers with:

- ✓ Access to a pipeline of motivated, skilled workers who have the technical proficiency the employer needs, and who are prepared to work in a professional environment.
- ✓ Access to Year Up to quickly address any problems that may come up.

For young adults, Year Up provides the benefits of training and experience, providing students with direct placement in an internship to gain essential experience, while concurrently allowing young people to earn college credits. Year Up recognizes that the lack of a college degree will be a barrier for most young people at some point in their careers. Year Up therefore encourages young adults to continue working on their associate's and bachelor's degrees on a part-time basis while continuing to work. In addition to skills training and internships, Year Up addresses participants' needs through a "high expectations, high support" model. To help students meet the expectations placed on them, Year Up provides support that includes:

- ✓ Peer support that comes from participation in a 40-person learning community,
- ✓ An advisor who acts as an advocate for the student,
- ✓ Professional mentors and counselors,
- ✓ Access to professional work networks to support career development and advancement,
- ✓ Student services that connect students with a set of necessary wrap-around support services such as support for housing, child care, transportation, food stamps, and other supports provided by partner organizations,
- ✓ An educational stipend that helps the young adults "earn while they learn."

Following their time at Year Up, most students continue to work full-time and work on completion of a college degree. Eighty-five percent of Year Up graduates are employed or attending college full-time within four months of graduating from the program. Year Up uses Salesforce to track participants from when they are admissions applicants to after they become alumni. Year Up has also conducted a longitudinal follow-up survey to track long-term progress of graduates as they continue their education and careers, along with random assignment trials to confirm the program's effectiveness.

The graduation rate of Baltimore's Year-Up participants is 68%, and 81% of Baltimore graduates are employed or in school full-time four months following graduation. The average wage earned by graduates is \$14.46 and the conversion rate of internships to post-internship hires is 26%.

## **2. Build On Existing Youth Career-Training Resources to Better Serve Opportunity Youth**

Baltimore has several career-oriented programs that serve youth, but are not specifically designed around the needs of opportunity youth. The two largest programs by number of youth served are:

- (1) The Maryland Career and Technology Education program that served 8,488 students in Baltimore City in 2013-14, through career training delivered through high schools, and
- (2) YouthWorks summer jobs program that employed more than 8,000 youth in summer jobs in summer of 2015, providing youth with workforce experience.

### **Making the Maryland Career and Technology Education Program Accessible to Opportunity Youth**

The Baltimore City Public School System offers youth-specific industry-based workforce training through the Maryland Career and Technology Education (CTE) Program, which had enrollment of 8,488 high school students in 2013-14.<sup>22</sup> While career outcomes for CTE-enrolled students are not tracked specifically by the program (and its career effectiveness is therefore unclear), the program serves a large number of students with a focus on industry-specific career training. The district has also implemented services designed to re-engage underperforming and out-of-school youth through the Alternative Options Program (AOP), which is expected to serve 3,833 youth in 2015-16.<sup>23</sup> The AOP is comprised of several programs to meet the educational and re-engagement needs of opportunity youth. These two programs independently serve the needs of students, but it is unclear how many students served through AOP actually enter a CTE program, or otherwise receive the training and support needed to begin a career.



Table 4: Maryland CTE Programs

Industry Field	Career Programs	Schools Offering Programs in 2014
Arts, Media, and Communication	Interactive Media Production (IMP), and Graphic Communications (PrintED)	10
Business Management and Finance	NAF Academy of Finance, and Business Management & Finance (BMF)	8
Construction and Development	Construction Trades (NCCER), Construction Design & Management (CDM), and Construction Maintenance (NCCER)	4
Consumer Services, Hospitality and Tourism	Lodging Management Program (LMP), Careers in Cosmetology, Culinary Arts (ACF), and Food and Beverage Management (ProStart)	5
Environmental, Agriculture & Natural Resources	Certified Professional Horticulturist (CPH), Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE), and Environmental Studies Natural Resources	2
Health and Biosciences	Academy of Health Professions, and Biomedical Sciences (PLTW)	6
Human Resource Services	Fire Fighter and Emergency Medical Technician (MFRI), Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM), and Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness	12
Information Technology	IT Computer Science, IT Networking Academy (Cisco), and IT Database (Oracle) Academy	14
Manufacturing, Engineering, and Technology	Project Lead The Way Pre-Engineering (PLTW), and National Institute of Metalworking Skills	8
Transportation Technologies	Automotive Technician, Autobody/Collision Repair Technician, and Medium/Heavy Truck Technician (Diesel)	2

