



KIDS COUNT USVI

2022 Political Candidates Questionnaire

As a political candidate in the upcoming 2022 U.S. Virgin Islands Election, St. Croix Foundation's [KIDS COUNT USVI](#) Team invites you to participate in a 2022 Candidate Questionnaire relative to the well-being of children and families in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Please reflect on and answer each question by **September 26, 2022**. All responses will be housed on EngageVI.org and distributed to media and key stakeholders in our communities, including the KIDS COUNT USVI 'network' of nonprofits, public sector agencies, and national partners. This will give candidates the opportunity to share their platform and perspective with voters, and will give voters the opportunity to evaluate candidates on their engagement with these critical issues.

Please note that responses will be published as received and will not be edited in any way (e.g., for typos, misspellings, grammatical errors). Please direct any questions you may have to lcox@stxfoundation.org and a response will be forwarded promptly.

Submission Directions

1. Please complete the following questionnaire and submit your answers to Lilli Cox at lcox@stxfoundation.org by September 26, 2022, close of business.
2. If there are any technical difficulties with completing, saving, or submitting this form, please contact Lilli Cox at lcox@stxfoundation.org.



Candidate's Full Name

MARISE C. JAMES

Office sought in the 2022 USVI Election

Governor

Senator - STJ-STT

Senator - STX

Senator - VI

**1. For the last school year with publicly available data (SY2018-2019), the highest retention rate among students in public school occurred in the 9th grade, with almost one-third of students (30%) being retained. (See page 25 of the [2021 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book](#).)*

While more recent data from the VIDE indicate that there has been some improvement in retention rates, given the data, what specific policies and/or interventions would you utilize to address this critical issue?

What funding opportunities/resources are you aware of that could be used for cross-departmental initiatives?

We must develop effective transition programs and systems to assist students as they enter high school from junior high school/middle school. The environment and culture of high school is different. Success in ninth grade is linked to high school completion rates. Researchers have identified seven themes related to the transition from middle to high school: the role of peers; school supportive strategies and activities; challenges due to unfamiliar processes and procedures; changes in scope of learning activities; confidence and success of students; homework issues; and roles of teachers.

Research indicates that the following interventions have been effective: (1) Planning session between middle schools and high school teachers; (2) Involvement of parents in high school activities; (3) Assistance for students with homework; (4) Incentive programs for attendance, grades, and citizenship; (4) System to earn credit each semester or each quarter; (5) Block schedules for core classes; (6) Closed campus; (7) Small learning communities; and (8) Celebrations of student successes. Effective transition programs should address the following key points: (1) Creation of a sense of belonging at school and in the community; (2) Active parental involvement; (3) Address barriers to success of all students through tutoring, cohort groups, peer support, motivation components, and skills development; (4) Highly effective and caring teachers; (5) Formative program evaluations: credits earned, number of core courses failed, on-track to graduate, and measures of connectedness; and Formative evaluations of the transition programs to ensure continuous improvement.

Clearly, resources are necessary for staffing, professional development, restructuring of programs and schedules, and facilities in order to implement the transition programs. The primary source of federal aid for elementary and secondary education is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—particularly its Title I-A program, which authorizes federal aid for the education of disadvantaged students. The ESEA was initially enacted in 1965 (P.L. 89-10), and was most recently comprehensively amended and reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; P.L. 114-95). Under Title I-A, the ESEA as amended by the ESSA continues to require states and public schools' systems to focus on educational accountability as a condition for the receipt of grant funds. Public school systems and individual public schools are held accountable for monitoring and improving achievement outcomes for students and closing achievement gaps, sustaining a focus that was initiated by amendments to the ESEA made by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; P.L. 107-110) but modified under the ESSA.

The School Improvement Grant (SIG) program provides resources to Local Education Authorities (LEA) in order to raise substantially the achievement of students in their lowest-performing schools. Social-emotional and community-oriented services that may be offered to students in a school implementing a turnaround model may include family and community engagement programs that support a range of activities designed to build the capacity of parents and school staff to work together to improve student academic achievement, such as a family literacy program for parents who need to improve their literacy skills in order to support their children's learning.

