HIGHLIGHTS *from*
CCRY NETWORK'S SPRING 2019 CONVENING
EQUITY *and the* FUTURE OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Photo: Shanice Turner

The Communities Collaborating to Reconnect Youth Network (CCRY) is a national learning community of leaders working across systems to help young people reconnect to education and career pathways.

CCRY was born out of the Youth Opportunity Movement (YO), a grant program authorized under the Workforce Investment Act. After the grant ended in 2005, **15 YO grantees** formed the CCRY Network to build on the gains that YO had made possible.

For the last 13 years, CLASP has facilitated semiannual convenings for CCRY communities to connect policy to practice, discuss local and state implications of federal policy, grapple with funding and implementation questions, and share challenges and promising strategies. CCRY gives particular focus to advancing equity by dismantling systemic barriers and creating pathways to careers for youth of color, youth living in communities with high poverty rates, and opportunity youth.

Unlike typical conferences, CCRY events are designed as learning exchanges where participants bring their successes and challenges, acquire knowledge from each other's experiences, and come away with new ideas that directly impact their work. Agendas are developed based on extensive discussions with CCRY members and co-convener FHI360.

CCRY's 2019 spring meeting topic was Equity and the Future of Youth Employment. With equity as our grounding principle, participants discussed a range of topics, such as summer youth employment programs and apprenticeship systems that are accessible to and effective for youth. This document captures some of what our members shared and learned.

Equity and policymaking

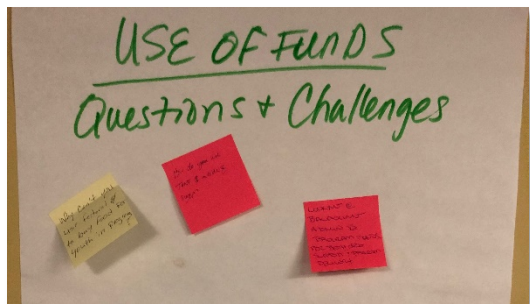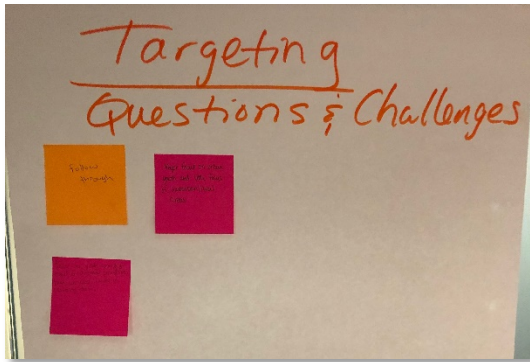**We opened the meeting by discussing systems of power.** These are the beliefs, practices, and cultural norms that reinforce white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity as the defining power structures in our society. We explored seven policy levers that can influence equity.

1. **Targeting**: Focus on selected demographic group(s) for priority.
2. **Programmatic strategies**: Services and opportunities tailored to that group, particularly programs codesigned with youth.
3. **Proximity to services (access):** A variety of physical locations that are accessible to youth and young adults.
4. **Eligibility**: Enrollment requirements and processes that facilitate participation of those with the most significant barriers.
5. **Reporting requirements:** Streamlined systems that disaggregate participation and outcomes data by race, gender, age, geography, or other demographic identifiers as well as groups who may face distinct barriers that can contribute to disparate outcomes.
6. **Performance measures**: Data collection that moves beyond typical measures of academic or employment gains to capture progress in socio-emotional learning or other ancillary domains.
7. **Use of funds**: Budget allocations that support strategies for serving prioritized groups.

Participants used sticky notes to share dozens of ways they are dismantling systems of power in their communities, including these examples:

- **Targeted programs** to help potential first-generation college students bridge to post-secondary opportunities.
- **Investing in communities** by hiring from the areas where youth live.
- **Strategies** to identify candidates who can relate to young people based on their own lived experience.
- **Paid youth leadership opportunities**, such as ambassador programs.
- **Pre-apprenticeships** that seamlessly transition into registered apprenticeships in a variety of fields .
- **Post-placement coaching**, with performance measures that incentivize personalized interactions that help youth navigate the challenges of employment.

Summer youth employment programs

CCRY participants built on the equity discussion in a conversation about strategies for effective and sustainable summer jobs programs. (For further background, see the 2018 report **Too Many Teens Turned Away: Strengthening and Expanding Summer Jobs**).

Ideas from network members

1) Facilitate equity in enrollment

- SYEP and detention agencies collaborate to register youth for summer jobs while they are incarcerated.
- Minimize paperwork required to enroll.
- Subsidize IDs or other necessary work documents.
- For agencies prohibited from enrolling undocumented youth: establish referral pipelines to identified partners (such as community-based organizations using

private funding) who are able to provide paid summer work experience.
- Hold registration days at recreation centers, public housing developments, and other easily accessible neighborhood locations.
- Increase the number of registration days.
- Create a welcoming environment by ensuring that police officers assigned to registration events wear plain clothes.

