Input for the Strategic Plan for Federal Youth Policy

Submitted to the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs by the Forum for Youth Investment
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(a) What is the single most important thing youth need to be successful?

As the Forum for Youth Investment (the Forum) wrote in 2000, a substantial body of research and practice has demonstrated that "the desired goals of overall youth development are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve within the bounds of a single intervention unless that intervention is, in reality, not a single program (even a comprehensive one) but a reasonably complex strategy to change young people's environments and opportunity structures."[i] There is no one single magic thing that will ensure youth will be successful. Leaders must instead implement a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach.

This can be difficult in a political context which places a premium on "focusing." Pick a population, pick a problem, pick a solution. Public and private leaders are told to find a niche and stick with it in order to direct limited resources toward a manageable goal. Left unchecked, leaders can create too many initiatives that do not necessarily add up to have a big impact on the problems that are affecting children and families.

Think of the number of separate change-focused initiatives, task forces and coalitions underway even in a small community. Part of the dilemma is that the more we focus on narrow pieces, the more we fragment the responses, and the more we fail our children and youth. This does not have to be the case. The Center for the Study of Social Policy found that community change initiatives focused on big goals were as likely to succeed as were those focused on small ones.[ii] The difference was in the planning, not the visioning.

The Harvard Change Model helps us understand why. Harvard Business School researchers have found that the level of organizational change equals the level of dissatisfaction with the status quo times the clarity of the vision, times the adequacy of the plan: Change = Dissatisfaction x Vision x Plan. Disconnected change efforts within a community or network may actually dissipate the energy for change. The response to lackluster change results should not be to focus in on smaller pieces, but to crank up the demand for a bolder vision and a better plan.

Leaders must learn to focus differently in a way that lets them see both the forest and the trees. Rather than zooming in only on one piece at a time, leaders need to learn to zoom out to see the big picture to make sure current efforts add up before they simply add on new programs, new solutions and new initiatives.

(b) What programs really make a difference in the lives of youth? How do you know this?

Naming specific programs that make a difference in the lives of youth is a laudable goal. Having such a list allows policymakers to increase investments in those specific programs. This is great for the small number of organizations that (1) have had the resources to undertake expensive evaluations, and (2) have a large infrastructure to allow for program replication in other sites.

But the vast majority of organizations do not have the capacity for such evaluation and replication. For these organizations to improve their youth programs, they must know not only *what* programs make a difference, but also *why* they make a difference. They need to know the *specific features and practices* that separate effective programs from ineffective programs. Armed with this information, *all* organizations could measure and improve their services.

The National Research Council's (NRC) book, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*[iii], provided a tremendous boost to efforts to define the *specific features and practices* that underlie all successful efforts for

youth. It named each feature, described what each looked like when present or absent, and underscored emerging research that suggests that not only do programs with these features lead to positive outcomes, but programs without these features can actually do harm. According to study authors Eccles and Gootman, "Research demonstrates that *certain features of the settings* that adolescents experience make a tremendous difference, for good or for ill, in their lives" (emphasis added).[iv]

In the nine years since the book was released, the research and evaluation field has made several important leaps forward which allow us to now definitively state that: Quality matters; quality is measurable; and quality is malleable.

Quality Matters

Every program *can* make a large difference in the lives of youth *if* the program uses specific features and practices. In their 2007 meta-analysis, Durlak and Weissberg grouped 73 programs into two clusters.[v] Programs with high-quality features showed positive effects on almost every outcome: school performance, social behavior, attitudes and beliefs. Programs that did not have the high-quality features showed no effect on any outcome. Note that if they had merely published a list of *which programs* worked and which did not, it would have done little to help any program improve. By naming the *specific features* of programs that led some to succeed and others to fail, the study provided all programs with important guidance for improvement.

Quality is Measurable

The Forum reviewed a number of measurement tools in the marketplace in its report, *Measuring Youth Programs: A Guide to Quality Assessment Tools*[vi], and found that the *specific features and practices* that separate effective programs from ineffective programs are scientifically measurable, and can even be reliably measured in affordable ways.