**2. The KIDS COUNT team recognizes the inextricable link between our nonprofits/social impact organizations and children and families and is conducting interviews with local social service organizations, providing insight into the importance of and dire need for community resources in the USVI that provide sustainable safety nets, relief, and enrichment in our children's lives.*

What policies and/or amendments would you advocate for to support nonprofits that serve children and families in the areas of health, education, housing, public safety, and economic well-being?

In the words of the federal Government Accountability Office, "Federal, state and local governments rely on nonprofit organizations as key partners in implementing programs and providing services to the public, such as health care, human services and housing-related services." While nonprofits are dependent on the government for funding, the government is dependent on the nonprofit sector to provide services to its constituents. Every day nonprofits educate, feed, heal, shelter, and nurture people. Nonprofits employ people directly and create work opportunities for others. They spur economic activity and attract other employers. They consume goods and services. Nonprofits play a fundamental role in creating more equitable and thriving communities. Both nonprofits and government should explore how closely they want and can afford to work together. Both can benefit from a joint evaluation of the optimal degree and type of connection they would like to have. They must develop an understanding of how the other sector

operates and what motivates it to act the way it does. They should develop a mutually supportive work culture across the sectors. Since nonprofits see the solutions to the community's challenges firsthand, nonprofits should be sharing their insights with policymakers to help them make informed decisions.

Yet nonprofits have challenges that affect how they serve the people and communities that rely on them, including working with the government to serve the public. There is a critical need for more and widespread public conversation about the issues and challenges facing nonprofits. The nonprofit sector should be as well understood and appropriately treated in public policy as any other part of our society, particularly given its role in supporting communities and populations that are often least well served in the business and governmental sectors. Despite the fact nonprofits are helping to financially sustain critical state services, nonprofits are closed out of critical policy discussions about future service planning (cutbacks or expansion of services), have no real role in advising or providing feedback on administrative mechanisms and processes used for joint service arrangements.

Nonprofits should participate in the development of policies. Research shows that governments fail to pay nonprofits for the true costs of delivering the services to the public which adds a burden on the nonprofits to raise funds to subsidize what is really a government obligation. For-profit contractors are paid their true costs (including overhead) plus profits. Nonprofits should be paid their true costs for the programs and services they deliver to the public. We need to review what approaches in government contracting strengthen and weaken nonprofit service delivery and mission fulfillment. There is a need for education on regulatory policies by the Lt. Governor's Office and IRB on nonprofit registration and compliance requirements, nonprofit laws, decision-making autonomy and self-governance authority of nonprofits.

A senior liaison or advisor position should be created in the Governor's Office to ensure collaboration between the government and nonprofits. The senior advisor should have a seat at table and provide insight on how governmental initiatives, funding, regulations, and efficiency (or lack thereof) alter or impact nonprofits, their missions and services, and ability to operate and serve the public.

Government can share information about funding – the amount of money available, the government priorities. How does government funding impact how nonprofits operate, both directly and indirectly. Nonprofits should have input into how government structures funding for the nonprofit sector, how it cuts back on funding due to economic downturns, etc.

The government and nonprofit sectors can both sponsor an annual forum that includes government and nonprofit staff, elected officials, and community volunteers. The government and nonprofit sectors should have joint strategic sessions around specific issues. They can jointly develop guidelines about mutual expectations and work to be accomplished together. The staff of nonprofits can serve on government committees and task forces.

**3. On a national level, KIDS COUNT data are derived from many sources, including the American Community Survey (ACS), which contains housing, economics, demographics, and social data. Unfortunately, the ACS is not conducted in the USVI. In the absence of the ACS, the territory administers (via the Eastern Caribbean Center) the Virgin Islands Community Survey (VICS), collecting data similar to that included in the population and housing components of the decennial Census. The last published VICS was released in 2018 (reflecting 2015 data), with the release of 2018 data expected in 2022. (See page 6 of the [2021 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book](#)).*

Given the territory's challenges around data collection and the rapidly changing ecosystem our children and families live in, what do you propose to improve data collection and usage for policy decisions in the USVI?

