

Rising to the Challenge Part 4: Policy Roundup

April 15, 2020

Merita Irby ([00:00](#)):

I think we are all here and ready to go for the Policy Roundup, and we are going to see if we can do this in a little bit of a rapid fire way. It's really just building out of all the conversations you all have been having over the last several weeks of what is the difference that we can be making now? We have the CARES funding is coming through and folks are figuring out how to tap into that, but there are so many that have been in these policy and advocacy conversations and the office is really hearing from hope on the ground about what's needed that we wanted to have a conversation around solutions and things that folks can connect into and help to make happen.

Merita Irby ([00:33](#)):

What we're going to do is we have 10 folks that are lined up to be able to give snapshots of what they've been working on and ways that you can connect. You're also going to be seeing in the chat box a little bit a link to a document where you can also add your ideas and reflections and ways to take action and connect. Once we go through that Round Robin, [inaudible 00:00:56] is going to be kind of wrapping up for us in terms of just the work that he's been doing connecting around all of these issues and why they're so important during this time. You're going to start seeing a lot of names come up on the screen, but we really are trying to say... You'll hear everything from the digital divide conversation to what do we do with summer to what about the most vulnerable youth?

Merita Irby ([01:19](#)):

What we're going to start with is there's a few folks teed up to talk about what are we hearing from young people? How are we paying attention to older youth? Are we doing enough for older youth and vulnerable youth during this time? I'm going to turn now, if we are all here team, for our Brady Bunch moment, I'm going to turn to Karen Evans who's executive director of the New Orleans Children Youth Planning Board. She's been working with young leaders to get... It was to get a youth master plan process up and going, but you've been talking with those young leaders about current reality and what differences, what they're saying is they look at the months ahead and what next. Karen, if we can bring you on screen. We're sharing videos now.

Karen Evans ([02:04](#)):

Okay, there we go.

Merita Irby ([02:08](#)):

There we go. Karen.

Karen Evans ([02:09](#)):

There we go. Good morning, all. Greetings to you all. I am happy to greet you from New Orleans. We're still here. Yes, we're an epicenter and we're still here. I will say to you that the young people that we've

had an opportunity to meet with last week and continuing to meet with this week have shared their feelings of stress and anxiety around a couple of different things.

Karen Evans ([02:29](#)):

One is they feel incredibly disconnected from what they saw as their social network. That not having a connection to their core group of folks who matter to them has really been very disconcerting to them. The other is this anxiousness about what is coming. Summer has often been in New Orleans, particularly, has often been a space where summer employment matter to our young people. We are a city that has 53% of ALICE households of working poor. Our childhood poverty rate is 39%. Summer has been a place where young people could contribute and participate and often curtail some of their school fees for the coming year.

Karen Evans ([03:12](#)):

Absent that, given our high tourism and hospitality impact to COVID-19, the city has no idea what the full impact of that is going to be and our young people are stressed and anxious about that. We see the summer as a tool building, skill building time that has been around other learning spaces. If there is this effort to recapture learning or to cause there to be reduce where necessary because of the absence of a full school year, then our young people are concerned that they may too not only have a loss of revenue generation for their families and households given what they've done in the past, but they may also feel very encumbered by the need to catch up on things that are affected by things that had no responsibility for them themselves. So we struggle with this stress, tension, fear and hopelessness that they could in fact have something fresh and new on horizon, but nobody's including them in the conversation. That is where they're speaking to us now.

Merita Irby ([04:21](#)):

I know part of what Karen and the team there is doing is actually training some young leaders to actually go out and in a virtual way, listen to young leaders and young people throughout the community over the next couple of months and actually be able to shape kind of agenda for what next, responding now and what next. Thank you, Karen. I'm going to turn over to Caitlin Johnson with Spark Action and in that, what are young people doing now, the young activists that you work with who have moved into a virtual space rather than kind of gathering together, what are you hearing from them?

