

SETTING THE AGENDA

National Summit 

on CREATIVE

YOUTH

MARCH 27-29  
BOSTON, MA

UNITE  
CELEBRATE  
ACTIVATE

DEVELOPMENT



This report is authored by Dr. Lauren M. Stevenson of Junction Box Consulting based on research she conducted to gather insights from arts, humanities, and science based youth development programs on the keys to their practice, impact, and future. The report serves as briefing materials for the National Summit on Creative Youth Development: Unite. Celebrate. Activate. The Summit is presented by the Massachusetts Cultural Council in partnership with the National Guild for Community Arts Education and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

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## The National Summit

On March 27-29, 2014, youth and adult leaders from out-of-school and community-based youth development programs in the arts, humanities, and sciences will convene in Boston. Coming from around the country, they will gather to celebrate their work and collaborate with funders, policymakers, and researchers to chart a strategic agenda to increase the sustainability and impact of their programs.

Presented by the Massachusetts Cultural Council in partnership with the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and the National Guild for Community Arts Education, the summit convenes arts, humanities, and science-based youth development programs with the recognition that they share a unifying principle—**creative youth development**. Each type of program teaches young people a discipline that centers on creativity—processes of creative inquiry and expression in particular—and each type of program uses its discipline as a vehicle for youth development. As young people learn the arts, humanities, and sciences in these programs, they develop personal, social, and intellectual skills and capacities that are important for their growth and success in life, school, and work. They also use these disciplines as means to understand and change the world around them, to connect to the greater human experience, and to develop and express their own sense of identity.

Today, too many young people are disconnected from their communities and the means to make a successful transition to adulthood (White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012). At the same time, creativity is coming into focus as a key ingredient for addressing new economic, social, technological, vocational, and environmental challenges. In this context, creative youth development programs are an asset, and supporting and increasing their impact is of great importance. For this reason, the goal of the national summit is to engage creative youth development program leaders, funders, policymakers, and researchers to build an action-oriented strategic agenda that they can use to advance the work of out-of-school creative youth development programs. The immediate measure of success for the summit will be that it yields such an agenda. Long-term success will be defined by the extent to which participants and their allies are able to advocate for and enact the agenda at the local, state, and national levels.

After the summit, the Massachusetts Cultural Council has committed to roll out the strategic agenda in the state of Massachusetts and work with state networks, such as the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, to disseminate the approach it develops and support leaders in other states to implement the agenda. The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and the National Guild for Community Arts Education will take the lead on developing collaborations with other national organizations and agencies to advance the agenda nationwide. They will also support their constituent organizations, on the ground in communities across the country, to promote and implement the agenda locally.



## Framing the Summit: Input from the Field

Recognizing that building a strategic agenda is a complex task, and that the national summit will provide attendees a relatively small window of time to complete that task, the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities commissioned a research study to lay groundwork for the summit deliberations. The goal of the study was to gather, synthesize, and begin to organize priorities and ideas for the strategic agenda. The study began with interviews and focus groups with youth and adult leaders in creative youth development programs and related sectors. More than 60 individuals from nearly 30 organizations across 18 cities and towns participated [see acknowledgements]. A national survey then followed to collect input from a broader sample of creative youth development programs, and to test and elaborate emerging themes. Youth and adult leaders at approximately 150 creative youth development programs across the country responded to the survey.

The following sections of this report draw on the findings of the background research study and a review of relevant literature, to describe the impact and defining qualities of creative youth development programs; propose a structure for a strategic agenda to advance such programs; and present emerging ideas for its content.

“The thing about art programs: it’s not just about making art, it’s about growing as a person.”

—Zoe, Marwen Student, Chicago, IL

### Creative Youth Development—Program Impact

Youth development refers to the process through which young people develop “personal and social assets” that prepare them to thrive—including, according to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (Eccles & Gootman, 2002, pp. 74-75), assets fundamental to their:

