

Youth Development Across the Federal Government: A Conversation with Cheri Hoffman

April 1, 2020

Ian Faigley ([00:00:01](#)):

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to today's Thought Leader Roundtable: A Conversation on Readiness. Today's session is part of a regular series of explorations of the key questions of what does it really mean for all young people to be ready for life's demands at every stage, and what is it going to take to get there?

Ian Faigley ([00:00:17](#)):

Karen Pittman, CEO of the Forum for Youth Investment leads lively and candid conversations with some of the most influential boundary pushing leaders working to improve the lives of children and young people in the United States.

Ian Faigley ([00:00:29](#)):

Today's session features Cheri Hoffman, the Chair of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs. The session will explore how the working group helps federal agencies approach Positive Youth Development and emerging ways that the working group is tackling its mission.

Ian Faigley ([00:00:43](#)):

A little bit about our presenters today. Karen Pittman is President and CEO of the Forum for Youth Investment and a respected sociologist and leader in youth development. Prior to co-founding the forum in 1998, she launched Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Initiatives at the Children's Defense Fund, started the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, and served as Senior Vice President at the International Youth Foundation.

Ian Faigley ([00:01:08](#)):

Cheri Hoffman is the Director of the Children and Youth Policy Division in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the US Department of Health and Human Services. The CYP Division develops and reviews policy initiatives focused on the well-being of children and youth, including those in early childhood learning settings, the child welfare system, and youth programs across federal agencies. Cheri serves as the Chair for the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs established by President George W. Bush, Executive Order in 2008. The 21 member agencies and offices of the working group span the federal government representing a broad cross-section of youth programming.

Ian Faigley ([00:01:49](#)):

A little bit about logistics for today. There are only a few slides for today's session we will be accepting questions and comments via the chat feature, which is available at the bottom of your screen. We also have some colleagues who will be live tweeting. If you're on Twitter, please follow the #ReadyYouth.

Ian Faigley ([00:02:06](#)):

Today's session is being recorded. Later this week, it will be sent to everyone who registered and also posted to the forum website, along with any additional resources that are mentioned on the call. It's now my pleasure to turn it over to Karen.

Karen Pittman ([00:02:21](#)):

Thank you Ian and welcome Cheri. I'm so glad we were able to make this happen. It was going to be a virtual meeting no matter what. But very glad that we're able to go forward with this. It really does seem that now more than ever, coordination is the name of the game as for really figuring out how as a country to respond to the coronavirus. I'm sure that there are specific things that you'll have to tell us in a bit about resources that the federal government has. I think it's really important today that we stay on track and stay with the idea of even when we aren't in moments of crisis, why interagency coordination is so important. Start with a little bit of having you give us the history of the interagency working group on these programs, how it got started and where it is now?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:03:16](#)):

Absolutely. Thank you so much, Karen. It's an honor for me to be here. I appreciate the invitation. I'm excited about the chance to talk about how we're coordinating across the federal government in serving youth and not only across the federal government, but also with amazing organizations like the Forum for Youth Investment and others that all have the same goals in mind to improve outcomes for our young people.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:03:39](#)):

As Ian mentioned at the beginning, the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs started in 2008, under an executive order from President George W. Bush. It grew out of work that First Lady Laura Bush was doing. They called it "Helping America's Youth." They had done a number of listening sessions across the country, really hearing from young people and adults who work with young people and love young people, really hearing from them across the country about the different issues that they were facing and what was most needed. They ended up deciding at the end of George W. Bush's presidency to institutionalize the work that had been happening through this Interagency Working Group.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:04:24](#)):

Really the goals of the working group that they laid out for us, the primary goal is to improve outcomes for youth, which is a very broad goal. Try to do that primarily by collaborating and coordinating among federal youth-serving agencies. We were also charged in that executive order to deliver information about evidence-based programming that improves outcomes for youth and to create a federal interagency website on youth, which we defined as ages 10 to 24, following some of the best brain science that's out there now about how long brain development actually takes.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:05:04](#)):