For example, a growing number of communities are using the Weikart Center's[vii] Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), which was developed by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation and has its roots in a long lineage of quality measurement rubrics for pre-school, elementary and youth programs. The overall purpose of the YPQA is to encourage individuals, programs and systems to focus on the quality of the experiences young people have in programs and the corresponding training needs of staff. While some structural and organizational management issues are included in the instrument, the YPQA focuses primarily on what the developers refer to as the "point of service" – the delivery of key developmental experiences and young people's access to those experiences. The YPQA has been rigorously researched and validated.

Quality is Malleable

Research has found that not only can quality features and practices be measured, but they can also be significantly improved, often without requiring large infusions of resources. For example, building on the YPQA, the Weikart Center wanted to scientifically measure if an intervention could improve the quality of existing programs. They undertook the "Youth Program Quality Intervention Study," a randomized control trial sited in 100 programs in five states, which examined the effects of a targeted intervention focused on managers and direct staff in out-of-school time (OST) organizations serving adolescents. Their findings indicated that the Youth Program Quality Intervention has a significant, positive impact on the management practices of site supervisors and direct staff, and that the intervention has a significant, positive impact on the quality of instructional performances of staff as they interact with youth in after-school activities.[viii]

Reframing the original question, "What programs really make a difference in the lives of youth?," we would instead encourage the Interagency Work Group on Youth Programs to shine a light on the question: "What program quality improvement strategies can ensure that all youth programs make a difference in the lives of youth?"

(c) What are the barriers to collaborating to improve youth outcomes and how can these barriers be removed?

It is one thing to call for a comprehensive approach; it is quite another thing to figure out how to help communities put one in place. What infrastructure is needed? What decision-making structures? Who needs to be at the table? What information and data must be collected, and how must it be used? How should the quality of programs be measured and improved?

The Forum has spent the past decade working to answer these questions. The answers are embodied in the Forum's Ready by 21 Standards being released this year. For communities to effectively collaborate, they need:

- Broader Partnerships (engaged stakeholders, aligned coalitions, networks and intermediaries, a cradle-to-career leadership council);
- Bigger Goals (clear goals for children and youth, defined supports and performance measures, youth-centered communications and planning, big-picture action plan);
- Better Data and Information (complete child- and youth-centered data, aligned data systems, useful information about what works); and
- Bolder Strategies (improved systems and settings, aligned policies and resources, engaged children, youth and families, and increased demand).

Federal policies often dictate the types of partnerships, goals, data systems and strategies communities put in place. But there are two common flaws.

First, instead of putting in place one strong, well thought out infrastructure (partnerships, goals, data and strategies) for child and youth policies, most federal policies put in place independent, fragmented, underfunded infrastructure. Communities are asked or even required to put in place one set of infrastructure to oversee juvenile justice programs, another to oversee child welfare programs, another to oversee education programs and more. They are asked to put in place separate data systems and are given different ways to evaluate and improve program quality.

Second, policies often implicitly assume that no existing infrastructure is in place. As such, instead of strengthening existing coordinating bodies, data systems, quality improvement efforts and more, new efforts are created in addition to existing ones.

The result is that communities often have multiple versions of key pieces of the infrastructure necessary to oversee a long-term comprehensive solution for young people, yet each version lacks the time, funding and attention it needs to succeed.

What is the solution? The *Ready by 21 Policy Alignment Guide*[ix] presents a vision for aligning federal policies so that they reinforce a common infrastructure for youth services. The items below form a road map of how federal policies could remove barriers to collaborating.

Collaborate

Over the years, policies requiring the creation of a new collaboration focused on a narrow topic have left many communities with dozens of separate concurrent collaborations. As one local leader put it, “I used to have to bridge 17 different departments; now I have to bridge 17 different coalitions!”