A truly data-driven public sector:

- recognizes data as a key strategic asset with its value defined and its impact measured
- reflects active efforts to remove barriers to managing, sharing, and re-using data
- applies data to transform the design, delivery and monitoring of public policies and services
- values efforts to publish data openly as much as the use of data between, and within, public sector organizations.

A whole-of-government approach should be adopted to develop a coherent and comprehensive model of data governance that helps governments deliver better services while being efficient, transparent, and trustworthy in their use of data.

First, the government needs to develop a comprehensive model for data governance. The components of a framework for establishing data governance are:

- Securing the leadership and vision to ensure strategic direction and purpose for the data-driven conversation throughout the public sector
- Encouraging the coherent implementation of this data-driven public sector framework across government as a whole and within individual organizations
- Putting in place, or revisiting, rules, laws, regulations, guidelines, and standards associated with data
- Ensuring the existence of a data architecture that reflects standards, interoperability and semantics throughout the generation, collection, storage, and processing of data
- Developing the necessary data infrastructure to support the publication, sharing and re-use of data.

Second, the government can apply data to generate public value through three types of activity:

- Anticipation and planning: using data in the design of policies, planning of interventions, anticipation of possible change and the forecasting of needs
- Delivery: using data to inform and improve policy implementation, the responsiveness of governments and the activity of providing public services
- Evaluation and monitoring: the use of data in measuring impact, auditing decisions and monitoring performance

The third area is the role of data in trust. Public trust in government is a critical factor in citizen well-being but is far easier to lose than to build. The way in which governments handle citizen data can be particularly damaging. The government must:

- adopt an ethical approach to guide decision making and inform behavior
- protect privacy, promote transparency and design user experiences that help citizens understand and grant or revoke consent for their data to be used
- approach the security of government services and data in ways that mitigate risks without blocking the transformation of the public sector

Source:

“The Path to Becoming a Data-Driven Public Sector- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Published on November 28, 2019”

**4. According to the most recent available data (2019-2020 school year), 54% of English Language Learner (ELL) public high school students did not graduate in 4 years compared to 71% of all public high school students (page 27, [2021 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book](#)).*

How do you propose we support ELL students and address their academic, social, and emotional needs to improve their educational outcomes?

The purpose of Title III is to help ensure that students with limited English proficiency master English and meet the same challenging state academic achievement standards that all children are expected to meet. An LEA must use Title III funds to provide high-quality language instruction programs and high-quality professional development for classroom teachers. Title III does not advocate a particular instructional approach, such as English as a second language or bilingual education, but it does require LEAs receiving Title III funds to fund instructional approaches that are scientifically based. Title III-A also promotes parental, family, and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents, families, and communities of ELs.

The school language policy should view students as bilingual, with talents in both their home language and English, and not just as learners of English whose home language is irrelevant to academic success. ELLs may be unable to demonstrate their true competence in subject content areas due to their current English language skills. The role of the school is to assist these students in acquiring both the English skills and content knowledge they need to participate in learning activities equally with their peers and to meet the expectations of the Virgin Islands curriculum.

Creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment for English language learners is a whole-school responsibility requiring the commitment of administrators, teachers, support staff, and other leaders within the school community. The outcome of this committed effort is a dynamic and vibrant school environment that celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset and enriches the learning experience of all students.

Whole School. To build the capacity of the whole school in helping English language learners reach their full potential, the school administrative team should among other activities:

(1) Ensure that the school has procedures and practices in place for English language learners and their families; (2) Build an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students and their families through the use of materials in community languages, the provision of interpreters whenever possible, and the recognition of diversity in school events and messages; (3) Encourage involvement of parents in school events and the parent association; acquire and make available a range of resources in classrooms and in the school library that reflect the linguistic and cultural makeup of the school community; (4) Ensure that the planning of programs to support ELLs is coordinated by a person with expertise in ESL; (5) Support all teachers in incorporating appropriate curriculum adaptations and teaching strategies into their instruction and assessment to meet the needs of English language learners; (6) provide access to quality professional development for all school staff; (7) Facilitate collaboration time to enrich and extend teachers' repertoire of instructional and assessment strategies to meet the needs of English language learners; (8) Review and discuss with staff the most recent demographic information on the school community; and (9) Create and nurture links with community partners such as social workers and community ethno-cultural organizations.