We put together what's now called "youth.gov." That is available for anyone. We really focus that on adults who work with youth. There's also another webpage that's part of youth.gov that is called "Youth Engaged for Change," which is directed directly to young people and also has some associated social media channels with it.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:05:29](#)):

This is the homepage of youth.gov right now. As Karen mentioned, we of course, are doing our best to get information out about coronavirus as much as we can. If you go to youth.gov and click into that article that's showing on the screen right now you would get to a few federal websites, the CDC and some from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration about how to help young people through the current crisis that we're having. We're also working with the CDC and a group of young people who serve as our editorial board for the Youth Engaged for Change website to translate some of these resources into language that young people are more used to seeing and would better understand. There haven't been many resources put out that focus on this youth population and making sure that we're getting information to them.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:06:20](#)):

Social relationships and relationships with peers and family are so crucial for adolescent development. We want to make sure that they, even in a time of social distancing or physical distancing, young people are understanding what needs to happen and how they can do that in ways that continue their normal adolescent development at the same time. That's a good look at youth.gov right there. I think it was maybe a previous slide that had a list of all of the agencies that are part of the working group.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:06:54](#)):

The numbers changes depending on where you look. We say 21 right now, but it depends on who is officially at the table and coming to our meetings. We've been meeting monthly, essentially over the last 12 years since that executive order came into being with folks from all of these agencies and some that even aren't represented here that come and go when they have work that's directed at our target age range.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:07:19](#)):

The Department of Health and Human Services was named in the executive order as the Chair. The Department of Justice and OJJDP, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has really taken up the role of Vice-Chair. We work with them to have content specific to children of incarcerated parents on youth.gov. All of these other agencies have the opportunity to meet with us monthly. Listen to what's happening across the government. Produce content that they can then use youth.gov to disseminate. We really try to make youth.gov a one-stop-shop for all the federal information that has to do with programming and resources for young people.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:07:59](#)):

I hope that you can take a little bit of time and look around youth.gov. We have multiple youth topics there. Any issue that might be affecting young people at any given time, whether that's about behavioral health, substance abuse, and mental health, or about Juvenile Justice Programs, or financial literacy skills, or lots of different information on there, different ways for the arts to be involved in people's lives, workforce and education programs, that sort of thing. Please take a look and let us know if there's anything on there that could be more helpful.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:08:36](#)):

If you go down to the bottom left corner of the youth.gov page, you will see right there, it's at the top left on your screen now where you can subscribe to an E-Newsletter. If you put your email there about once a month, we send out a newsletter that has a feature article on some new content that might be on youth.gov, often, lined up with different celebrations or different focuses of the month. If April is

Prevent Child Abuse Month, there might be some content about that, or Financial Literacy Month, that sort of thing. We direct you to any new resources and information there. There's also some information about the federal funding opportunities that comes with that newsletter. There's a funding center on youth.gov that has a lot of information about how to apply for federal grants, which can be a very tricky and confusing process. We've tried to be helpful with the information we've provided there. A number of features there available on youth.gov that we hope you will take advantage of.

Karen Pittman ([00:09:42](#)):

Wonderful. I really do encourage people to look at the site. There's a treasure trove of information there and I go to it frequently.

Karen Pittman ([00:09:49](#)):

One of the things that I actually go to the site most frequently for and you think I would have this memorized by now is the definition that you all have given to youth development. I think that it's incredibly important that the federal government has an official definition of Positive Youth Development and would love for you to ... it's not the shortest definition. I'd love for you to unpack this a bit for us and tell us how the process that you all went through as so many different departments and agencies with so many different ... hands-on different parts of the elephant. How did you end up with this definition?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:10:25](#)):

Yeah. That's a great metaphor for how this goes with hands-on different parts of the elephant. This was a really collaborative process. I will say that it predates me arriving at HHS. I was not part of putting this together. We have some of the greatest minds, the greatest Positive Youth Development minds, our folks who have been in government service for a long time. I did not know before I started in this position and being the Chair of this group that 4-H is a federal program. I did not realize that that grew out of USDA, the US Department of Agriculture. We have had folks that have been part of our staff level working group for a long time who've been working in this field for many, many years and really understand Positive Youth Development from its very roots.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:11:19](#)):