Instead of this: a policy creating a new topic-specific collaboration (such as a state interagency coordinating council on educating individuals with disabilities).

Consider this: a policy ensuring that the topic in question gets adequately addressed by an existing collaboration.

Establish big-picture goals and long-term plans

Innovative leaders work to engage partners around a broad, long-term vision for children and youth, which they hold themselves collectively accountable for achieving. Policies requiring the creation of a new strategic plan focused on a narrow topic lead to the proliferation of separate sets of goals and plans that fragment efforts.

Instead of this: a policy requiring a new strategic plan (such as a dropout prevention strategy).
Consider this: a policy ensuring that the topic in question is adequately addressed by a community's existing goal-setting and strategic planning processes.

Administer grants

Most policies include a predictable set of elements dictating funding mechanisms, how and when to apply, regulations and reporting requirements. When each element is implemented independently, grantees lose valuable time cutting through red tape – time that could better be used to advance their missions.

Instead of this: a new application process and reporting requirements.
Consider this: a joint application process and reporting mechanism that could be used to satisfy the requirements of multiple funding streams simultaneously.

Engage young people in decision-making

Too often, decision makers shape youth services without bringing young people to the table to share their unique perspectives and insights. It is difficult to build and maintain the depth of experience needed for authentic youth engagement when the role of young people is added as an afterthought to multiple single-topic policies. Successful youth engagement efforts include a significant level of training and support (for both the young people and the policymakers working with them).

Instead of this: a policy creating a topic-specific youth engagement effort (such as a foster care youth advisory board).
Consider this: a policy calling for an existing youth engagement effort to include the topic in question as one piece of its work.

Improve quality and accountability

Researchers have found remarkable consistency between "what works" in programs designed to prevent negative outcomes and help young people reach their full potential.[x] Yet instead of collectively focusing on this core set of "essential ingredients" of good programs, most policies establish their own criteria for evaluating effectiveness, their own approaches to building capacity and their own methods of ensuring accountability. Many states and localities have built completely separate quality assurance systems for early childhood programs, after-school programs, schools and more. This creates significant duplication of effort, wasting scarce resources that could be better spent investing in the common pool of early-career professionals who staff a wide range of child and youth programs.

Instead of this: a policy requiring that a new initiative create its own quality improvement system.
Consider this: a policy calling for an existing quality improvement system to be enhanced and expanded to incorporate new programming.

Collect and use data to drive decision-making

Instead of pooling resources to develop one effective, interconnected, interagency set of data systems, many states and localities have parallel data systems – one for each federal, state, local and foundation-funded grant. These parallel data systems often make redundant technological expenditures and collect overlapping sets of information, and are built in ways which inhibit the flow and transfer of data among them. As a result, despite new resources devoted to data systems, most state and local policymakers and practitioners still do not have the information they need to be make informed decisions.

Instead of this: a policy requiring the creation of a new data system focused on a single topic (such as tracking the number and location of homeless youth, and services provided to them).
Consider this: a policy calling for particular data elements to be included within existing data systems.

Provide a flexible set of child and youth services

A seamless continuum of services from cradle to college and career should be available for all young people. Policies with restrictive eligibility criteria and narrowly-defined allowable uses leave local leaders shaking their heads, wondering if they really have to close the door on a young person in need just because he or she does not fit the right category or because what it takes to help him or her is not the exact intervention for which the funding was intended.

Instead of this: a policy creating a narrow type of service for a narrowly defined population (such as tutoring for male citizens ages 14 to 21 who have registered for the selective service and are homeless, runaway or in the foster care system).

Consider this: a policy that allows for an inclusive target population and the flexibility to fill service gaps, and that provides incentives to align with and improve existing services.

(d) What can federal agencies do to help? What are your ideas for federal policy to improve the coordination, effectiveness and efficiency of programs affecting youth?