Teachers. Teachers bring knowledge, enthusiasm, and varied teaching and assessment approaches to the classroom, addressing individual student needs and ensuring sound and challenging learning opportunities for every student. In supporting English language learners, teachers: (1) Learn about their students' backgrounds, experiences, and languages; (2) Provide engaging and challenging opportunities for English language development for all learners with appropriate modifications/ accommodations, as needed; (3) Use a variety of instructional, assessment, and evaluation strategies that are designed to facilitate the success of English language learners; (4) Collaborate with the person responsible for ELLs to plan for the needs of the English language learners in their classrooms; (5) Create a classroom environment which reflects and celebrates the linguistic and cultural diversity of all students; (6) Support English language learners in their integration into the academic and social life of the school; (7) Communicate effectively with parents, taking into account

the varied background experiences of diverse families; (8) Work together to increase the capacity of the whole school in meeting the needs of English language learners.

Students. Students have many responsibilities regarding their learning, and these increase as they advance through elementary school. Students benefit when they: (1) Make a sincere commitment to learning and to the development of cooperative skills in the classroom; (2) Pursue various opportunities outside the classroom to enrich their learning; seek out recreational reading materials and multimedia works in English and their home language to extend their knowledge of the world around them; (3) Engage in conversation with parents, peers, and teachers about what they are reading, writing, and learning; (4) Take increasing responsibility for their own progress and learning.

Parents. Parents should be made aware of the goal of ESL and ELD programs and how they are of benefit to students who are developing proficiency in English. It is the school's responsibility to provide opportunities for parents of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds to become engaged, to recognize parents as partners, and to appreciate that their involvement may take different forms. In serving culturally diverse communities, schools need to keep in mind that parents may have different ideas about how, where, and when they should be involved in their children's schooling. Studies consistently show that students perform better in school if their parents are involved in their education. They need not be proficient in English themselves to help and support their children in school. They may face barriers to full involvement in the school partnership model, such as limited time or limited proficiency in English. To support English language learners, parents should be strongly encouraged to: (1) Read to their children, in the home language and/or English, on a regular basis; (2) Become familiar with the curriculum and what their children are expected to learn at school; (3) Involve their children in talking about their school experiences; attend parent-teacher meetings; (4) Speak with their child's teacher or appropriate school personnel whenever they have questions or concerns about the program or their child's progress; (5) Participate in parent workshops and other community events which help them to learn more about the school system; encourage their children to develop and maintain active use of the home language; and (6) Partner effectively with school staff to help their children achieve their goals. Communication with the home needs to be handled in an honest, sensitive, and respectful manner. This communication can take many forms, both informal and formal: a phone call, a note, a newsletter, a meeting, an interview, a student's agenda/planner, and the school website. When needed, that communication should be available in the home language of the family.

**5. In 2018, 36% of surveyed public high school students "felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities" (page 38, [2021 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book](#)) - a response often associated with clinical depression.*

What do you consider to be some of the primary contributing factors to the mental health challenges facing our youth, and what are some of the systemic 'fixes' to the Territory's mental health infrastructure?

The social causes of mental health problems are manifold, ranging from individual causes of distress to issues that affect a whole community or society. Poverty and traumatic events in the youth's family and communitywide (physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, conduct disorder, natural disasters, and the pandemic) have been the primary contributing factors to the mental health challenges facing VI youth. However, multiple factors affect mental health. The more risk factors adolescents are exposed to, the greater the potential impact on their mental health. Factors that can contribute to stress during adolescence include exposure to adversity, pressure to conform with peers and exploration of identity. Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between an adolescent's lived reality and their perceptions or aspirations for the future. Other important

determinants include the quality of their home life and relationships with peers. Violence (especially sexual violence and bullying), harsh parenting and severe and socioeconomic problems are recognized risks to mental health. Some adolescents are at greater risk of mental health conditions due to their living conditions, stigma, discrimination or exclusion, or lack of access to quality support and services.