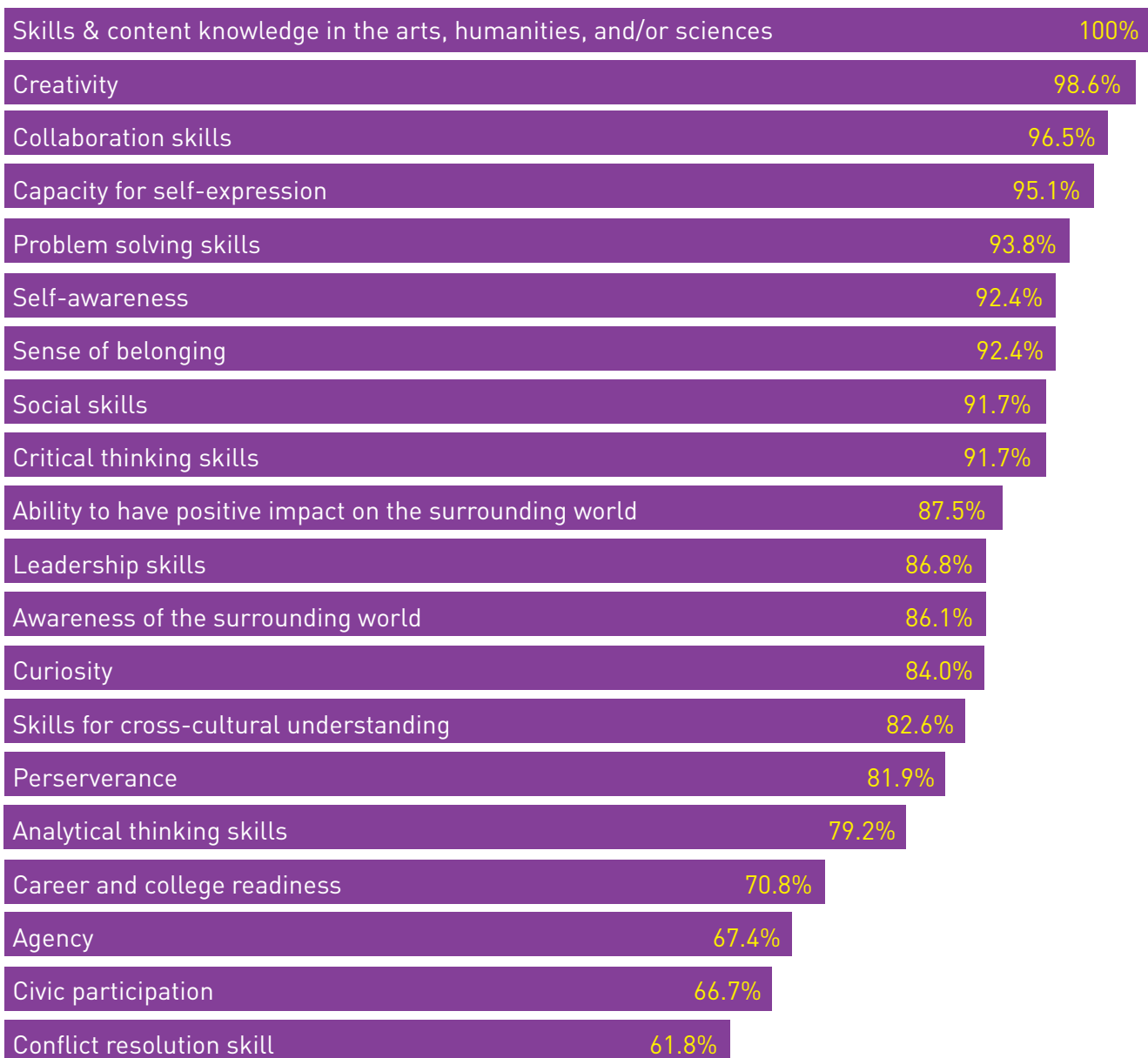
- *Physical development—e.g., “good health habits”*
- *Intellectual development—e.g., “knowledge of essential life skills,” “critical thinking and reasoning skills”*
- *Psychological and emotional development—e.g., “conflict resolution skills,” “coherent and positive personal and social identity”*
- *Social development—e.g., “connectedness,” “ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts”*



“You get to look at what’s possible. And you get to learn how to discern what’s authentically you”—Anne Teschner, The Care Center, Holyoke, MA

The summit research study found that arts, humanities, and science-based creative youth development programs are fostering youth development in similar ways. Creative youth development programs report that they target a consistent set of developmental assets. Over 90 percent of programs responding to the national survey, for example, report that they are working to help young people develop creativity (98.6%), collaboration skills (96.5%), capacity for self-expression (95.1%), problem solving skills (93.8%), self-awareness (92.4%), sense of belonging (92.4%), social skills (91.7%), and critical thinking skills (91.7%). One hundred percent of respondents reported that their programs help youth to develop skills and content knowledge in the arts, humanities, and/or sciences. Achieving mastery in a discipline such as these is itself an asset for youth development. Research on quality youth development programs finds that, “content-specific mastery experiences in the afterschool context produce longer-term skill development and corresponding skill transfer outside of the afterschool setting” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 10).

**Figure 1: Target Youth Development Outcomes in Creative Youth Development Programs**  
Our organization works to help young people...[check all that apply]





While it was beyond the scope of the survey to measure the actual rather than intended outcomes of responding creative youth development programs, a significant body of existing research provides evidence of a strong connection between young people’s participation in such programs and their development of the assets the survey explored (Gutiérrez & Spencer, 2008; Halpern, 2010; Heath, Soep, & Roach, 1998; Heath & Roach, 1999; Larson, 2000; Locklear, 2013; McLaughlin, 2000; Stevenson, 2011; Wright, 2006).

“Everything about hip-hop is about teaching people to be aware and responsible. We always say, ‘show and prove.’ That means stop talking and do it, take action.”

—Rennie Harris, Puremovement, Philadelphia, PA



In addition to facilitating young people’s development, another key dimension of many creative youth development programs, reported youth and adult study participants, is that they also provide youth a means to have a positive impact on the world around them. Such programs bring the tools of the arts, humanities, sciences, and youth leadership to bear to facilitate community development—improving the safety and physical and cultural contexts of the communities they serve—and foster civic engagement. They also support youth to use these disciplines as a vehicle to effect social change by addressing social inequality and other social issues that affect their lives, imagining the world in which they’d like to live, and beginning to reshape the world around them to embody that vision. As reported on the national survey, creative youth development programs work to help young people develop skills and capacities useful to these additional program purposes, including, for example, skills for cross-cultural understanding (82.6%), leadership skills (86.8%), awareness of the surrounding world (86.1%), ability to have positive impact on the surrounding world (87.5%), civic participation (66.7%), and conflict resolution skills (61.8%). A growing body of research underscores the connection between participation in creative youth development programs, in particular arts-based programs, and increases in both the capacity and inclination of young people to take action to positively affect the world around them (Gutiérrez & Spencer, 2008; Heath, Soep & Roach, 1998; Seidel et al., 2009; Stevenson, 2011).