Folks like that were part of drafting a definition and then we did a lot of sharing that among our members, working through it, getting all the parts and pieces into it. It's very difficult to make one definition that reaches everyone who's doing this kind of work. But we really think we've hit the key points here where we're talking about an intentional and pro-social approach that is allowing youth to connect with all of these different groups of people who talk or who have great impact on young people's lives, their peers, their schools, their organizations, their communities.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:11:59](#)):

We really are thinking about this from a strength-based perspective. We're talking about the assets that young people have and all of the incredible gifts and the strengths that they bring to addressing issues in their communities and in their schools. We're thinking about promoting those positive outcomes. It's so easy to slip into the mindset of fixing problems, particularly when you're talking about from a government perspective, because the government really is set up to be that safety net or that structure that steps in when something is wrong. It's a real shift to try to have people be thinking about the

positive outcomes that we want to see for young people and to be thinking about the strengths that young people bring to the table.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:12:40](#)):

That's really where Positive Youth Development fits in so nicely with what we want to do. I really like to talk about the role of the working group. I see this interagency working group on youth programs as a way to infiltrate the federal government with a Positive Youth Development approach. Many agencies are already thinking that way and doing a lot of things that is PYDs, we call Positive Youth Development. Some agencies have really not ever thought about it before. We'll talk a little bit more later on about the specific agencies and such that are involved.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:13:13](#)):

We're able to get everyone to the table and get clearance on using this definition. It's such good news that folks outside the government have found it really useful. There are a number of agencies that use this definition in funding announcements. If they are putting out a call for applications for grants that they want to take a Positive Youth Development approach, they look to this definition so that everybody is using the same language and thinking in the same way when they when they talk about Positive Youth Development. Folks really do look to the federal government to set some standards and this is one way that we wanted to do that for Positive Youth Development.

Karen Pittman ([00:13:57](#)):

It really is incredibly valuable to have it. I quote, obviously work with 4-H closely and glad to see that during the House Rebecca. It's critically important to have a definition and have it validated by the agencies. This definition plus just going back frequently to the National Research Council 2002 report consensus document on community programs that promote youth development has been really important to have those. You can't get more official than the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, and interagency workgroup representing all of the federal agencies when you want to help people understand that this pro-social asset forward approach to youth development makes sense.

Karen Pittman ([00:14:49](#)):

I love the fact that you use the word "infiltrating." We are still infiltrating at all levels. You're not alone at the federal level. I mean because you've got such a range, as you said, of agencies that have been at the forefront of creating these definitions and agencies that are still mandate working in more of a deficit space, any other examples that feel useful of where you've seen this infiltration get traction?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:15:22](#)):

Yeah. I think the Children's Bureau, the folks at Health and Human Services that do all the child welfare programs and support for young people who are in the foster care system, they are a really great example of a federal agency that has taken a Positive Youth Development approach for many years now. They work very hard to have young people with lived experience of foster care be involved in the decision making. That's difficult to do. That's difficult to do in any organization. It's a shift in the way that people think about leading organizations. It's a shift in thinking about young people strictly as recipients of services and starting to think about them as decision-makers and having those strengths that we talked about in those assets to bring to determine what the services should be or to work in partnership with adults to be doing all of the things that an agency does.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:16:20](#)):

The Children's Bureau has a set of young adult consultants who are young people with lived experience in the foster care system who work just like any other staff member at the Children's Bureau might work. They're involved in everything from sending out grant announcements to reviewing the grant applications when they come in and helping to make the decisions about what gets funded. They work in training and technical assistance capacities and reaching out when people have questions and providing answers from the viewpoint of a young person who has experienced the system.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:16:55](#)):

They're really great, strong example of a federal agency that's been doing this for a while. They continue to lead and to help us understand the ways that this approach can be operationalized within a federal agency. We have both FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and NASA, our space folks. They both have really great youth councils that operate. They operate in different ways. Sometimes it's about coming on board for a year and taking on a particular project that is of interest to the young person and something that NASA or FEMA wants to pursue and that young person works in partnership with a federal staff person to create something tangible, some outcome, some product that the agency then uses in the course of their work. Both of those are really great examples of young people being partnered with adults and learning how to make the decisions they're expected of a staff person at a federal agency.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:18:06](#)):