Adolescence is a crucial period for developing social and emotional habits important for mental well-being. These include adopting healthy sleep patterns; exercising regularly; developing coping, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills; and learning to manage emotions. Protective and supportive environments in the family, at school and in the wider community are important. Protective factors are related to emotional well-being; social integration through participation in sport, church associations, clubs, etc.; connectedness with family and friends; high self-esteem; physical and environmental aspects such as good sleep, a balanced diet, physical exercise and a drug-free environment; and various sources of rewarding pleasure.

Recommended systemic “fixes” to the Territory’s mental health infrastructure:

- (1) Foster awareness of the importance of mental well-being;
- (2) Collectively tackle stigma, discrimination and inequality, and empower and support people with mental health problems and their families;
- (3) Design and implement comprehensive, integrated and efficient mental health systems that cover promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, care and recovery;
- (4) Address the need for a competent workforce;
- (5) Recognize the experience and knowledge of service users and caretakers as an important basis for planning and developing services.
- (6) Develop and offer evidence-based programs that foster skills, provide information, and focus on resilience, emotional intelligence and psychosocial functioning in children and young people.
- (7) Promote community-based multilevel interventions involving public awareness campaigns, primary care staff and community facilitators such as teachers, clergy, and the media.
- (8) Ensure that policies on mental health include as priorities the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents.
- (9) Involve young people and older people as much as possible in the decision-making process.
- (10) Develop mental health services sensitive to the needs of young and older people, operated in close collaboration with families, schools, day-care centers, neighbors, extended families, and friends.
- (11) Restrict institutional approaches for the care of children and adolescents and older people that engender social exclusion and neglect.
- (12) Improve the quality of dedicated mental health services by establishing or improving the capacity for specialized interventions and care in childhood and adolescence.
- (13) Provide training and employ an adequate numbers of specialists.
- (14) Improve coordination between organizations involved in alcohol and drugs programs and children’s and adolescents’ health and mental health at the local level, as well as collaboration between their respective networks.
- (15) Ensure parity of funding in relation to comparable health services.
- (16) For families at risk, provide home-based educational interventions to help proactively to improve parenting skills, health behavior and interaction between parents and children.
- (17) Set up evidence-based education programs addressing suicide, depression, alcohol and other substance use disorders for young people at schools and universities and involve role models and young people in the making of campaigns.
- (18) Ensure adequate professional support and services for people encountering major crises and violence, from school fights to natural disasters to prevent post-traumatic stress disorder.
- (19) Increase awareness among staff employed in health care and related sectors of their own attitudes and prejudices towards suicide and mental health problems.

- (20) Encourage the recruitment of new mental health workers and enhance the retention of existing workers.
- (21) Develop a surveillance system based on nationally standardized, harmonized, and comparable indicators and data collection systems, to monitor progress towards local objectives of improved mental health and well-being.
- (22) Develop new indicators and data collection methods for information not yet available, including indicators of mental health promotion, prevention, treatment and recovery.
- (23) Develop specialist services capable of addressing the specific challenges of the young people, and gender-specific issues;
- (24) Prioritize services that target the mental health problems of vulnerable groups, including problems of comorbidity, i.e. where mental health problems occur jointly with other problems such as substance misuse or physical illness;
- (25) Confirm health funding, regulation and legislation that is equitable and inclusive of mental health;

Mental health is everybody's business; it is not only an issue of mental or public health, but also one of public policy. Action for mental health is a shared responsibility, and health and economic gains can be achieved through the support and action of many different sectors in society. Finally, if mental health is to be promoted and mental disorders prevented, there must be a climate of respect for and protection of basic civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights. Without the security and freedom provided by these rights, it is very difficult to maintain a high level of health. When properly implemented, interventions and approaches aimed at mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention are effective and lead to a range of positive health, social and economic outcomes.

The presence in society of children and adolescents who are "at risk" or manifest mental disorders leads to destabilizing conditions in society as a whole. Prevention is a key element of child and adolescent mental health services. The prevention of disorders is evidently both cost saving and in the best interests of the child, the family and the community. Primary health care is an important setting in which to introduce treatment and care for people with mental disorders. It helps to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help from stand-alone mental health services; facilitates the early identification and treatment of such disorders and thus reduces disability; increases the possibility of providing care in the community and the opportunities for community involvement in care; and importantly, it improves access to mental health care among underserved populations. The capacity of primary health care to provide effective services to people with mental disorders must be strengthened. A way must be found to support adequate services; if this is not done, we will be hit by the adult consequences of unrecognized and untreated child and adolescent mental disorders.