“I’ve been thinking a lot about why RAW is so successful in terms of connecting students, creating an awesome environment, and reaching out to community. I think what stands out is creativity. RAW shows that creativity is something that anyone can achieve, and through creativity, you can solve problems. That’s what’s really lacking in our community.” —Thonah Ep, Raw Art Works alumnus, Lynn, MA



Focus group and interview data suggest that creativity is the linchpin to the multi-faceted impacts realized by creative youth development programs. As stated earlier, one hundred percent of creative youth development programs responding to the national survey reported that they work to help young people develop skills and content knowledge in the arts, humanities, and/or sciences. Focus group and interview data, however, make it clear that creative youth development programs do not stop there. Key to their DNA is supporting young people to become creators—to apply the skills and content knowledge they are acquiring to create work in the arts, humanities, and sciences, and to use the creative process and products in those disciplines as vehicles to create their own lives and identities (youth development); healthier and more vibrant communities (community development); and a more equitable and just society (social change).

The creative and expressive opportunities and supports that creative youth development programs provide young people are the vehicles through which they realize their impact. Though intrinsically motivating for many youth, creative experiences in the arts, humanities, and sciences are not merely a recruiting tool to get young people in the door for “real” youth development programming.





“What we’re trying to do as scientists is see things new and ask interesting questions that we can explore, and that’s in some ways what artists do as well. And in doing so, your questions are always going to be related to who you are as a person.”

—Kris Scopinich, Mass Audubon’s  
Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary,  
Lincoln, MA

## Creative Youth Development—Quality Programming

What constitutes quality in creative youth development programming? What ingredients must programs have in place in order to realize the impacts described above? In the midst of the background research study for the summit, the Wallace Foundation released the highly anticipated results of its study examining issues of quality for effective out-of-school time youth arts programs, *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts* (Montgomery, Rogovin, & Persaud, 2013). The Wallace study coupled market research among adolescent and teenage consumers of out-of-school time youth arts programs, with input from leading out-of-school time practitioners, scholars, and funders, to identify ten principles for effective out-of-school time youth arts programs [see figure 2]. Rather than duplicating Wallace’s efforts to assess key components of program quality, the summit partners chose to use the national creative youth development survey as an opportunity to check the perceived accuracy of the Wallace findings. The survey first tested the ten Wallace principles with survey respondents from arts-based creative youth development programs, asking them to rate the extent to which they agreed each principle was a key ingredient for quality in programs like theirs. The survey then adapted the principles (with slight modifications in language where necessary) to test the extent to which organizations offering humanities-based and science-based creative youth development programs would agree that the principles constitute key ingredients for effective programs in their contexts.

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the ten Wallace quality principles were key ingredients for effective creative youth development programs in the arts, humanities, and sciences. On all principles, at least 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed and for the majority of the principles more than 90% agreed or strongly agreed. This shared awareness of what is required to build quality programs is important in a landscape where out-of-school time policymakers, researchers, and practitioners are increasingly focused on ensuring and assessing quality in youth programs (Princiotta & Fortune, 2009; Smith et al., 2012). It also suggests that creative youth development programs are unified not only by the outcomes for which they strive, but also their inputs—the mechanisms through which they realize their impact.

## Figure 2: Wallace Foundation Principles for Effective Out-of-School Time Youth Arts Programs

**Principle No. 1:** Instructors are professional, practicing artists, and are valued with compensation for their expertise and investment in their professional development.

**Principle No. 2:** Executive directors have a public commitment to high-quality arts programs that is supported by sustained action.

**Principle No. 3:** Arts programs take place in dedicated, inspiring, welcoming spaces and affirm the value of art and artists.

**Principle No. 4:** There is a culture of high expectations, respect for creative expression and an affirmation of youth participants as artists.

**Principle No. 5:** Programs culminate in high-quality public events with real audiences.

**Principle No. 6:** Positive relationships with adult mentors and peers foster a sense of belonging and acceptance.

**Principle No. 7:** Youth participants actively shape programs and assume meaningful leadership roles.

**Principle No. 8:** Programs focus on hands-on skill building using current equipment and technology.

**Principle No. 9:** Programs strategically engage key stakeholders to create a network of support for both youth participants and the programs.

**Principle No. 10:** Programs provide a physically and emotionally safe place for youth.

*(Montgomery, Rogovin, & Persaud, 2013)*



Interview and focus group participants in the summit’s background research study noted importantly that their programs do not build quality experiences for young people in the arts, humanities, and sciences on the one hand, and quality youth development experiences on the other; they do both at the same time in an integrated, inextricably interconnected way. Successful programs provide a learning environment that supports creative practice in the arts, humanities, and sciences—one that is safe for taking risks and developing and trying out new skills; fertile for imagining, revising, and realizing new possibilities; supportive of the exploration and expression of one’s internal and external landscapes; and inclusive of opportunities to make one’s self and one’s learning visible. In so doing, they are, at the same time, providing a learning environment with the qualities researchers identify as key for fostering youth development (McLaughlin, 2000; Stevenson, Limón, Reclosado, 2012). Both adult mentors and youth participants at their programs, they reported, are attuned to and build on this connection.