Source: Maryland CTE

CTE is comprised of a broad spectrum of more than 25 career-training programs that are available to high school youth (Table 4). These programs build technical and academic skills and encourage students to explore and prepare for their future studies and employment in a way that complements their interests. Through most CTE programs, students can earn early college credit and/or industry certifications. The Alternative Options Programs (AOP) provides educational services in alternative settings to students designated at-risk and/or facing challenging circumstances. Baltimore City Public Schools has four models for AOP:

1. **Stand-Alone Sites:** In FY 2015-16 there will be three stand-alone sites that will serve middle and high school students who are not meeting success in a traditional academic setting in an effort to assist them in preparing for college, career, and life goals.
2. **Push-In Programs:** There will be five push-In programs that will serve up to 200 students. Push-In programs offer alternative option services in the schools where over-aged and under-credited

students currently attend to capitalize on the connection that the students have with the school community.

3. **Transitional Programs:** There will be four transitional programs that will serve the unique needs of students. Among these is a Re-engagement Center that will serve as the intake and assessment hub for all students entering the AOP system and will make recommendations on educational options that will best support student success.
4. **Co-Locations:** In partnership with the Mayor’s Office, there will be two co-located programs that will provide an instructional focus on academic acceleration, as well as career exploration and development.

The CTE program incorporates many elements of an industry-based workforce development program, but as a stand-alone program it lacks elements that would make it an effective resource for youth who must earn immediate income.

- While the CTE programs are, in theory, accessible to out-of-school youth who reconnect and enroll in classes, interviews reveal that more would need to be done to provide an effective Career Pathways approach that provides all the services needed for opportunity youth to succeed. Necessary “wrap-around” support services include job-readiness preparation, transportation resources, mental health and emotional support services that adequately address the pressures placed on many opportunity youth, peer-to-peer support, child care services (for youth who are parents), encouragement and support from caring adults, and access to a network of professionals in their field who can support them through career development.
- CTE educators, coordinators, and program managers also report that it is difficult for them to engage employers. Typically the instructor is expected to teach classes throughout the workday, leaving little time to engage with employers. In addition many of the instructors report that they feel unprepared and unequipped to engage employers, lacking the support and resources to do so effectively. Without a dual-client approach to serve the specific needs of opportunity youth and identified employers, there are limited opportunities to place students into internships, part-time jobs, or permanent full-time jobs that provide work experience and a clear pathway into a career.
- Earn-and-learn options are not available in Maryland’s CTE programs. To access these programs, opportunity youth may need income support and access to other benefits to meet basic needs.

There are several ways that Maryland’s CTE programs can become more accessible and supportive of opportunity youth. These could include:

- Partnership with adult-oriented industry-based training programs that have strong relationships with employers
- Stronger partnerships with existing professional networks, unions, and industry organizations to provide better access to internships and other opportunities for on-the-job experience
- Better alignment with the YouthWorks summer jobs program, with the goal to place students in summer employment that uses skills learned during the school year
- Stronger connections between the AOP and CTE programs to facilitate providing the types of support youth need to be successful, together with job training

## Linking the YouthWorks Program with Industry-Based Workforce Development

YouthWorks provides youth with work experience in a professional environment, serving 8,000 youth in Baltimore City in 2015. Community support for the program is high, with students placed in more than 700 work sites, including 150 private employers who keep kids engaged in positive work experiences during the summer and allowing them to earn an income. The cost of the program is approximately \$10 million per year. While the program has career benefits, is not strongly linked with career training and it is unclear how many of Baltimore's opportunity youth are engaged in the program (most participating youth are enrolled in school).

There are several opportunities to extend the positive impacts of YouthWorks to opportunity youth. These could include:

- Stronger coordination between the AOP and CTE programs to ensure that youth in alternative options are able to get career training in a field that interests them, coupled with experience through a summer job placement in the same field.
- A portion of the budget for YouthWorks summer internships could be redirected toward career training for opportunity youth. This might be accomplished by engaging the existing industry-based workforce development organizations in Baltimore and asking them to develop summer training programs that lead to job placements in the Fall. By encouraging the development of summer training for opportunity youth, Baltimore can help to build capacity within industry-based workforce development organizations to better serve this population year-round.