Caitlin Johnson ([04:54](#)):

Thank you, Merita and thanks, Karen. Hello all from another epicenter. I'm in Brooklyn with Spark Action, the form, storytelling and mobilizing collective. And we're still here too. I'll just quickly go through because a lot of it echoes what Karen just said, but a lot of the young leaders we work with across the country are focused on a lot of different issues, focused on climate change, on justice reform, on access to opportunity, on civic and voter engagement. We're hearing a lot of the same things there. There's a lot of exhaustion. Folks are exhausted, folks are overwhelmed. They're trying to adapt while they're taking care of themselves and their families and their communities. There's a lot of need and question around mental health supports, lot of questions about the stimulus. Who's eligible and what does that mean? Then as Karen said, what is this going to mean for young people's futures? Young people who are not in school, young people who missed graduation or other milestones and particularly for young people who were especially vulnerable before all of this. Opportunity youth, young people involved in the justice system, parenting young people or young people supporting families. What does this mean? What happens now and what happens next?

Caitlin Johnson ([06:09](#)):

On the positive side, we are hearing so much an incredible spirit of adaptation and experimentation. I think as adults we often think that young people live their whole lives digitally. But in fact, youth organizers and young leaders who we support, the bulk of the work has to be done on the ground, developing real relationships, educating and engaging people. True to the theme of this, it's all about relationships. So this is upending a lot of that work in very real ways and even the most tech forward organizers are having to get creative. A lot of the rallies and events they had planned, particularly civic engagement summits, young people were planning over the spring and summer. All of that's interrupted.

Caitlin Johnson ([06:50](#)):

A couple of quick examples of how folks are dealing and getting fully digital is really creative, experimental ways to share content and share perspective. The climate strike coalition is pivoted to a three day digital live stream with experts and influencers and artists and young people starting on Earth Day. There's a lot of creative engagement around the census. Get out the vote and voter engagement town halls and summits that are starting. Then the last thing I'll flag since this is over a minute, but just to echo what [inaudible 00:07:24] said earlier, we're really living in an unprecedented moment of crisis and opportunity and a lot of the conversation we're hearing from young leaders as they're working together to create trainings and share peer-to-peer knowledge and ideas, they're also thinking about the longer term. What does this mean about our our systems, our institutions? In the words of one young organizer, "This isn't just a health crisis. This is really pulling back the curtains on bigger social and economic issues and the crisis of capitalism."

Caitlin Johnson ([07:55](#)):

We're hearing a really positive note that there is a sense that the government has a role to play and if it were more effective and people driven, it would be helping out a lot more in this case. We're optimistic for the future. I'll share in the chat some of the resources [crosstalk 00:00:08:13].

Merita Irby ([08:12](#)):

That's great.

Caitlin Johnson ([08:14](#)):

Thanks.

Merita Irby ([08:14](#)):

Sorry, Cate. Also, I'm going to remind folks there is a Google Doc where you can go to and add your own resources but also see many of the things that folks are referencing. So you can tap into that and that's also where you'll see the link that Jo Ann Paanio from Nashville Network for Youth who used to be with the forum team has the links to a recent conversation that you all had around homeless and runaway youth. Can you give us a top note from that and how people can take some action in that area?

Jo Ann Paanio ([08:42](#)):

Absolutely. Thank you so much for writing Karen for this opportunity again. Hi everyone. My name is Jo Ann Paanio. I'm the director of policy and advocacy at the National Network for Youth. We're a membership driven policy advocacy and public education organization working with local service

providers, agencies, and young leaders with lived experiences of homelessness. In regards to some of the conversations that our network has had with federal agencies with regard to a call that took place last month in which the National Network for Youth brought together local service providers. The US Interagency Council on Youth Homelessness, the CDC, as well as the Department of Health and Human Services. We really tried to uplift the needs that our local providers and our young leaders have been highlighting in their experiences related to COVID-19. So much of what we have been hearing has been related to shelter needs, access to food, housing, mental health and medical care. Even some of the most basic needs that you can think of relating to access to food. We've heard of an instance where a young parent needed assistance with just getting some support and formula for her young child.