“In school, teachers want it their way or the highway. You have an idea; they drop it. Here, they accept your ideas. They want you to have ideas, they want you to make up your own thing.” —ARTLAB+ Student, Washington, DC



## Building the Agenda

Participants in the interviews and focus groups were asked to identify priorities for a strategic agenda that would increase the impact and sustainability of their programs. A set of nine strategic priorities emerged:

1. Engaging and supporting program alumni
2. Building collective impact to improve youth outcomes
3. Contributing to community development
4. Documenting and communicating program impact
5. Evaluation and research
6. Building structures and networks for connecting and collaborating as a creative youth development field
7. Funding and sustainability
8. Responding to and staying relevant in changing times
9. Facilitating social change and social justice

Through the national survey, a wider sample of creative youth development leaders—both youth and adult—participated in ranking these priorities to determine the top five they felt should be the focus of the summit and become the major “planks” of the strategic agenda. In rank order, they selected: 1) building collective impact to improve youth outcomes; 2) funding and sustainability, 3) documenting and communicating program impact, 4) contributing to community development, and 5) facilitating social change and social justice.

The remaining section of this report introduces each of the five strategic priorities, proposes two key strategic goals under each, and lists emerging ideas for action steps that creative youth development organizations, funders, policymakers, and other stakeholders might take to help achieve those goals. At the summit, participants will organize into five caucuses, each charged with refining the imperative and call to action for one of these five priorities. The material presented below is intended to inform—but not prescribe—these deliberations.

## Five Strategic Priorities

### Strategic Priority 1: Building Collective Impact to Improve Youth Outcomes

How can creative youth development programs better connect to broader efforts to improve youth outcomes and collaborate with other sectors invested in supporting youth development—including education, health, and business—in order to build collective impact?

The challenges facing young people “are complex and cannot be solved by families, communities, schools, employers, nonprofits, or the government alone” (White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012, p. 21). Those invested in improving youth outcomes are increasingly embracing “collective impact initiatives” as a strategy to ensure that young people’s needs are met from “cradle to career” (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Collective impact initiatives organize often-fragmented efforts to address specific social issues. Such initiatives—characterized by “a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations”—are demonstrating success in moving the needle on previously intractable social issues (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 21). Creative youth development leaders participating in the pre-summit research recognize that they have an important role to play in collective impact initiatives to improve youth outcomes in their communities, and in some cases are already engaged in or leading such initiatives. They emphasize the importance of these efforts as an avenue to make substantial and enduring change in young people’s lives and also point to the strategic value of integrating their programs with these efforts—opening new possibilities for support, connection, and resources. At the same time, these leaders highlighted that it will be important for creative youth development programs participating in such collaborative efforts, to hold on to the core principle—the creative linchpin—that enables them to realize their dynamic and multifaceted impact with and for young people and their communities. Forming and



joining collaborative efforts to improve youth outcomes, they also noted, has until now been largely an unfunded mandate, and support and resources will be needed moving forward to facilitate the success of such collaborations.

In the youth policy context, collective impact strategies are receiving special attention in efforts to improve outcomes for so-called “opportunity youth”—the estimated 6.7 million young people in the United States ages 16 to 24 who are currently disconnected from pathways to college, careers, and civic engagement (Pittman, 2012). Absent a change in the status quo, opportunity youth are projected to impose an economic and social burden on American society of upwards of six trillion dollars over their lifetime (Belfield, Levin, & Rosen, 2012). Policy experts recognize that “the lack of coordination across systems and within communities is more severe for opportunity youth than for any others” and that collective impact strategies, therefore, are particularly important to addressing their needs (Pittman, 2012, P. 1). Creative youth development organizations can be an important part of collective efforts to turn the tide for opportunity youth as they frequently provide “on ramps”—alternative pathways—to reconnection for young people who have become disengaged from their communities and pathways to educational and career attainment (White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012). Creative youth development leaders participating in the pre-summit research reported that they are already becoming increasingly aware of their importance as “on ramps” for older youth, and are developing programming to strengthen this function and more formally bridge young people from their programs to college and career attainment. Given the success of these programs in engaging young people in their own learning and helping them cultivate their sense of self and future, there may be a special role for creative youth development programs in engaging and equipping currently marginalized youth.



“I think people assume that because we’re from the inner city that none of us want to go to college or want to build careers. RAW showed everybody, ‘Hey, they’re here, this is the next generation, they want jobs, they want college, come and get them.’” —Jonathan, Raw Art Works Alumnus, Lynn, MA

**Goal #1: Build creative youth development programs into collective impact initiatives to improve youth outcomes at the local, state, and federal levels.**

**Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:**

**a) Programs:**

- Identify, join, and actively participate in local community collaborations for youth.
- Prepare and support youth leaders to be active participants in charting and executing the goals of community collaborations for youth.
- Focus on shared community goals for youth and advocate for young people (not the arts, humanities, or sciences).
- Evaluate program impact on shared goals for youth and increase awareness of the role creative youth development programs play in achieving these goals.
- Develop relationships with agencies and officers managing workforce development, health, and expanded learning opportunities funds, and apply for those funds.

**b) Funders:**

- Advocate for the inclusion of creative youth development programs in collective impact initiatives to improve youth outcomes.
- Provide resources and technical assistance to creative youth development programs to participate in collective impact initiatives to improve youth outcomes, and recognize that collaboration requires additional time and resources.
- Fund research and evaluation studies that provide evidence of the impact of creative youth development programs on youth outcomes (both short-term and long-term), as well as identify best program practices.
- Fund an organization at the national level that can support creative youth development programs in acquiring the relationships, resources, and tools they need to participate effectively in collective action for youth, and provide a mechanism for creative youth development programs to engage in unified, direct advocacy at the federal level.