### 3. Build System-Wide Interventions to Address Basic Math and Reading Deficiencies

Poor basic math and reading skills stand out as a major barrier for many Baltimore opportunity youth. Baltimore's system serving opportunity youth must place a greater emphasis on addressing these deficiencies if youth are going to progress into more highly skilled careers. Opportunities to improve basic skills include:

- **Introducing more contextual learning approaches into industry-based training, following the MI-BEST model.** The construction pre-apprenticeship training program operated by JumpStart is an example of skills upgrading that provides contextual basic skills training (e.g. applying fractions in construction). Other industry-based training programs can develop similar bridging programs or alternative training approaches that combine instruction in basic skills with technical skills training.
- **Realigning programs to add more opportunities for basic math and reading skills upgrading or completion of a GED or pre-GED program.** For example, YouthWorks provides youth with a positive work experience. The goals of the program could be expanded, however, to address basic education as well, by providing students with opportunities over the summer to complete pre-GED or GED classes.

#### 4. Engage More Employers and Proactively Improve Perceptions of Opportunity Youth

Unfortunately, many employers do not view opportunity youth as a great source of talent for meeting their hiring needs. At a national level, some organizations are trying to change those negative perceptions through approaches such as the “Grads of Life” campaign.

The “Grads of Life” campaign was developed by the Ad Council, in partnership with Year Up, the Employment Pathways Project, ConPRmetidos, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, New Options Project, and Opportunity Nation to raise awareness and change employers’ perceptions of opportunity youth. The effort includes a series of print, broadcast, radio, outdoor, and web public service ads that seek to convince employers to adopt proven Career Pathways models. The campaign raises awareness that while many employers are open to the concept of alternative hiring practices, the current system of candidate screening is tailored toward traditional applicants with a four-year university degree. The campaign positions Career Pathways programs that include mentoring, school-to-work programs, internships, and other hiring opportunities, as widely recognized and used by competitive, best-practice employers to hire previously overlooked candidates.

At a program level, organizations that are successful in gaining high graduate placement rates often actively manage employer perceptions of opportunity youth and create multiple ways for employers to be involved in their programs. The intention of these approaches is to shift the focus away from helping low-income youth and toward solving business problems. Some of the strategies employed include:

- ✓ Creating and articulating a strong value proposition for employers; this includes benefits like lower training and onboarding costs, longer worker retention, and consistent streams of workers for recruiting talent,
- ✓ Recruitment of an adequate number of large employers to their board of directors,
- ✓ Creating extensive volunteer opportunities for employers such as daily lunch-and-learns that expose more people in the workplace to opportunity youth,
- ✓ Implementing employer feedback loops to identify and proactively address any problems with employees,
- ✓ Addressing unconscious bias, head-on, by ensuring that employers become comfortable with the skills and credentials of program graduates, and
- ✓ Communicating stories of positive business outcomes for employers who hire opportunity youth.

#### 5. Build System-Wide Data Collection and Data Sharing Capacity

According to the White House Council study, Community Solutions to Opportunity Youth, one of the four core principles of “needle-moving” community collaboratives, is the use of shared data to set the agenda and improve over time. Data provides a basis for collaboration and helps to facilitate the alignment of organizations that must work together closely to serve all needs of opportunity youth.

Information from a unified database system serving opportunity youth could potentially be linked to data in the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS), which contains education and workforce data on each student in the state. The MLDS manages and analyzes this data to determine how students are performing

and to what extent they are prepared for higher education and the workforce. Work on the MLDS began in 2010 and is still under development, but as data becomes available, it can be a powerful tool for understanding Baltimore’s opportunity youth.

**6. Improve Funding for Opportunity Youth by Adding to Existing Financial Resources and Braiding Different Funding Streams for Increased Impact**

Effective workforce development suited to the needs of opportunity youth typically requires higher funding per participant than workforce development for adults or youth that come from more supportive backgrounds. For services funded through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), workforce development services to youth cost 65% more per participant, when compared to services for adults (Table 5). In addition, outcomes for youth are typically lower than they are for adults, due to the complex set of barriers youth face.