Create and implement a Child and Youth Strategic Plan with a clear vision and outcomes framework, with corresponding indicators, strategies and action steps[xi]

Effective child and youth policy starts with a vision and outcomes framework; we have seen this at the national level (in Northern Ireland, for example) as well as at the state level (in Ohio and Massachusetts, for example). Each of these three places built its coordination efforts on top of a unifying framework because, as Northern Ireland expressed it, a child and youth strategy needs to be grounded by a "high level framework, expressed in terms of a common vision, underlying principles, with a focus on high level outcomes for children and young people and effective measures and indicators of progress."[xii]

Vision and Outcomes Framework

The best vision statements are broad and all-encompassing, focusing on all children and youth, and setting a positive, aspirational tone. Effective outcomes frameworks correspond to that broad vision and further delineate a specific set of results to be achieved, ideally covering the full range of ages (preferably birth to 24 years) and the full range of developmental realms (e.g., educational, vocational, social, emotional, physical, civic and cultural).

Action Plans

Once a vision and outcomes framework was in place, Northern Ireland, Ohio and Massachusetts each created an action plan. The best action plans are carefully linked to the vision and outcomes framework; include specific deliverables, timelines and parties responsible; are widely publicized; are developed based on a careful review of data; and integrate efforts across departmental lines. For example, Northern Ireland established a clear action plan that is published along with progress reports every two years. All actions are "linked to the outcomes framework."[xiii] Departments are "required to provide timescales for the completion of actions and identify delivery leads and partners."[xiv]

Indicators

Once an action plan is underway, leaders need to monitor short-term progress to determine where mid-course corrections are needed. That is where short-term indicators of child and youth well-being come in. Northern Ireland chose a set of indicators that "linked to the outcomes framework, with each indicator corresponding to one or more outcome areas," and uses these indicators to "monitor and track the progress of actions" and "to measure the success of the ten year strategy."[xv] Based on this data, the action plan is reviewed on an annual basis and is updated as necessary. Likewise, Ohio Family and Children First developed a set of indicators to correspond to each of the 11 outcomes areas, and Massachusetts developed a set of indicators that represent success in each area of its outcomes framework, have strong communication power, and balance negative indicators (behaviors the planners hope young people will avoid) with positive ones (behaviors the plan seeks to promote).

A clear vision and outcomes framework, combined with corresponding indicators, strategies and action steps, form the elements of a strategic plan to reduce fragmentation and improve alignment.

Align policies

Do child and youth policies really need to be so disjointed in the first place? Some level of fragmentation is inevitable. Legislatures are divided into committees and executive branches are divided into departments for a reason. If every policy had to be comprehensive, nothing would ever get done. Even so, policymakers can take sensible steps to make it easier for people on the ground to align the myriad funding streams, programs and regulations into a comprehensive solution for children and youth.

The *Ready by 21 Policy Alignment Guide* helps policymakers ensure that new child and youth policies align with existing efforts to create a seamless system of supports. The guide can be used to inform any policy that creates a funding stream related to children and youth, no matter what specific topic it addresses (e.g., education, youth employment or juvenile justice) and no matter what form it takes (e.g., a legislative statute, an executive order, or an agency or foundation request for proposals).

We encourage the Interagency Working Group to use this as a tool as it advances efforts to align disparate child and youth policies.

Support state and local collaboratives

Funding collaboratives

Funding collaborations will help cities and states improve the efficiency and effectiveness of child and youth services. The Obama administration's Promise Neighborhoods and Choice Neighborhoods are great examples of the impact that funding collaboratives can have. We encourage the administration to continue and expand such funding streams for local collaboratives, as well as to begin funding state collaboratives, such as Children's Cabinets.

Get input from state and local collaboratives when designing federal Requests For Proposal (RFPs)

Working with state and local coordinating bodies to inform RFPs can ensure that funding goes out the door in ways that build upon and support existing efforts across agency lines. These collaboratives have important expertise on how to craft RFPs to allow state and local governments to use the funding in ways that support and reinforce existing interagency efforts to support children and youth.