**c) Researchers:**

- Continue lines of research that examine the impact of creative youth development programs on youth development outcomes as well as conduct research to better understand the role that creativity, self-expression, and innovation play in achieving broader youth development outcomes.
- Examine and measure how program impact unfolds over time for alumni.

**d) Policymakers:**

- Ensure that arts, cultural, and science agencies at the local, state, and federal levels are active participants in collective efforts by policymakers to improve youth outcomes—including, at the federal level, the Interagency Working Group for Youth (youthinfo.org).
- Include priorities for creative youth development programs in public funding streams that target youth outcomes—including the Workforce Investment Act, the federal high school redesign program, and federal and state career pathways initiatives.



“The college admissions officer said, ‘They come in here and they have voice, they have confidence, and they take leadership.’ I’ve heard many times, ‘I can spot a Raw kid.’”

—Kit Jenkins, RAW Art Works, Lynn, MA



“Over the last ten years, every one of our seniors has graduated, but even more importantly, 100 percent of our kids have gone on to a college or university. Seventy-seven percent of our students being Latino, first generation college students, that’s pretty significant.”

—Jon Hinojosa, SAY Sí, San Antonio, TX

**Goal #2: Engage creative youth development programs to re-connect “opportunity youth” and support their successful transition to college and careers.**

**Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:**

**a) Programs:**

- Expand programming for older youth.
- Support alumni in making successful transitions to college and careers.
- Develop and use tools to stay connected with alumni and evaluate program impact as it unfolds for youth over the long-term.
- Build opportunities for alumni to return to programs (and be employed) as mentors, teachers, and guest artists, scholars, or scientists.

**b) Funders:**

- Provide funding and technical assistance for creative youth development organizations to expand programmatic activities for older youth and program alumni.
- Support research and evaluation studies that provide evidence of the impact of creative youth development programs on opportunity youth (both short-term and long-term), as well as best program practices.

**c) Researchers:**

- Research the role and impact of creative youth development programs as “on ramps” for opportunity youth.
- Conduct studies with alumni of creative youth development programs to examine the long-term impact of such programs on their college and career trajectories.

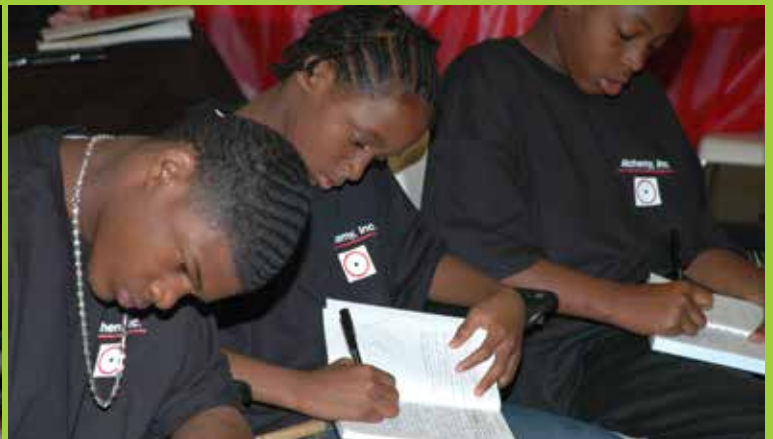
**d) Policymakers:**

- Legislate the inclusion of creative youth development programs as “on ramps” to youth engagement in their communities and to college and career attainment.



## Strategic Priority 2: Funding and Sustainability

How can creative youth development programs work together to tackle shared goals and advance their sector, and what support would they need to do so? How can funders most effectively support the sustainability and impact of creative youth development programs?



Creative youth development leaders identify a desire for support and opportunities to collaborate across programs to address shared goals—including developing measurement and evaluation tools and data systems and advocating for creative youth development—in order to help them strengthen their community of practice and increase the capacity of their sector. Currently resources for collaboration between and among program leaders, participants, researchers, and evaluators at local and national levels are scant. Given that such activities require time and coordination, they are unlikely to take place without support. An investment in such collaborations, however, may help to conserve the sector’s resources and increase its visibility, sustainability, and impact over the long-term.



“Scale doesn’t always mean an increase in numbers, but it often means depth of experience and depth of opportunity, investment of opportunities.” —James Kass, Youth Speaks, San Francisco, CA



Many creative youth development programs spend enormous time and energy writing and reporting on small, short-term grants. This cycle detracts from the ability of organizations to make long-term program commitments to young people, draws resources and focus away from programmatic activities, and contributes to staff burnout. Further, the overall funds available for arts and culture programs are limited, and existing grant programs are frequently defined by narrow priorities, making it challenging for organizations to procure funding for holistic, dynamic, and responsive program approaches. Creative youth development leaders recognize a need to cultivate new funding streams and for innovations in grant making and reporting approaches. They also identify a desire to collaborate with funders to pilot new strategies for scaling the impact of successful programs—in particular, working with the idea that increasing the scale of a program’s impact does not necessarily mean increasing the breadth of its reach, but may mean instead increasing the depth of what it offers in a particular community.

**Goal #1: Develop opportunities and supports for creative youth development leaders and stakeholders to collaborate across programs to increase the sector’s capacity, sustainability, and impact.**

**Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:**

**a) Programs:**

- Increase awareness of the activities of other creative youth development programs locally and nationally.
- Participate in local, state, and national meetings of creative youth development programs.
- Work with peer organizations to develop tools and systems that address shared needs.