There's lots of folks across the government. I would put folks to on youth.gov. There is a Positive Youth Development youth topic. There's some new content in there. This new content is also in the slideshow that we looked at earlier too. You can find it there as well. There's a report on there, about a 50-page report of a number of agencies and how they are utilizing young people in either delivering services or providing content, creating content for young people coming from those federal agencies.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:18:40](#)):

The agencies really run the gamut along the spectrum of youth engagement or of Positive Youth Development. I've mentioned that have been doing this for a long time and do it really well and those that are just learning that this cultural shift or perspective shift to engaging young people in the delivery of services and the planning of services as possible. Our goal within the working group is really to move folks one step along the ladder. Wherever they are, we want to help them move one step forward. We do a lot of that by highlighting those programs that have active youth engagement efforts happening, something that you can find that report on youth.gov if you're interested in seeing what other federal agencies are doing.

Karen Pittman ([00:19:26](#)):

That's terrific. I think in addition to the important work and it's critically important around youth engagement and really getting young people in as advisers and consultants, there's also just a huge amount of work, again, uneven but moving forward. I think, for me, this is one of the accomplishments that I would ... if it doesn't get direct credit to the interagency working group, it's a sign that the agencies because they're in this water together moving forward. Two examples that I've been familiar with and worked on are that the Administration for Children, Youth and Families really taking a deliberate approach to go from thinking just about child safety to thinking about child well-being and being very explicit about defining what well-being means for young people. We're moving from the

phrase that the forum has used for multiple decades, we're moving from just a problem-free approach to what it mean for young people to really be fully prepared and fully participating.

Karen Pittman ([00:20:29](#)):

The other one, which got more to practice was an opportunity that I had to work with the Office of Adolescent Health that it very much embraced Positive Youth Development, but then wanted to get down to the practical level of you're being asked to use evidence-based programs around pregnancy prevention, you're also being asked to use a Positive Youth Development approach. How do these things fit together? At that level, those are the conversations that often trip people up and help them limit moving from this wonderful definition to how do I make sure I'm in compliance when the things that are coming in my door are still written very strictly?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:21:09](#)):

Right.

Karen Pittman ([00:21:10](#)):

Good. As I was getting ready for this and looking at the website, I saw that you all did a strategic plan, federal collaboration in 2016. I mean, first of all, I thought it was great that in addition to setting up the capacity for collaboration, you were actually given funding to make a specific plan for how you're [crosstalk 00:21:32]. Can you talk a little bit about that and in a particular share the vision and a little bit about what difference it's made to have this formal plan in place?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:21:40](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. We did receive a one-time appropriation from congress to go out and do this strategic plan. There wasn't ever any funding attached with the executive order to have this working group and do the coordinating and collaborating work. Still to this day, even though we're running youth.gov as a website and we have things that cost a fair amount of money each year to do. There's no appropriation line item or anything like that for the working group. We actually are funded by the partner agencies. The partner agencies all contribute a certain amount of money each year depending on what content they want to have developed and what level of support they want from our contracting team, our great team at the American Institutes of Research who have been working on this with us for the last 10 years.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:22:28](#)):

It really, I think, speaks to the importance of the working group of that collaboration and coordination that federal agencies are actually coming to the table with money to contribute to this. That wasn't enough to really get out and do a great strategic plan. We did get that one-time appropriation from congress. I believe it was in 2012 that that happened. We were able to go out across the country and do a number of listening sessions with young people themselves, with parents, with educators, with folks who work in community-based organizations with young people, getting all of the perspectives out there from stakeholders about what young people need to develop successfully to have everything in place that they need for a successful transition to adulthood.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:23:17](#)):