Jo Ann Paanio ([09:42](#)):

So really trying to understand how COVID-19 has really impacted a youth who have lived experience of homelessness and who are also returning clients is something that we have been shifting our attention, energy and time into. Some areas that we've been focusing on really has been gathering, developing and circulating resources in real time. As Cate had just mentioned earlier, there've been a lot of questions and challenges regarding the economic impact payments through the IRS and through the Department of Treasury and even with the payment protection plan for nonprofit organizations through the SBA 7A loan program. So just making sure that folks are sharing and learning from each other is something that we have been focusing our efforts on and we also encourage folks to share from your communities how you've possibly been implementing and interpreting some of the federal guidelines at the state and local levels. At the National Network for Youth, we've been hosting weekly office hours with our provider just to make sure that they can learn from each other and to also see how local policies are also being implemented.

Merita Irby ([10:41](#)):

Thank you. Thank you, Jo Ann. Our next trio is going to talk about what solutions youth programs, youth organizations are focused on. First, Dan Gilbert with the National Afterschool Alliance, Dan over to Gina with the National Afterschool Association, Gina Warner. And then Jeff Davis with the California Afterschool Network. One, two, three. You guys can do it.

Dan Gilbert ([11:02](#)):

Hi everyone. So excited to be here. Dan Gilbert with the Afterschool Alliance. I'm going to try to go quickly through some of this. I'm going to change a little bit of what I was going to say because I think that Jennifer Peck did a fantastic job of describing the conundrum that we're facing structurally in terms of how our programs are going to be situated to address this. Whether that's just for a couple of weeks at the end of the summer, whether or not we might lose the entire in person summer learning program situation.

Dan Gilbert ([11:30](#)):

But I think the concern that we have at the Alliance and that we're trying to strategize around is concerned that what we provisionally refer to as summer learning loss isn't just going to be confined to summer anymore with kids out at school for so long. Even with some states discussing potentially not bringing kids back into schools by the beginning of the next school year.

Dan Gilbert ([11:51](#)):

What we're looking at is strategizing around ways that afterschool and summer learning programs can prospectively build off of their strengths in this situation because of all of the compounded trauma, because of all of the deep need that there will be for social and emotional skill development amongst youth who are right now going through social distancing and things like that.

Dan Gilbert ([12:18](#)):

What we at the Alliance are strategically trying to do is make sure, number one, that we make sure that the federal government provides as many resources as possible and streamlines the provision of those resources to programs that need them, both to increase and improve the services that they provide, but also just to stay open and also to make sure that all of the programs that are doing that on the ground around the country have the information that they need in order to access the resources that are going to be made available for this and also to build their relationships with schools and districts that are going to be the conduit through which a lot of those resources flow. Sorry, I probably went over a minute, but I tried to be quick.

Merita Irby ([13:00](#)):

[crosstalk 00:13:01]. We're good. Over to Gina.

Gina Warner ([13:02](#)):

Hi everyone. This is Gina Warner with the National Afterschool Association and I'm just here today to remind everyone that the Afterschool Workforce is the workforce for the workforce. Right now the Afterschool Workforce is the essential workforce for the essential workers and that we need to remember full support for their time, training, and safety is key to providing all of these resources that we're talking about for young people. None of the ideas we're discussing today for kids or for families are going to be possible if we don't have a workforce to support that. Lest anyone think, I may be alarmist here, those of you who know me know that I led the Afterschool Intermediary immediately after Katrina and I can tell you that we will be looking at a workforce crisis when our communities open back up. We will be competing against retail establishments, fast food restaurants, Amazon, which didn't exist 15 years ago.