**b) Funders:**

- Encourage and fund collaborations of program leaders and researchers to develop evaluation and other tools that can be shared, to conserve the resources of individual organizations and advance the sector as a whole.
- Collaborate with peer philanthropies to develop a larger pot of funds available for national-level activity by creative youth development programs.
- Support a national organization to create and maintain communications vehicles for the sector and lead the implementation of its strategic agenda.

c) **Researchers:**

- In collaboration with creative youth development leaders, and funders, develop tools and systems needed across creative youth development programs.
- Build a formal program of research investigating the impacts of creative youth development programs, the mechanisms through which they are realized, and their policy implications.

d) **Policymakers:**

- Support, strengthen, and encourage data sharing between and among creative youth development and other youth-serving programs and institutions.

**Goal #2: Develop new grant making and reporting approaches to increase the sustainability and impact of creative youth development programs.**

**Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:**

a) **Programs:**

- Partner with funders to develop innovative means for reporting on and ensuring accountability for grants—including for example, site visits, videos, and mentoring exchanges across grantee organizations.
- Develop models to engage potential major individual donors to support creative youth development programs.
- Develop innovative earned-income models for creative youth development programs.



b) **Funders:**

- Streamline grant application and reporting processes.
- Provide creative youth development programs larger, longer-term grants.
- Support creative youth development programs to increase the scale of their impact by going deeper in communities, rather than necessarily expanding across more communities, in order to help them realize their full potential as catalysts for the transformation of young people and communities.
- Develop models to engage potential major individual donors to support creative youth development programs.

c) **Researchers:**

- Develop and teach cases of innovative funding approaches within the creative youth development sector.

d) **Business:**

- Invest in creative youth development programs as a training ground for a creative workforce—provide ongoing funding support; participate on their boards of directors; and provide professional and intellectual in-kind services.

e) **Policymakers:**

- Include creative youth development programs in broader youth-focused initiatives and funding at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Increase investments in creative youth development organizations to offer afterschool and extended learning programs, including summer learning, summer jobs programs, and alternative education opportunities.



### Strategic Priority 3: Documenting and Communicating Program Impact

How can creative youth development programs better document and communicate their impact—individually and as a sector—and what support is needed for them to do so?

Creative youth development programs are working to realize a complex set of outcomes that are of broad concern to community, education, business, cultural, and civic leaders, but few outside the sector fully understand its impact or value. Creative youth development leaders recognize that they need to get better at documenting and telling their story and, in particular, making visible the transformation that happens for young people and communities through their programs.

Participants in the summit research study called for creative youth development leaders to develop and use a shared conceptual framework to facilitate the documentation and communication of program impact. Such an effort, they stress, might fruitfully build on frameworks developed within the sector in recent years. In Massachusetts, for example, a coalition of five arts-based youth development programs, the Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project, developed a framework—drawing on arts education, youth development, and out-of-school research and best practice—to describe, and guide the measurement of, their program impact. The framework examined program outcomes through three overlapping lenses, which they called: I Create, I Am, and We Connect (Swaback et al., 2012). In Michigan, researchers studying Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit's impact on youth development designed a similar set of constructs for describing the set of outcomes they observed, named: Skills, Self, and Society (Gutiérrez & Spencer, 2008). Despite having been developed in isolation from one another, these frameworks have substantial resonance and suggest that consensus on a shared, conceptually rich, and useful framework is within reach. Study participants also highlighted a need within the creative youth development sector to engage more dynamic, multi-media communication tools to capture the attention of external audiences and convey vividly the work and stories of programs, participants, and alumni.

“Our programs can all offer up our separate evaluation results, but what are we really proving; what are we really learning; how are we really improving our programs based on this? If we could get support to pool our national and cross-sector brain power, we could go to the next level.”

—Kathe Swaback, Raw Art Works, Lynn, MA



**Goal #1: Develop and promote a shared conceptual framework for documenting and communicating the impact of creative youth development programs.**

**Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:**

**a) Programs:**

- Collaborate with peer organizations and funders to create and use a shared conceptual framework for evaluating and conveying the practice and impact of creative youth development programs.

**b) Funders:**

- Fund leading creative youth development programs and researchers with whom they work, to gather regularly over a two to five-year period to develop a shared conceptual framework for documenting and communicating the practice and impact of their programs.
- Fund a national organization to serve as convener and to provide professional development and training to support program leaders in developing and using a shared conceptual framework.

**c) Researchers:**

- Engage in two-way partnerships with creative youth development programs to help build a shared conceptual framework to facilitate the documentation of program impact.
- Develop and teach case studies of creative youth development programs and key phenomena in the creative youth development sector.

**d) Business:**

- Provide in-kind support to creative youth development programs to design tools and systems that will assist them in more efficiently collecting and analyzing the impact data needed to document and communicate their impact.



**Goal #2: Communicate program impact effectively to increase awareness of and support for creative youth development programs.**

**Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:**

**a) Programs:**

- Recognize that documentation is critical; develop program capacity for and allocate resources to documentation.
- Develop multimedia storytelling tools and examples to convey the narrative of the sector's work and impact on multiple levels, for multiple audiences. (See, for example, "Voices," "Showcase," and "Making the work" on the *Seen and Heard* blog at: [www.seenandheard.massculturalcouncil.org](http://www.seenandheard.massculturalcouncil.org)).
- Create and contribute to a national, online repository of stories from the sector using the Afterschool Alliance's *Afterschool Storybook*: (<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/storybook/gallery.cfm>) or other website.
- Track and share alumni stories as evidence of program impact and how it unfolds in young people's lives over time.