Spotlight: Baltimore

Youth who are incarcerated during SYEP registration periods often miss out on the opportunity to gain a summer job. In Baltimore, SYEP staff go behind the prison walls to ensure that youth who will be released by summer can register and be welcomed home with a job offer.

2) Leverage limited funding by increasing unsubsidized jobs

- Identify champions such as mayors to recruit employers.
- Increase direct employer outreach.
- Maintain relationships with employers throughout the year, not just when securing summer jobs.

3) Supplement SYEP funding

- Integrate SYEP into year-round programs funded through other sources.
- Identify nontraditional funding sources that can meet specific needs, such as support services, outreach, or enrollment of youth who don't meet eligibility requirements for public funds.
- Offer opportunities for corporate sponsorship.

Spotlight: Albany

The City of Albany sought out external funding, winning a grant from the U.S. Conference of Mayors to support jobs for undocumented youth. As a Sanctuary City, they were able to give those youth access to the state retirement plan.

4) Prioritize youth voice and leadership

- Hire SYEP alumni as staff.
- Institutionalize feedback loops and program evaluations that capture the youth's experience.

5) Encourage postsecondary collaboration & exploration

- Include paid college visits in the SYEP schedule.
- Offer the choice of a higher education awareness option in place of a traditional summer job.
- Offer technical skills training that gives youth an in-depth introduction to specific careers such as finance, carpentry, or information technology (IT).

Spotlight: Orlando

A pilot program in Orlando offers an "Explorer Track" where youth attend community college, rotating through weeklong introductory classes in a range of career fields. This option demystifies higher education, whether that be career and technical education or college.

6) Integrate money management skills

- Partner with banks or credit unions to teach financial management.
- Support financial autonomy and independence with options for debit cards or bank accounts that don't require parental cosigners.
- Enroll youth hired by the city in state employee retirement plans.

Pre-apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a hot topic, but pre-apprenticeship is less well-understood. There is great potential for pre-apprenticeship as a tool to help youth access apprenticeship opportunities and benefit from new investments in this area. There is little consensus on what pre-apprenticeship is or what makes it quality. Members raised questions, concerns, and opportunities for using pre-apprenticeship to advance equity.

- To avoid tracking youth, pre-apprenticeships should be available for a broad range of careers. Participants mentioned healthcare, construction, IT, advanced manufacturing, childcare/early education, cyber security, and finance.
- Pre-apprenticeships should be designed using positive youth development principles, with attention to equity and the cultural competency of instructors, mentors, and employers.
- Outcomes should include concrete skills, social capital, and understanding of workplace expectations.

- Pre-apprenticeships should be co-developed with industry partners, leading to priority admission to registered apprenticeships.
- Zero tolerance policies for substance use are not appropriate for pre-apprenticeship; programs should support healthy decision-making and treatment when needed. Testing should be limited and used to ensure safety, not to weed out applicants or justify termination.

What's next?

Input collected from the CCRY Network informs CLASP's advocacy for policies that support the work of CCRY members. Our fall 2019 convening in Los Angeles will feature the City of LA's Performance Partnership Pilot (P3), deep discussions of approaches to mental health in the context of youth employment, and other topics of interest to our members.

CCRY Members

Albany, NY	Pittsburgh, PA	Nashville, TN	St. Louis, MO
Kansas City, MO	Baltimore, MD	Southeast Arkansas	Hartford, CT
Philadelphia, PA	Louisville, KY	Denver, CO	Orlando, FL
Atlanta, GA	Seattle, WA	New Orleans, LA	Tacoma, WA
Los Angeles, CA	Boston, MA	St. Louis, MO	

Meeting at a Glance

DAY ONE

2:15pm	Welcome, Introductions, Overview, Icebreakers
2:45pm	The Big Picture: Federal Policy and Our Response
3:45pm	Equity and Youth Policymaking
4:50pm	Wrap-up

DAY TWO

9:00am	Warmup Activity
9:30am	Key Youth Employment Strategies: Looking Back and Looking Ahead
9:50am	Building Effective, Equitable Apprenticeship Systems: Part I
11:15am	Building Effective, Equitable Apprenticeship Systems: Part II
1:00pm	Challenges and Opportunities in Summer Youth Employment Programs
2:30pm	Pop-up Break-out Groups
4:00pm	Local Policy News Exchange
4:55pm	Wrap-up

DAY THREE

9:00am	Recap and Sharing
9:30am	Dialogue with Federal Partners
11:10am	Wrap-up and Looking Ahead
12:00pm	Adjourn