Gina Warner ([13:58](#)):

So we need to be prepared and understand that we need to make provisions. All the policy initiatives we're talking about, all the private initiatives. We need to make sure that we are securing funding for the workforce so they are there to be able to deliver services. So yes, this is a crisis and our workforce is on the front lines of this crisis right now every day delivering, putting their health and their safety at risk to deliver services for children and families. But as so many have said, this is also a moment of opportunity. I'm going to add, I think it's also a moment of obligation for us as leaders in the field to advocate for the fair pay, fair benefits, equitable access to training and opportunities that we talk about for our young people. We need that for the adults in the workforce too. We need them.

Gina Warner ([14:42](#)):

I mean we not just on this call, but we the people, the big we, if we're going to be able to put our communities back together, provide to families and have the full economic recovery that I know that so many of those that we are working with are concerned about. Thank you.

Merita Irby ([14:58](#)):

Do you have anything else on the youth programs? Then over to Nick Yoder and Jenn DePaoli. They're talking to educators.

Jeff Davis ([15:09](#)):

Yes. I'm throwing some information into the chat box. But the systems that have been designed, are resulting in the outcomes that they're resulting in. This current context is only going to seek to magnify and reinforce many of these pieces. But this also has created some opportunities for us to dream of something new. The good news is that we don't have to reinvent it. We've talked about science informed equitable supports for thriving youth today. All of the recommendations in the [inaudible 00:15:45] report, the Science of Learning and Development would point to for us to create whole community collaboration to support thriving youth and families.

Jeff Davis ([15:57](#)):

Some of the things that we're doing, yes, we're working to address the current context, ensure that our programs, if they choose to, are equipped to provide emergency childcare services. We're advocating by creating GIS maps of our locations close to hospitals and police stations so that we can elevate our profile amongst other state leaders. So using the current opportunity to advocate and also this is a moment of bureaucratic agitation. We have a problem of silos in probably all of our communities in our country. What we're working on in California is something, and we started this in December, is what's called the Collaboration for Whole Child Health and Wellness. So how can we bring in, build on our platform to enhance our nutrition, mental health as well as medical, dental, vision, and other social service connection to our already existing infrastructure to create the conditions necessary for thriving youth? Lots of information in the chat box. Definitely hope you'll follow up with us.

Merita Irby ([17:07](#)):

Fantastic. Jen and Nick, [inaudible 00:17:10].

Jennifer DePaoli ([17:11](#)):

Yeah. Hi. Thanks Merita. Can I just say amen to what everybody has already been saying? At LPI, we've been thinking about this very similarly and we've been thinking about kind of a three stage response, the immediate response which we've obviously been working on at alongside all of you, looking at responses to distance learning, serving vulnerable student populations, especially including students with disabilities, the SCL mental health and trauma informed practice, and then also disruptions to educator prep and those types of things. Next we'll be moving more onto not only continuing that work but then also thinking about the CARES act and trying to help people think about how that money can be spent in addition to the other stimulus funds that will be hopefully passed over the next few months.

Jennifer DePaoli ([18:02](#)):

Then lastly, it has been said repeated repeatedly over this call, thinking about the re-engagement of students in the fall and how schools can be better prepared to meet these needs should distance learning be put into place again. I'll let Nick... And I will just also say too very much on Hal's point earlier today in terms of rethinking how the schools work and rethinking school design. I think that's very much where our focus is as well. With that, I'll pass it over to Nick because we'll be working with them on some of the back to school re-engagement pieces.

Nick Yoder ([18:40](#)):

Thanks Jen. Hi everybody. I definitely echo everything that everyone's been saying. I'm just going to quickly point, there's a lot of stuff that [Castle 00:18:48] is doing around Castle Cares and COVID response. But I think one of the things, and you can go to our website for that, but I think one of the things I really want to hit on is just how we are contemplating and thinking about and talking to the educators about how to reimagine schools right now, particularly when we're thinking about accountability systems and testing has been canceled in many states this this past year.