**6. Opportunity Youth are generally defined as those young people between the ages of 16 to 24 years old who are considered "disconnected" from school and work (i.e., not in school and not participating in the labor market), according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Data on Opportunity Youth in the USVI are minimal and variable from year to year. Previous KIDS COUNT Data Books report that between 2005 and 2014 the percentage of teens ages 16 to 19 that were not in school and not working fluctuated from a low of 11.3% (in 2006) to a high of 27% (in 2013).*

What specific steps and strategies would you develop to reconnect this population?

I would look closely at the programs and approaches listed below that focus on helping Opportunity Youth and determine whether they can be adapted here— some are already established in the V.I. While in the Virgin Islands National Guard I lobbied for and wrote the legislation for the Forward March and About Face Programs that now exist in the VING and funded through the Office of the Adjutant General. Forward March is a community outreach program designed to assist economically disadvantaged, out-of-school youth and adults, in making a successful transition into the workforce. The program helps students by teaching core academics and work readiness skills that facilitate job placement and retention. About Face is an after-school program serving economically disadvantaged youth, ages 13 - 17, who are still in school but at risk of becoming dropouts. The program is designed to help students by improving their academic skills, teaching effective study habits, teaching life coping skills, good citizenship, and providing strong mentor and role model experiences.

Programs and Initiatives Working to Reconnect Youth and Prevent Disconnection Federal Initiatives

AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs, made up of three primary programs that each take a different approach to improving lives and fostering civic engagement. Members commit their time to address critical community needs like increasing academic achievement, mentoring youth, fighting poverty, sustaining national parks, preparing for disasters, and more. Supported by the federal government, foundations, corporations, and other donors, AmeriCorps offers service opportunities in classrooms and communities that are designed to engage adults in "helping others and meeting critical needs in the community."

Apprenticeship.gov from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration provides information and resources on apprenticeships. An apprenticeship includes a combination of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation. Applicants for apprenticeship programs must be at least 16 years old and meet the program sponsor's qualifications. Youth Apprenticeship is a program that connects youth to apprenticeship programs for high school students combine academic and technical classroom instruction with work experience through a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). It provides the foundation for students to choose among multiple pathways after high school – to enroll in college, to enter an apprenticeship program, begin full-time employment, or a combination.

YouthBuild programs give at-risk youth ages 16-24 the opportunity to transform their lives by earning their high school diploma or state-recognized equivalency degree, learning to be community leaders, and preparing for college and other post-secondary training opportunities. YouthBuild programs provide occupational skills training in construction and other in-demand industries and include a focus on increasing the supply of low-income housing in their local communities. By providing low-income young people with both education and occupational skills training leading to industry-recognized certifications, as well as the opportunity for community service, YouthBuild programs can help disenfranchised youth to become successful adults.

SBIRT/YouthBuild, an employment and training program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), partnered to address alcohol and drug use among students. The Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) is a tool developed by SAMHSA to identify people who have or are at risk for substance use problems, and to identify people who need further assessment or referral for treatment. The "SBIRT" was adapted to best suit the young people, ages 16-24, served within the YouthBuild program, and was piloted in 15 YouthBuild programs.

Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3) offer a unique opportunity to test innovative, cost-effective, and outcome-focused strategies for improving results for disconnected youth. Pilot sites will commit to achieve significant improvements for disconnected youth in educational, employment, and other key outcomes in exchange for this new flexibility. For P3, statute

defines disconnected youth as individuals between the ages of 14 and 24 who are low income and either homeless, in foster care, involved in the juvenile justice system, unemployed, or not enrolled in or at risk of dropping out of an educational institution.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Formula Program is a comprehensive youth employment program serving eligible youth, ages 12-24, who face barriers to education, training, and employment. Funds for youth services are allocated to states and local areas based on a formula. The WIOA Youth Program focuses primarily on out-of-school youth, requiring local areas to expend a minimum of 75% of WIOA youth funds on them. The program includes 14 program elements that are required to be made available to youth participants. WIOA prioritizes work experience through a 20% minimum expenditure rate for the work experience program element. Local programs provide youth services in partnership with American Job Centers and under the direction of local Workforce Development Boards.