**Table 5: Costs and Participants in WIA Workforce Development: Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Cost Per Participant</b>	<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>Placement Rate*</b>
<b>Adults</b>	\$2,237	3,831	80.3%
<b>Displaced Workers</b>	\$2,267	4,924	85.1%
<b>Youth</b>	<b>\$3,784</b>	<b>2,669</b>	<b>77.2%</b>

Source: DLLR WIA Annual Report 2013; \*Placement reflects entrance into employment for adults and dislocated workers and placement in employment or education for youth.

Table 6: Average Cost Per Participant, Selected Programs

Program	Cost Per Participant
<b>Youth-Friendly Industry-Based Workforce Development</b>	
Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Training (national average) - Low	\$3,500
Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Training (national average) - High	\$5,000
Baltimore Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Pipeline *	\$8,000
Per Scholas	\$7,000
Year Up	\$25,000
<b>High School-Based Career and Technical Education Programs</b>	
Career Academies (national average) **	\$675
WIA Youth Program ***	\$3,784
Baltimore City Schools Alternative Options Programs (AOP) and Schools	\$3,108
<b>Youth-Oriented Workforce Development</b>	
YouthWorks	\$1,300
Baltimore City Schools Career and Technical Education (CTE) ****	\$175

Source: Data collected from multiple reports; calculation by the author.<sup>24</sup> \*This project has a higher cost per student as it focuses strongly on barrier removal and retention. \*\*Career Academies are small high schools that combine vocational/technical training with a focus on internships and work experience, with the goal of improving students' job prospects. \*\*\*The WIA Youth Program provides employment and education services to eligible low-income youth, ages 14 to 21, who face barriers to employment. Service strategies, developed by Maryland's Local Workforce Investment Boards, prepare youth for employment and/or post-secondary education through strong linkages between academic and occupational learning. The program serves youth with disabilities, basic literacy skills deficiencies, school dropouts, pregnant or parenting, and homeless youth as well as others who may require additional assistance to complete an educational program or enter employment. One-half of youth participants are out-of-school youth. \*\*\*\* Additional cost for CTE Education.

Table 6 outlines some of the differences in costs per participant for different types of programs. The data presented in the table is not comprehensive and is not designed to inform policy decisions, but it illustrates some of the differences in the costs of different programs serving opportunity youth.

- For industry-based programs like Per Scholas and Year Up - which have been designed to meet the needs of opportunity youth - the cost per participant is approximately \$7,000 and \$25,000 respectively. While Year Up depends on employers for most of their program funding, the cost per participant is high and the total number of youth served is lower than in other large programs.
- The cost per participant for programs offered through Baltimore City Schools is comparatively low and these programs have a larger number of students enrolled. The cost per participant in the Alternative Options program is \$3,108 and the incremental cost for the CTE program is low – only \$175 per student. These programs have recognized problems, however, such as poor connections with employers, and the programs are not designed to provide a true Career Pathways approach

that serves opportunity youth. Without career outcomes data, it is unclear how effective these programs are for connecting youth – or opportunity youth – to careers.

- YouthWorks is able to serve a very large number of youth, in part because of its comparatively low cost per participant (about \$1,300). However, changes to this program to reallocate a portion of funds toward training for opportunity youth, could result in higher per-participant costs and fewer youth served.

A cost-benefit analysis of different models of opportunity youth workforce development is beyond the scope of this report, but it will be important that stakeholders understand the costs and outcomes of different models. Better data on these costs will be needed in order to optimize the deployment of resources, and reallocate them where warranted.

### Changes in Federal Legislation (WIOA) Will Likely Channel an Additional \$3 Million in Funding to Industry-Based Programs Serving Opportunity Youth

Baltimore industry-led training has an opportunity to leverage new federal financial resources that will become available through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) to expand the scope of industry-based training and workforce development serving opportunity youth. WIOA, which will replace the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), will supply the majority of Maryland’s workforce development financial resources in the future and is specifically designed to ensure that more resources reach opportunity youth. In 2013, WIA funds provided nearly \$30 million in workforce development resources to Maryland. More than a third of Maryland’s 2013 WIA expenditures were for youth (\$10 million), and under WIA rules, 45% of funds had to be expended on opportunity youth (See Table 7). Under the new WIOA legislation, 75% of state and local youth dollars must now go to opportunity youth; this shift in rules could result in \$3 million in additional funding channeled to serve Maryland’s opportunity youth. While this is not a huge amount of resources by workforce development standards, it is a large amount to be targeted directly for opportunity youth.