**b) Funders:**

- Support an organization at the national level that can powerfully and consistently make the story of the creative youth development programs visible within broader youth development, community development, and funding contexts.
- Fund research on communications tactics and methods within the creative youth development sector to identify and help disseminate best practices.
- Provide funding for creative youth development programs to work with social media consultants as well as image strategists who are expert in conveying big ideas through film and photography.
- Provide funding for data analytics support to develop tools and systems to more efficiently analyze impact data collected by program leaders.

**c) Researchers:**

- Conduct research on communications tactics and methods within the creative youth development sector and identify and teach best practices.

**d) Business:**

- Provide in-kind marketing and communications support to creative youth development programs.



## Strategic Priority 4: Contributing to Community Development

How can creative youth development programs increase their impact on the vibrancy, safety, and health of the communities they serve? How can they engage local community development initiatives as a vehicle for young people to become more visible and valued as community assets?

Creative youth development programs are contributing to community development—helping to make their communities safer, healthier, and more vibrant. They are, for example, creating murals to beautify community spaces and address public safety issues; increasing community capacity for non violent conflict resolution and violence reduction; creating community gardens that make communities more environmentally sustainable and welcoming; and serving as hubs of cultural and civic activity for youth and their families. In response to growing economic, social, and environmental stressors in the communities they serve, creative youth development leaders find that there is a need for their programs to more actively identify, join, and contribute to local community development initiatives. At the same time, current investment in creative “place-making”—a strategy that engages community-based arts and cultural organizations as key drivers of community vitalization—presents new opportunities and resources that creative youth development programs might tap toward this end (Nowak, 2007).

For many creative youth development programs, the initial impetus to engage in community activities stems from their understanding that opportunities for “making a real difference in one’s community” are an important feature of programs that promote youth development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002, p. 90). Creative youth development leaders participating in the study recognize that increasing their participation in community development efforts is, thus, an opportunity not only to increase their impact on communities, but also on the outcomes of the young people they serve. They also recognize, knowing what their young people have to offer, that communities need the creative voice and vision of their young people if efforts toward community development are to succeed.



**Goal #1: Connect creative youth development programs with local community development initiatives to improve community outcomes.**

**Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:**

**a) Programs:**

- Identify, join, and actively participate in local community development initiatives.
- Advocate for shared community goals and increase awareness of the role creative youth development programs play in achieving desired community outcomes.
- Work with community development agencies and other community partners to develop and use tools to evaluate impact on shared community goals.
- Develop relationships with agencies and officers managing community development funds—including neighborhood revitalization and crime prevention grants—and apply for those funds.

**“It’s linking them to resources in their community, and literally linking them to what they can do to make a positive difference in their community.”**

—Kris Scopinich, Mass Audubon’s Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Lincoln, MA

**b) Funders:**

- Provide resources to creative youth development organizations to participate in community development initiatives.
- Support research to examine the impact of creative youth development programs on community outcomes and document best practice.
- Advocate for the inclusion of creative youth development programs in community development grants.

**c) Researchers:**

- Research the role and impact of creative youth development programs and youth cultural activity on community development and creative place-making initiatives.

“What was once a gang and drug-infested neighborhood has become a neighborhood where people can gather and truly be a community together, and in large part that has to do with the teens and the work they do in this organization.”

—Brenda Rodriguez-Andujar, Hyde Square Task Force, Boston, MA



“I think funders and politicians should support programs like this because a lot of us come in as really shy, quiet kids, and then we come out as leaders in the community.”

—Yasmin, Hyde Square Task Force Student, Boston, MA

#### d) Policymakers:

- Legislate the inclusion of creative youth development organizations in community development initiatives and funding streams at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Ensure that arts, cultural, and science agencies at the local, state, and federal levels are active participants in collective efforts by policymakers to improve community development outcomes.
- Create incentives for artists to live and work in distressed neighborhoods and teach in creative youth development programs.
- Develop and fund programs that engage creative youth development programs to repurpose and revitalize under-utilized spaces.
- Engage creative youth development programs to address public safety issues, in particular, gang and gun violence, and to enhance cultural life and civic engagement in communities.

**Goal #2: Connect creative youth development programs with community development initiatives to support young people in becoming more visible, vocal, and valued in their communities.**

#### Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:

##### a) Programs:

- Prepare and support youth leaders to be active participants in charting and executing the goals of local community development initiatives.
- Recognize and build on community development opportunities as avenues for youth development and civic engagement.
- Create opportunities for the public to experience youth participants as assets to community cultural and civic life.

##### b) Funders:

- Include language in community development grants that honors the intersection of youth and community development practice and outcomes to aid programs in targeting both at the same time.

##### c) Researchers:

- Examine how creative youth development programs contribute to “place-making” and other community development initiatives.
- Develop and teach cases of creative youth development programs contributing to community development.

##### d) Policymakers:

- Legislate the inclusion of creative youth development organizations in community development initiatives and funding streams at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Include youth engagement, expression, and empowerment among target outcomes of community development initiatives.



## Strategic Priority 5: Facilitating Social Change and Social Justice

How can we increase opportunities and supports for young people to imagine and create a more just and equitable society? How can the leadership of the creative youth development sector—its programs and funders—model and support that goal?