Request letters of support from existing collaboratives

Too often, a Children's Cabinet learns about new grant programs *after* its state has applied for and received the money. They therefore miss important opportunities to align this funding stream into a cohesive set of activities. If RFPs suggest that applicants work with coordinating bodies in the proposal process, the proposals will be stronger. Ideally, federal grant applications should request a letter of support from existing state and local policy coordinating bodies, such as Children's Cabinets. Getting support from a Children's Cabinet enables the state to strategically help identify *which* state agency should apply for the funds, and how these funds can be utilized to advance interagency efforts to effectively address the issue targeted by the grant.

Strengthen existing collaboratives rather than creating new ones[xvi]

Movements to create new collaboratives and task forces – including legislation that requires it – often do not take into account that the issue at hand can be addressed by one or more existing groups. If appropriate collaborations exist, legislation and policies should be written to assign the tasks to those groups.

> For example: The 2007 Head Start Act mandates the creation of an Early Childhood Advisory Council in each state but allows a governor to designate an existing entity to meet that requirement. Several states have done so. Georgia created a new subcommittee in an existing collaborative (the Georgia's Children's Cabinet) to address early childhood issues. That saved time and money.
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> Another example: The Reengaging Americans in Serious Education by Uniting Programs Act (H.R. 3982/S. 1608, known as RAISE UP and introduced in the 111th Congress), would give grants to local partnerships that help disadvantaged young people graduate from high school, attain a postsecondary credential and earn a family-supporting wage. Existing partnerships would be eligible for this grant. The policy simply requires all collaboratives that serve as "eligible entities" to have representation from specific groups and institutions, such as the local head of government, leader of the local education agency and young people in disadvantaged situations.

Strengthen connections between federal, state and local collaboratives

Federal collaboratives, state collaboratives and local collaboratives need to be better connected to each other. Some states, such as Maryland and Ohio, have a statewide collaborative (Governor's Children's Cabinet) that

connects to a set of local, county-based collaboratives. The statewide collaborative creates policy change to break down state agency policy silos and enable local collaboratives to better serve children and youth. Likewise, the work of state and local collaboratives could be improved by having a stronger connection to the Federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs.

Allow and support interagency data sharing

Support comprehensive data systems

A comprehensive interagency data system is fundamental to the success of collaboratives, providing leaders the information they need to align efforts, and holding policymakers across agency lines collectively accountable for results. Ideally, an interagency data system will allow child- and youth-serving agencies (e.g., education, child welfare, early childhood, juvenile justice, workforce development and health) to better track and understand how well youth are doing across ages (from "cradle to career"). It would integrate various types of information on child and youth outcomes (i.e., demographics, indicators of well-being, program enrollment and participation data) and the available supports for young people (e.g., program quality or performance-level data, program availability and participation rates, provider workforce capacity data, and resource and investment data). Oftentimes, state efforts to create comprehensive interagency data systems are limited by a lack of executive support for a coordinated approach more than they are by technological limitations. The federal government could play an important leadership role in encouraging states and localities to foster such interagency data systems.

Examples of state innovation

The New Mexico Children's Cabinet created an annual child report card (indicators of child well-being) and children's budget (size and allocation of state funding) using a common set of results, indicators and service categories across more than 12 state agencies. This enabled leaders to see how well young people are doing at the aggregate level and how much funding is going to support the indicators being tracked, such as high school dropouts. Research demonstrates that it is important to track the full range of ways young people grow and develop, including academic development, vocational development, social/emotional development, physical development and civic/cultural development. To do this successfully, data must be integrated across a common results framework. Federal programs should be structured in a way to support rather than hinder such efforts.

Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet has implemented an individual child data-sharing system among eight participating state agencies. The system builds off of their Office of State Courts advanced electronic system, and the pilot will include data elements from various agency sources, including: Agency for Workforce Innovation, Department of Children and Families, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Health, and Agency for Healthcare Administration. This system equips caseworkers to work more efficiently and effectively with their clients and helps them to make more informed decisions. Prior to this system, a caseworker may have to drive across the state to obtain a client's school records.

