

Cradle to Career

a project of the Center for Transformative Action

Award amount: \$20,000

Description of the initiative for which the grant was received. The shared community goal for this initiative (a.k.a. Common Agenda, the vision for which activities are shaped). A description of the need and urgency for this in our community.

Overall Vision:

All youth and their families have what they need to ensure that our children and youth, pre-birth to age 24 are successful at every stage of development. This means that they are physically and emotionally healthy, active community members and on-track for living wage employment.

Desired Outcomes

- **Belong.** All residents feel valued, safe, included, and able to participate in shaping community decisions.
- **Learn.** All children and adults have the knowledge and skills needed to build a good life for themselves and those around them.
- **Work.** All residents who wish to work have adequate opportunities for meaningful employment at an income sufficient to sustain themselves and their families.
- **Flourish.** All children have a safe, nourishing childhood. All individuals and families are able to meet their basic human needs, enjoy life and achieve their full potential.
- **Sustain.** All our behaviors and decisions ensure that we can restore and preserve the natural world.

Need:

- **This age group represents almost 40% of the county's population**
- **40% of students in public school receive Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL)**
- **20% of children under 18 are food insecure**
- **Academic performance gaps among low income and students of color (e.g. on 3-8 ELA proficiency Asian -61%, White-41%, Multi-Racial 38%, Black 23%, Not economically disadvantaged 55%, economically disadvantaged 20%)**
- **Over 60% of single moms of children under five live in poverty**

A summary of “quick wins” that have been achieved. (e.g. new connections/relationships, systems that have been impacted, publications, newly engaged volunteers, data collection, established working groups and their activities, engagement of those historically marginalized, etc.)

- **Becoming a CTA project**
Represents commitment of partners to work together to provide backbone functions
- **My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) grant proposal**
First major collaborative project
- **Decision to use and support the Achieving Youth Results (AYR) action plan**
Represents a step in establishing an overall action agenda
- **Got kindergarten assessment process from each school district**
-Opportunity to engage all of the school districts in the county
- **Office of Engagement Initiatives is a partner**
This represents a significant opportunity to leverage resources as well as a connection to almost half of the age-group
- **Increased membership size and diversity of leadership group (e.g. more Cornell and IC partners)**
- **Established a “Beyond High School” Working Group**
- **Collaborative decision making regarding Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) grant proposal and collaboration with Groton on writing the proposal.**
- **Increased networking and networking opportunities**

Identify and describe relationship with collaborating partners. Collaborators are entities that systematically adjust and align work toward reaching the common agenda.

- **Building Bridges Initiative, Challenge Workforce Solutions, Child Development Council, Childhood Nutrition Collaborative, Collaborative Solutions Network, Cornell Community Relations, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, Cornell Office of Engagement Initiatives, Cornell Public Service Center, Dorothy Cotton Institute, Early Childhood Development Collaborative, Family Reading Partnership, Franziska Racker Centers, Greater Ithaca Activities Center, Ithaca City School District, Ithaca College, Ithaca Youth Bureau, Mama's Comfort Camp, My Brother's Keeper, Southside Community Center, Tompkins Cortland Community College, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG), Tompkins County Health Department, Tompkins County Youth Services Department, TST BOCES, Village at Ithaca**
- **Represents an experiment in organizing the backbone function**
- **Group is still in formation and now working on engagement of youth**

What data is being used

- Youth data from County Youth Services Dept.
- NYS Ed Data
- ICSD Equity Report Card
- Census Data/The American Community Survey
- County Health Department Data
- Data from interviews with context experts
- Focus group data

How are shared measurements being used in an effort to reach the Common Agenda? What mutually reinforcing activities are being carried out?

Shared Measures

- **Established a goals framework based on equity. We define goals by looking at best performance of sub-groups and making that the goal for all groups.**
- **Achieving Youth Results indicators**

This work has been underway for over two years and represents a step toward some agreed upon indicators of success.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

- monthly meetings of leadership group**
- regular meetings of working groups**
- mutual support for grant opportunities (e.g. MBK grant, RWJF Grant Proposal in Groton)**
- increased networking opportunities**

Communication-A Work in Progress

- Leadership group meetings
- Working Group Meetings (e.g Beyond High School, School Readiness)
- Collective Impact Working Groups Meeting
- Building Bridges Newsletter
- Email
- Google docs
- Working on a community-wide communications platform
- Survey to collective impact working groups to identify communication needs and methods

How are the voices of those with lived experience being incorporated into this work? (People whose voices have been historically marginalized and people whom the common agenda is intended to serve).

- **Representation in the leadership group**
- **Engage families in K readiness assessment process and on leadership group.**
- **Pre-natal interview project for Early Childhood Development Collaborative**
- **Working on identifying youth organizers to participate in leadership group**

What have you learned so far? (e.g. barriers, successes, challenges, efficiency, demand, other observations, etc.)

- **Both the importance and the difficulty of communicating across the various sectors and across the county**
- **There is shared frustration with the slow pace of progress given the urgency of need**
- **Difficulty of determining what authentic engagement even means**
- **The challenge of balancing the need for action to meet immediate needs against the need for not acting until all voices are fully engaged and included and we fully understand the nature of the systems that are in the way of progress.**
- **Issues related to including new people in a process that has been underway for a some time**
 - how to include new voices without having to start over**
- **Shared understanding of the need to work together**
- **How much the issues (e.g. poverty, transportation, housing, mental health, food security, etc.) are interconnected and how important it is to organize ourselves in a way that breaks down the silos between people and organizations working on these issues**

Describe plans for the future of this initiative and why/how others should care/get involved?

- **Finish pathways documents and post on community platform**
- **Complete goals framework-set specific desired outcomes**
- **Work on communications platform and developing effective communication systems**
- **Reach agreement on action strategies especially for pre-natal to 5 and beyond high school**
- **Engage youth in the leadership group**
- **Beyond High School Working Group**
- **Host community gatherings this fall and next spring**
- **Support Achieving Youth Results Action plan**
- **Analyze data from pre-natal interviews to determine what's needed**
- **Begin community/school conversations about kindergarten screening process**
- **Increase collaboration with higher education institutions (Cornell, IC, TC3)**
- **Continue to work on increasing engagement (particularly of the business community and context experts)**

Anyone can get involved by supporting the work of any of the partners or attending working group meetings.

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