The information from that listening session became this Pathways for Youth strategic plan that you see on the screen there. If you are on youth.gov, you can put Pathways for Youth into the search bar and you should come up with a PDF of the strategic plan itself and take a look at all of that. We really

focused on making sure that we took that Positive Youth Development approach as we did this strategic plan. We're viewing people as resources and not as problems to be fixed or issues to be solved, but the capacity that they have to really make a contribution and talking about how we promote these positive outcomes for all youth. Through that strategic plan, we reinforced what the original goals from the working group were from the executive order were for the working group about around collaboration and coordination.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:24:10](#)):

Just to talk about that for a minute, I think the idea of silos and especially silos coming from the federal government is something that's been talked about for years across my whole career, across many, many years of thinking about how we can best be serving not just young people. Silo show up when we're serving any of the populations, but particularly for young people. Each of these federal agencies has their own mandate. They have their own legislation that created them or that controls them about what they can do, how they can do it, what they can fund, all those rules around what can happen.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:24:49](#)):

We all know that none of our lives and particularly young people's lives don't happen in silos. They are dealing with all kinds of different things at any one given time. If you think about a young person who might be coming to a Department of Labor education and training program looking to get into the workforce, get some job training, that young person is not just thinking about what education they need or what job training that they need. They're also thinking about where's their next meal coming from and where might they be sleeping tonight if they're have insecure housing and what behavioral health, substance abuse or mental health issues are they struggling with that they need to get some services for in order to be able to stick through a program, a training program that the Department of Labor might be offering.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:25:37](#)):

Oftentimes, the Department of Labor is just not equipped to meet all of those needs, because that's not what they are funded by the government to do. Having this interagency approach really is what allows us to streamline some of those things to make sure that we're not duplicating things that are happening in different federal agencies and programs and that we can leverage the resources that everybody brings to the table.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:26:02](#)):

I saw a question in the chat about what we think some of our accomplishments of the interagency workgroup have been over the past 10 years. I think this is one that we can really point to where this collaboration that is our first goal has led to great outcomes. There was a working group meeting a number of years ago, again, that predates me where the Department of Labor did come to the table and shared some issues that they were having with their YouthBuild program which brings young people in as a residential program and teaches skills and job training skills. They were having a lot of trouble keeping young people in that program because of substance abuse issues.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:26:47](#)):

It was a zero tolerance program if you took a drug test and failed it or were found to be using drugs and alcohol you were out of the program. Given the trauma histories of young people coming in and just the life circumstances, there were a lot of young people struggling with those issues. They said, "We really

don't know what to do about this." Staff person from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration was at the meeting and said, "We have a program that we call SBIRT." It's the Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral for Treatment program, S-B-I-R-T. That really could help if you could screen the young people as they came in and figure out who's having some issues at the top when they're getting involved and refer them for treatment. Most young people who were struggling with something could go to a relatively short treatment program and address some of those issues. Others needed more full substance abuse treatment programming.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:27:50](#)):

Using that tool would help identify problems in the beginning and get services involved so that they could then at the same time participate in the YouthBuild program. Those two agencies got together and started integrating the SBIRT into the YouthBuild programming. Lo and behold, the retention rates of YouthBuild just skyrocketed. There were so many more young people who were able to make it through the program to its end. I think, it's sometimes is a 12-month program or even longer.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:28:23](#)):

The number of young people who are able to be retained in that, because they got those issues dealt with, because of the collaboration of those two agencies is really something that we point to. Yes, the SBIRT tool is accessible. I see another question in the chat. There's actually one of the slides in the carousel when you go to youth.gov is about the SBIRT, about a webinar that is training anyone who's interested in using that tool. I really would encourage folks to go to that. We are grateful to our partners at SAMHSA who have been making that available for a number of years.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:28:57](#)):

That collaboration between SAMHSA and DOL was something that outside funders picked up on, the Hilton Foundation saw how well that was working. They continued the collaboration. Did a pilot of it with some strong evaluation and were able to document the really positive results of that collaboration. That's the thing that we are trying to foster when we have staff members from these various agencies at our table every month, hearing about what different programs offer, where there are opportunities to coordinate and to collaborate across the government.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:29:31](#)):