Privacy issues

Additionally, federal privacy requirements – such as those in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) -- should work with, rather than against, these innovative state efforts. The Forum encourages the issuance of additional FERPA guidance that meets states' 21st Century technology needs and better assists them in improving youth outcomes. Despite the political difficulties generated by federal privacy laws, some states are finding creative solutions to address the issue head-on and ensure confidentiality while sharing data to improve outcomes for youth. For example, the state of Maine used state legislation (LD1356) to address privacy concerns while putting a single student identifier data system into place. As a result, the state made strides on creating an interagency data "hub" for individual student data.

(e) How can youth be engaged in these efforts?

Create a Federal Youth Council[xvii]

The federal government has a rich history of seeking the input of specific populations to gain insight for policy decisions. For example, the National Council on Disabilities was established in 1978 to advise the U.S. Department of Education and now advises the entire executive branch as well as Congress. In 1995, President

Clinton created the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA) through executive order. PACHA directly advises the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, who then reports PACHA's findings to the president. As recently as 2009, President Obama created the Advisory Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. This council, composed of religious and secular leaders and scholars from different backgrounds, is charged with making recommendations to the president (through its executive director) regarding changes in policies, programs and practices that affect the delivery of services by such organizations and the needs of low-income and other underserved persons. Building on these models to create a National Youth Council would be a landmark achievement.

But the federal government should take this work a step further. Although a growing number of states and localities have youth councils, the vast majority still do not. In the United States, policymakers who have access to a youth council are the exception, not the rule. In one study, two-thirds of state policymakers described the current level of youth participation using terms such as "minimal," "limited" or "token." If the United States were to not only create a Federal Youth Council but also create an infrastructure of effective state and local youth councils, that would be a true game-changer.[xviii]

Advancing Quality

Our need is not only for a system of youth councils; we need *effective* couth councils. The mere creation of a youth council doesn't ensure that policymakers will have opportunities for high-quality interactions with young people. Plenty of well-intentioned youth councils fall far short of the goal of providing unique insights and perspectives to inform critical policy decisions. So efforts to increase the quantity of youth councils must go hand in hand with efforts to improve the quality of youth councils.

What makes for a high-quality youth council? In 2007 the Forum for Youth Investment undertook a review of youth councils and identified the following elements of success.

Sound financial and staff infrastructure. Successful youth councils have stable multi-year budgets (for transportation, training, staff, communications and outreach, and meeting expenses). They also have sufficient, consistent, high-quality staff. Running a youth council is a challenging job, requiring expertise in working with youth and in working with policymakers. Finding individuals with both skill sets can be challenging, but finding and retaining them is critical for success.

Diverse membership. The composition of successful youth councils reflects the diversity of the region, including a large number of young people served by government systems. Policymakers express concern that too often they "hear from only a few, perhaps unrepresentative, youth voices. Participation by diverse groups of youth (beyond the 'class presidents') is lacking." Some councils reserve a number of seats for specific types of members (the Seattle Mayor's Youth Council, for example, reserves two slots for homeless youth), while others, such as the North Carolina State Youth Council, undertake significant outreach and marketing strategies targeting a diverse cross-section of their communities.

Mechanisms to represent all youth. No group of young people, no matter how carefully selected, can claim that its views represent the views of all young people in a region unless the group has solid outreach mechanisms. Youth councils need to use multiple mechanisms (such as polls, focus groups and convenings) to learn and document the views of all young people in their jurisdictions so that they can adequately represent those young people to policymakers. As a state policymaker in California put it, the weight policymakers give to any individual young person's testimony "depends if the youth representing an organization has surveyed the members of the organization and then speaks from those results."[xix]