Table 7: Maryland WIA Expenditures by Funding Stream, 2013

	Expenditures	Share
Adult	\$8,570,680	29%
Dislocated Worker	\$11,163,237	37%
Youth	<b>\$10,099,990</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$29,833,907</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Maryland WIA Annual Report, 2013

Several features of WIOA funding will favor development or expansion of industry-based workforce development specifically serving opportunity youth. In particular, WIOA will:

- **Encourage integrated education and training**, as well as the implementation of Career Pathways approaches to workforce development that are commonly used in tandem with industry-based workforce development.
- **Promote on-the-job experience for youth**, with a requirement that at least 20% of Youth Formula Funds be spent on paid and unpaid work experiences.



- **Allow youth up to age 24 to receive youth services** (previously, services were only available to youth ages 16 to 21).
- **Allow more youth to receive services** (youth no longer have to prove that they come from a low-income household to receive services; instead, youth living in a low-income neighborhood are eligible to receive services).
- **Expands education and training options** by allowing youth to immediately start on a formal career-training program, rather than to first have to participate in programs for which they already have skills.<sup>25</sup>

Changes can be implemented now that will position Baltimore’s industry-based workforce development organizations to take advantage of these funds and deploy them effectively to serve more opportunity youth. To prepare, Baltimore can:

- **Expand existing industry-based programs—or create new ones—that target youth and opportunity youth.** Because WIOA encourages more career-training opportunities and requires states to report how much youth-based funding they are spending on career and training services (and how many opportunity youth are served) industry-based workforce development programs are well positioned to receive this funding.
- **Ensure that industry-based workforce development is aligned to meet the needs of opportunity youth** by incorporating best practices that work for opportunity youth such as earn-and-learn or implementing better connections to caring adults.
- **Industry-based programs can also ensure that an appropriate Career Pathways approach is in place to serve opportunity youth.**

WIOA will assess states on the number and type of credentials attained by their participants, as well as whether these credentials align with jobs that are in the highest demand. Industry-based programs that have strong leadership from employers will be better able to assure that opportunity youth earn credentials that are in demand.

### **Increase the Amount of Funds Available for Career Development for Opportunity Youth**

Beyond new WIOA funds, employers provide an important source of resources. The commitment of Starbucks and other employers demonstrates that employers can make a huge impact in providing on-ramps to employment for opportunity youth. For programs like Year Up, employers contribute \$24,000 per year per intern, which covers the majority of the \$25,000 per participant cost of the program.

### **Braid and Blend Funding for Collective Impact**

The braiding and blending together of various state, federal, philanthropic, and private funding streams has been critical to the implementation of integrated Career Pathways for opportunity youth. Braiding and blending of funding is typically implemented at the program level and can be well suited to opportunity youth workforce development because this can meet many of the different needs of opportunity youth. For instance, child care funding for young mothers can be braided with career training funding so that young mothers can attain child care that enables them to work.

The Jobs for the Future Braided Funding Toolkit provides colleges and workforce development organizations with resources that can identify funding sources for opportunity youth including:

- (1) Identifying funding streams
- (2) Developing funding strategies to support integrated career pathways
- (3) An assessment tool to determine current usage of funding streams
- (4) Innovative ideas developed by colleges and states to support integrated career pathways for youth.

Baltimore organizations will need to consider the various sources of funds available to meet the needs of the specific populations they serve.

## **7. Build the Organizational Infrastructure Needed for Greater Collective Impact in Baltimore**

**In interviews, stakeholders report that there is a need for much stronger coordination and specialization among groups serving opportunity youth in Baltimore City and across the Baltimore Region.** There are a large number of organizations in Baltimore that perform many types of services for opportunity youth, and while the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development, The CONNECT, and other organizations have played different sorts of coordinating roles, a high degree of fragmentation continues to exist. This results in duplication of effort, disconnected services, and a suboptimal collective impact of all providers serving opportunity youth.