Many creative youth development programs, particularly arts-based programs, use the disciplines they teach “as a tool to examine and challenge unjust social dynamics” (Seidel et al., 2009, p. 24). They also engage the creative process and products in the arts, humanities, and sciences as vehicles for young people to learn about one another and build understanding across lines of social difference—including race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socio-economic background—that often separate them in schools and neighborhoods. They provide a setting and experiences in which young people can see themselves, and through which they can become more empowered and visible to others. They support youth participants to imagine the world in which they would like to live and to change the way they relate to one another so that their world inside the program better embodies the imagined one. They also take action individually and collectively to effect change more broadly. They frequently do this by creating, and sharing with external audiences, work in the arts, humanities, or sciences that embodies alternate and more just social possibilities. Many also act as agents of change by “walking differently in the world”—relating to others and the world around them with greater self-awareness, social awareness, leadership capacity, and skill for cross-cultural understanding developed through their participation in creative youth development programs (Stevenson, 2011). Further, some creative youth development programs partner directly with youth-serving systems—for example juvenile justice, alternative education, and mental health—to help them reimagine and reinvent their ways of working with young people and align them with principles of social justice.

To increase their capacity to support young people in creating a more just world, creative youth development leaders recognize a need to help policymakers and funders develop a better understanding of their impact on social change and social justice. They also identify a need to attend to leadership structures and practices within their sector to ensure that they embody and support the social change that youth in their organizations are working to create.

**Goal #1: Advance creative youth development programs as vehicles to prepare and support young people to create social change and facilitate social justice.**

**Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:**

**a) Programs:**

- Develop and use tools to measure the impacts of creative youth development programs on social change and social justice.
- Build relationships with politicians, religious leaders, community organizers, scholars, and others actively pursuing social change.
- Provide youth access to instructors and content that reflect and engage their cultural backgrounds.
- Deliver training in social justice pedagogy as part of staff professional development.
- Connect youth participants with existing social justice efforts and movements.
- Make young people's work visible to, and their ideas heard by, wide audiences.

**b) Funders:**

- Fund creative youth development programs as avenues for young people to create social change, and participate in addressing social issues and structures of inequality that inhibit their growth and success.
- Fund the development of tools to measure the impact of creative youth development programs on social change and social justice.
- Fund program participants and staff to visit and learn from other programs that emphasize social justice in their practice.
- Fund a summit of youth leaders from creative youth development programs that effect social change.
- Fund professional development for emerging youth workers to learn from social justice pedagogy experts locally and nationally.

**“If we were to rethink our mission statement, for me, I would like it to say, “To get free.”** —Robyne Walker-Murphy, DreamYard Project, Bronx, NY



### c) Researchers:

- Study short-term and long-term impacts of creative youth development programs on social change and social justice.
- Help to develop tools with which other researchers and programs can examine their impact on social change and social justice.
- Develop case studies of creative youth development programs for the White House's What Works resource, an "online portal to disseminate programs and practices that improve outcomes for boys and young men of color" (Jarrett & Johnson, 2014).

### d) Policymakers:

- Encourage and support partnerships between creative youth development programs and youth-serving government agencies.
- Engage creative youth development programs as partners in enacting the vision of the White House's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, aimed at empowering boys and young men of color (Jarrett & Johnson, 2014).

**Goal #2:** Ensure that the leadership structures and practices within the creative youth development sector embody and support the world that youth participants are striving to create.

### Emerging Ideas for a Call to Action:

#### a) Programs:

- Ensure that program leadership reflects and is responsive to the youth and communities it serves.
- Provide formal leadership pathways for interested youth to learn about administration and practice in creative youth development programs, including paid internships and mentorship roles for returning alumni.
- Provide practitioners and leaders in creative youth development programs anti-racism and other anti-oppression training, and develop participating young people as trainers in those efforts.



“They create an original play based on their lives, and current issues within the queer community. Then they take that as a tool for social activism, and they go out in the community and they perform and conduct workshops.”

—Magda Spasiano, True Colors: Out YouthTheater, Boston, MA



b) Funders:

- Fund research to identify promising practices for how organizations can shift internal structures to more effectively embody and support social justice and social change.
- Partner with leaders in creative youth development organizations—both youth and adult—to evaluate and design the leadership structures that guide grant making to align with principles of social justice.
- Fund creative youth development programs that are already deeply engaged with diverse audiences and communities, to collaborate with major cultural institutions to develop programs that will lead to meaningful and enduring audience-diversity outcomes for those institutions.

c) Researchers:

- Partner with youth and adult leaders to determine the research questions that matter to them, and increase awareness of and address the power differential that often exists between academic institutions and the youth and community-based organizations they study.

## Looking Forward

Over the last eight months, stakeholders in creative youth development programs—both young people and adults—have contributed their thoughts to this research to help lay the ground work for the National Summit on Creative Youth Development. Their insights, accompanied by a review of relevant literature, have helped us to better understand creative youth development practice and impact, and most importantly, to identify the strategic priorities around which stakeholders might organize to increase the sustainability and impact of creative youth development programs. They have also helped us to identify emerging recommendations for a call to action that would help realize the goals of the agenda.

Now the work of the summit itself begins, as leaders from across the nation gather in Boston to grapple with these findings and recommendations. Are the included goals the most important to achieving the ambitions of the five proposed strategic priorities? What are the right calls to action and which are the most urgent? After the summit, results of these deliberations will be available through the summit partners—the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the National Guild for Community Arts Education, and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities—all of whom are committed to continuing to work together after the summit to promote the resulting strategic agenda. Together, they are dedicated to increasing the collective impact of creative youth development programs on young people, their families, and communities.



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# Acknowledgements: It Takes a Village

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