Rigorous training. This is likely the most important element, and the most often underappreciated. As Rich Goll, former director of Alternatives Inc. in Hampton, Virginia, expressed it, "We never put a young person in a position to embarrass him or herself. If young people have not been given the opportunity and/or training to be properly prepared for the tasks you are asking of them, don't ask." Being on a youth council is not easy. Members need to develop new skills in outreach to solicit the views and perspectives of their peers. They need policy analysis skills to understand the decisions being made. They need social skills to present their case to policymakers in a

compelling and respectful manner. Policymakers can see a clear difference between youth council members who have received significant training and those who have not. State policymakers in California, for example, found that "youth must be adequately prepared to participate effectively in policymaking. Specifically, they need to be familiar with the legislative process and know the policy area and its background to understand the context. They need to be trained in public speaking (to be clear and succinct) and understand the purpose of the forum, their audience and time constraints."[xx]

Authentic access to policymakers. Even the best staffed, most diverse, and most effectively trained youth councils will do little to assist policymakers with difficult policy decisions if they can't get a foot in the door. Interactions between young people and policymakers must be carefully crafted to ensure that the policymakers are truly interested in what the young people have to say, and must be artfully timed to coincide with a key decision-making juncture that the policymaker is facing. Youth councils have had success with a variety of different access structures. In Maine, the Youth Advisory Council includes four legislators as members along with the 18 young people. North Carolina's State Youth Council is structured similarly. In New Mexico, the Children,Youth and Families Department hired a "youth liaison" to help connect department officials to youth council members. The Missouri Youth Cabinet assigned members to work directly with the directors of 19 state departments. In Hampton, Va., the Youth Commission is charged with writing a component of the Hampton Community Plan. Similarly, the Des Moines Youth Advisory Board is exploring the idea of spearheading a youth master planning process for the city.

White House Youth Ambassador Fellowship

One potential barrier to the creation of a Federal Youth Council is the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), which regulates "committees, boards, commissions, councils, and similar groups which have been established to advise officers and agencies in the executive branch of the Federal Government." While these regulations are not onerous, if federal officials did not want to trigger FACA, an alternative to creating a National Youth Council would be to create a White House Youth Ambassador Fellowship. As with the Federal Youth Council, youth ambassadors would use multiple mechanisms (such as polls, focus groups and convenings) to learn and document the views of all young people in their jurisdictions so they can adequately represent them to policymakers, then would present these findings to senior elected officials. Since the youth ambassadors would be sharing views they have heard during their outreach, rather than directly advising senior officials, a White House Youth Ambassador Fellowship would not trigger FACA.

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[iv] Ibid.

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[vi] Yohalem, N. and Wilson-Alstrom, A. with Fischer, S. and Shinn, M. (2009, January). Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools, Second Edition. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment. http://forumfyi.org/content/measuring-youth-program-quality-guide-assessment-tools-2nd-edition

[vii] The Weikart Center on Youth Program Quality is a division of the Forum for Youth Investment.

[viii] For more information visit, http://cypq.org/products_and_services/research

[ix] Ferber, T. (2010). Ready by 21 Policy Alignment Guide: Overview & Rationale. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment. http://forumfyi.org/content/ready-21-policy-alignment-guide-overview-rational-0

[x] See, for example, Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002). Community Programs to Promote Youth Development. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

[xi] For more information on creating action plans, read the Forum's "What's the Plan?" article here: http://www.firstfocus.net/sites/default/files/Big%20Ideas%20_Gaines%20and%20Ferber.pdf

[xii] Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Our Children and Young People — Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006–2016 (Belfast, UK: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006). http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf
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[xiv] Ibid.
[xv] Ibid.
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[xvii] For more information about Youth Councils see our publication: Martin, S., Pittman, K., Ferber, T., McMahon, A. (2007, July). Building Effective Youth Councils: A Practical Guide to Engaging Youth in Policy Making. Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment. http://forumfyi.org/node/127
xviii For more information on engaging youth through a Youth Council, read "Big Idea: Youth Councils" here: http://www.firstfocus.net/sites/default/files/Big%20Ideas%20_Ferber.pdf
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[xx] Ibid.