Baltimore would benefit from a more powerful central leadership organization to facilitate alignment and coordination of services. The ideal coordinating body would:

- ✓ Encourage and facilitate collaboration of all stakeholders across the system for connecting opportunity youth to careers.
- ✓ Facilitate the creation of a strategic regional plan for connecting opportunity youth to careers, within the context of other basic needs of opportunity youth such as reengagement, educational momentum, and youth development.
- ✓ Increase coordination of career-connecting services for opportunity youth, building on the career-connecting strengths of the current system infrastructure including the YO! Baltimore reconnection centers, public school infrastructure, and the work of community-based organizations. This may require some reengineering of the ways that supports and services are provided in order to simplify access to services, increase matriculation of youth into career training programs, or bring disjointed or disconnected services together for better delivery.
- ✓ Identify gaps in services to opportunity youth by leveraging shared data or guiding the implementation of a unified data platform that tracks youth and services.
- ✓ Increase the level of financial resources, and the blending and braiding of resources that are strategically targeted to increase collective impact.

A central coordinating organization would be in the best position to create career-connecting strategies that address the other major problems for opportunity youth in Baltimore, including connecting careers for youth involved in the criminal justice system, boosting adoption of youth-friendly Career Pathways employment and hiring practices among Baltimore employers, and coordinating strategies that break down structural racism and increase access to careers among all young people, including young people of color.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The potential exists to connect many more of Baltimore's opportunity youth to careers, and doing so will result in significant economic benefit for youth, employers, taxpayers and our society. To realize this potential, the organizations that have built Baltimore's current infrastructure serving opportunity youth will need to creatively implement better approaches. Challenges that must be addressed include a realignment of services, stronger coordination for collective impact, and comprehensive strategies to break down the major career barriers youth face. In light of the current enthusiasm and interest to serve opportunity youth, now is the time for Baltimore to take bold action and set a course to ensure every youth makes vital connections to a career and a better future.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> See The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth (Belfield et al., 2012). Available at [http://www.serve.gov/new-images/council/pdf/econ\\_value\\_opportunity\\_youth.pdf](http://www.serve.gov/new-images/council/pdf/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth, (FSG, 2012). Available at [http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/resources/FSG\\_Collective\\_Impact\\_for\\_Opportunity\\_Youth\\_Report.pdf](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/resources/FSG_Collective_Impact_for_Opportunity_Youth_Report.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> See National Roadmap for Opportunity Youth, (Civic Enterprises, 2012); Last Accessed July 2015 at <http://www.civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/Opportunity%20Youth%20National%20Roadmap%20Final%202012.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Sources: American Community Survey 2013, 5-year estimates; The Cowen Institute analysis of ACS Public Use Micro Data, See Reconnecting Opportunity Youth Data Reference Guide. Analysis by the author.
- <sup>5</sup> American Community Survey annual estimates generated from the Public Use Microdata File, 2006-2013.
- <sup>6</sup> Working Poor Families Project data generated by the Population Reference Bureau from 2014 Current Population Survey. *Table 3.A.2.i. Percent Of Workers Ages 18 To 24 Who Are Not Fully Employed, 2014.*
- <sup>7</sup> “Don’t Call Them Dropouts,” GradNation (2014). Available at <http://www.gradnation.org/report/dont-call-them-dropouts>
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Current Population Survey, based on analysis of pooled data 2008-2013.