Job Corps is the nation's largest and most comprehensive residential education and job training program for at-risk youth, ages 16 through 24. Private companies, state agencies, federal agencies, and unions recruit young people to participate in Job Corps, where they can train for and be placed in jobs. At Job Corps, participating youth receive basic living benefits to make life easier and the opportunity to become a part of a community that encourages growth and success.

Youth Employment Success (YES), from the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, is an initiative that provides technical assistance to youth employment programs to help them integrate financial capability offerings, including expanding access to financial products to help young adults manage their paychecks as well as helping programs provide relevant financial education and empowerment resources on basic money management skills.

State and Local Initiatives

Youth Reengagement Network Run by the National League of Cities, the Reengagement Network Hub connects municipal leaders to share effective strategies for reconnection and equity. The Resources section of the website includes data, guides and tools to support reengagement efforts across the country.

State and Local Corps are locally-based organizations that engage young adults ages 16 to 25 and veterans up to age 35 in service projects that address recreation, conservation, disaster response, and community needs. Descended from the Civilian Conservation Corps, the federal Depression-era work relief program, modern Corps are public-private partnerships, with some operating as nonprofits and others run as units of state or local government.

Project U-Turn is a citywide collaborative effort to address the dropout crisis in Philadelphia. Project U-Turn identifies and examines the problem, promotes the crisis as a system-wide issue rather than an education issue, involves and sustains a diverse array of partners, and works to both prevent students from dropping out as well as re-engage those who have already dropped out.

Partnership for Results is a model of local governance designed to implement a broad spectrum of evidence-based programs for the benefit of youth at risk. Operating in Cayuga County in Central New York, it has improved outcomes for children and youth and their families since its founding in 2000. Evaluation results indicate reductions in substance abuse, arrests, juvenile detention expenditures, and foster care placements. Partnership for Results has been associated with increases in standardized test scores, particularly for elementary schools serving low-income children.

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development coordinates and aligns state policies and practices to support positive youth development and increase high school graduation rates.

Non-Profit Initiatives

Opportunity Youth United This youth-led movement brings together leaders from urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities across the United State to decrease poverty and increase opportunity. Its strategic direction is set by the members of the National Council of Young Leaders, who are each sponsored by a national non-profit.

National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) Unique in the opportunity-youth space, NYEC represents organizations that serve and study opportunity youth, bringing the wisdom of practitioners to policymakers and the fields of workforce development, education, youth development, and

rehabilitation services. NYEC represents and speaks for organizations that are the leaders in serving opportunity youth – and those that are at earlier stages of the journey.

The YES Project (Young Employed Successful) is a national initiative launched by America's Promise Alliance, and was created to support and grow the youth workforce so that every young person seeking a job can find a job. To tackle this ambitious goal, the YES Project teamed up with nonprofits, researchers, and employers and landed on three conditions for success: ready, connected, and supported (RCS). The RCS framework is the backbone of the YES Project and serves as a consensus point for everyone– from public officials, community leaders and young people themselves – to drive action towards increasing youth employment.

Navigate (formerly Linking Learning to Life, Inc.) supports a collaboration of schools, businesses, colleges, and other organizations to foster opportunities for community service, leadership development, career and college exploration, internships, and employment for youth in Vermont as they transition from school to careers and postsecondary education.

The Opportunity Youth Forum The Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions launched the Opportunity Youth Forum to build a research and knowledge base that supports cross-sector collaboration to build and strengthen educational and employment pathways for young people.

Opportunity Youth Network This collaborative effort works to connect, unite, and support opportunity youth. Through its annual Opportunity Youth Summits and Opportunity Weeks, the Opportunity Youth Network brings young leaders, nonprofits, business, philanthropy and government staff together to collaborate on community-strengthening solutions.

Thank you for participating.