Nick Yoder ([19:08](#)):

Now how is that going to then think through the next year? How are teacher evaluations and educator evaluations? How are we connecting more broadly with you all in the Afterschool space and extended learning opportunities and summer learning, right? How can we be more cohesive and connected to the whole child in the different avenues that we're situated? And really trying to think about, as Jen mentioned, how can we leverage some of that Castle Care funds and money and policy mechanisms to really support and enhance that work and then how can that get translated back down into districts and schools, and how can we really create that cohesive system is some of the stuff that we're really thinking about along with many of you in many of our partners.

Merita Irby ([19:44](#)):

Thank you, Nick.

Nick Yoder ([19:44](#)):

Thanks.

Merita Irby ([19:45](#)):

Again, I encourage folks to go to the document where there's more resources. Mary Ellen Williams with the Children's Cabinet posted what governors and businesses are doing to be able to help bridge the digital divide. With [inaudible 00:19:59] council and the SoLD Alliance has resources that they've been putting out to folks around a range of policy issues and thinking longterm beyond the next year to five years. What does it mean as we're responding to the current economy and all of this? So more resources and a commercial because what we're hoping to do is get some interest in conversation going here and then we're planning to have a deeper dive into these topics and others in a couple of weeks.

Merita Irby ([20:24](#)):

So you'll be getting the invite to that webinar. I think you're seeing some of the need for the connection on this and thinking about a different way of doing business as all of these both are targeted issues but they all interconnect and relate. I'm going to turn it over to Karen and Hal to give us our closing reflection. Thank you to this incredible Round Robin group of folks who are doing such powerful work but also it missed all that, work to get this session together as well.

Karen Evans ([20:58](#)):

Great. Hal, do you want the next to the last word?

Hal ([21:02](#)):

Sure. Thank you. I really appreciate this opportunity to gather together with everyone and learn so much about what folks are focused on. I think Ross put it well. The more we can have coherence, the

more we have a sense of what it is we think are going to be necessary and can present that as a sector or a series of sectors, ideally, the better off we'll be. I think if we're able to talk through the jagged kind of year we'll see this year and talk about flexibility, not just in getting additional funds, which is critically important, but talk about the ways in which we can engage young people in thinking about what additional flexibility might generate for us. But this has been a fantastic discussion and we look forward to working with you both in these kinds of settings in person when we're allowed to and across the country in the readiness project. So thank you.

Karen Evans ([22:00](#)):

Thank you, Hal. Thank everybody. Thank our partners. This has been a huge amount of work, harder than it thinks to get this many people on the screen in a short amount of time. When you go to the website and we've just sort of launched the readiness projects on the website, you'll see that our goals are to make sure that we inform you, inspire you, get you involved so that we can all be implementing the kind of bold ideas that we've just talked about today. I hope you can give us feedback on this format. We don't think you were bored. We may have over informed you. We hope we inspired you. Clearly in the chat box, we have a lot of ways that we can get involved in each other's work. Part of what the forum tries to do is to align and get folks to create the forum for people to see how their work connects together. I hope we've demonstrated that.

Karen Evans ([22:50](#)):

The other part of what we do is to really try to find important public ideas and figure out how to make them sticky and tangible and actionable. You all have raised some powerful ones that we'll bring back the next couple of weeks. One of the things I hope we can do as we talk about moving this forward to create a thriving youth field is to see if this does not sort of end up with, let's do a press release and say the readiness projects are open for business. Let's have an open letter that's a call to action. We're going to come off of this call, take the chat, take the videos, have a conversation, get back to you soon with some more opportunities to really galvanize the thinking that was on this call, which only scratched the surface of what you all were working on.

Karen Evans ([23:35](#)):

When we pull back to look at the bigger picture of what young people need to thrive, what we need to do to really take a robust approach to equity, and how we need to make sure that the learning and development that we're focused on is not just for our benefit, but for young people's benefits so that they have a sense of competence and agency and identity. We have a lot of work to do. We're going to be bolder. We're going to be clear. We're going to be stronger than ever. Thank you for taking your time with us today.