- <sup>10</sup> See Reconnecting Opportunity Youth Data Reference Guide, Cowen Institute (2015). Last Accessed July 2015 at [http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Cowen\\_OY\\_Data\\_Guide\\_2015.pdf](http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Cowen_OY_Data_Guide_2015.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> See “Most Segregated Cities in the US,” Business Insider (2013); Baltimore’s black-white dissimilarity score is 64.3, according to a study of 2010 Census data by professors John Logan and Brian Stults of Brown and Florida State University. A score above 60 on the dissimilarity index is considered very high segregation. Last Accessed July 2015 at <http://www.businessinsider.com/most-segregated-cities-census-maps-2013-4?op=1#ixzz3emGc0OKM>
- <sup>12</sup> Current Population Survey
- <sup>13</sup> “Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Maryland Juvenile Justice System,” Institute for Governmental Service and Research, 2011. Last Accessed July 2015 at <http://www.goccp.maryland.gov/documents/DMC-report.pdf>
- <sup>14</sup> “Baltimore Behind Bars,” Justice Policy Institute (2008), Appendix A. Last Accessed July 2015 at [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/10-06\\_rep\\_baltbehindbars\\_md-ps-ac-rd.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/10-06_rep_baltbehindbars_md-ps-ac-rd.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> Barriers to Employment Opportunity in the Baltimore Region, Opportunity Collaborative, 2013. Available at [http://www.opportunitycollaborative.org/assets/Barriers\\_Study\\_Final\\_052714.pdf?18cd4b](http://www.opportunitycollaborative.org/assets/Barriers_Study_Final_052714.pdf?18cd4b)
- <sup>16</sup> Working Poor Families Project data generated by the Population Reference Bureau from 2014 Current Population Survey. *Table 4.A.1a2. Percent Of Workers Ages 18 To 24 In Low-Wage Jobs, 2014.*
- <sup>17</sup> Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth, (FSG, 2012) Available at [http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/resources/FSG\\_Collective\\_Impact\\_for\\_Opportunity\\_Youth\\_Report.pdf](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/resources/FSG_Collective_Impact_for_Opportunity_Youth_Report.pdf)
- <sup>18</sup> See “Top US-Based Companies Launch 100k Opportunities Initiative”, Press release July 13, 2015. Last Accessed July, 2015 at <https://news.starbucks.com/news/top-us-based-companies-launch-100k-opportunities-initiative>
- <sup>19</sup> The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Approach: Developing Criteria and Metrics for Quality Career Pathways, CLASP (2013). Available at <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/files/CLASP-The-AQCP-Approach-Feb-2013.pdf>
- <sup>20</sup> For more information, see “The Many Faces of I-Best” Presentation (PPT), National Council for Workforce Education (2014); Last Accessed July 2015 at [https://www.ncwe.org/resource/resmgr/workforce\\_dev\\_reports/2014\\_wdi\\_presentation.pptx](https://www.ncwe.org/resource/resmgr/workforce_dev_reports/2014_wdi_presentation.pptx)
- <sup>21</sup> See “Tuning In to Local Labor Markets: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study,” Public Private Ventures (2010). The study finds that those who participate in sector-based programs are more likely to get work, earn more money and have better access to benefits than the control group.
- <sup>22</sup> Maryland State Department of Education Fact Book 2013-14
- <sup>23</sup> See District Wide Facility Planning and Goals 2015-2016, Baltimore City Public Schools; Last Accessed July 2015 at: <http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain/8784/PDF/2015CEFMP/20150721-CEFMP-ch1.pdf>
- <sup>24</sup> A listing of links that were accessed for these calculations are listed below:  
[http://www.baltoworkforce.com/documents/issc\\_031605\\_Summary%20Baltimore%20Trades%20Pre-Apprenticeship%20rev%20%20DP.doc](http://www.baltoworkforce.com/documents/issc_031605_Summary%20Baltimore%20Trades%20Pre-Apprenticeship%20rev%20%20DP.doc)  
<http://perscholas.org/press/per-scholas-media-fact-sheet>  
<http://www.givewell.org/united-states/charities/Year-Up>  
[http://www.givewell.org/united-states/programs/career-academies#footnote6\\_tonain8](http://www.givewell.org/united-states/programs/career-academies#footnote6_tonain8)  
<http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/domain/8052/pdf/FY15-AdoptedBudget-CompleteBook.pdf>  
[http://msde.maryland.gov/msde/divisions/bus\\_svcs/docs/Fact\\_Book\\_2013-2014.pdf](http://msde.maryland.gov/msde/divisions/bus_svcs/docs/Fact_Book_2013-2014.pdf)  
[http://www.oedworks.com/resources/whats\\_new\\_pr\\_063014.pdf](http://www.oedworks.com/resources/whats_new_pr_063014.pdf)  
<http://www.dllr.state.md.us/wdplan/mdpy2013wiaannrep.pdf>
- <sup>25</sup> See Cowen Institute Issue Briefs, May 2015: Investing in Opportunity