Secondly, we're working on evidence-based and innovative strategies and trying to disseminate information about that. I think we'll have a little bit more of a conversation about that later on and then that youth engagement and partnerships goal that really came from this process of these listening sessions that we had across the country. You mentioned earlier, Karen, about the process of getting all of these different agencies together. We did a lot of this work through 2012 and 2013. Then it took us three years to finalize this strategic plan because it had to go through the clearance process of 17 different federal agencies. We were finally able to do that and finalize this plan in 2016 and start distributing it and getting it out there to the public.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:30:23](#)):

I think one of the things that's really important from this strategic plan is on the next slide. We share what the Strengths-Based Vision for Youth is. It's actually over two slides because it was too long to get on one slide. This is the first four points of this Strengths-Based Vision for Youth. This is what we heard

from communities across this country, young people need, youth and their families need safe, healthy, and stable places to live, learn, and work.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:30:49](#)):

There's a lot you can unpack just from that statement, talking about what's safe, what's healthy, what's stable, and we're talking about where they're living, where they're learning, their school settings, their educational programs they're pursuing, their work environments, there's a lot in that and talking about access to health care, education and training, life skills development, all those skills you need to transition to adulthood, and then the connections that young people need with their family, with their peers, with their schools and with supportive adults in the community.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:31:19](#)):

Then the next slide, we talked a little bit about what organizations need, the staffing needs, those organizations training, the knowledge that providers of youth services need, and that youth need to be recognized by their communities for their strengths and have opportunities for engagement, service and leadership.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:31:38](#)):

At the end of the day, we want youth to be thriving throughout all phases of their development all the way up into young adulthood and beyond. That Strengths-Based Vision for Youth is really what has been driving us to think when we're talking about that really broad charge that we have to improve outcomes for youth. These are the kinds of outcomes that we are working on.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:32:03](#)):

This is new work that we've been doing over the last couple of years where we took on the challenge. I mentioned how hard it was to clear the strategic plan through all of our partner agencies, which was 17 at the time. We're now 21. Now across all 21 of those agencies, we have been working to determine what the common outcomes are that all of these agencies can find themselves somewhere in this chart and say, "Yes, we are contributing to improving outcomes in one of these seven domains; social-emotional well-being, connectedness, health, healthy and safe environment, youth contribution and engagement, education, and employability and economic opportunity."

Cheri Hoffman ([00:32:45](#)):

We are still working through the process of how we take what all those various different agencies do and what they measure and rolling that up into one indicator for how the agencies represented on the interagency working group for youth programs are improving these outcomes. It's been a really big task that we've taken on. I've been grateful for the support of our contractors who understand more about the mathematical ways to figure out how we show these outcomes. This has been really grounded in the work that we did in the strategic plan and bringing all of those agencies together to say, "What are you doing? What are you measuring? What are the most important things that your agency is trying to help young people achieve?"

Karen Pittman ([00:33:37](#)):

That was a great overview. Let's stay on the slide. I was on mute for a second. Of course, want to stay on the slide for a minute and just see if we can pull in some of the questions that have been popping up in the chat space.

Karen Pittman ([00:33:51](#)):

First of all, it's so important that youth contribution engagement is listed as an outcome for all the reasons that you've just said as we're coming at this from a Positive Youth Development perspective. One of the comments that came in and I think this is from Roger at OSU, is that the current narrative around, the epidemic portrays young people as a problem rather than as an asset. Obviously, on youth.gov you really promoting people as an asset, are there things that you would suggest that we do? Are there things that could actually be done through the interagency workgroup to really highlight the fact that young people are doing fantastic things across the country and how we could have highlight their civic engagement in this effort?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:34:38](#)):

Yeah. That's actually a question that we have taken back to our editorial board and actually some virtual interns that we have as well. Current college students and this editorial board of young people from ... I think they're mostly the 18 to 24 age range. We've taken it back to them to say what kind of content do you want to see and how can we engage you all with the experts in the federal government to translate some of that content. We've taken a couple of pieces from the CDC. We had a conversation about this just last Friday. Our virtual interns are working on translating that into language that young people would be more responsive to.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:35:17](#)):

The young people have been coming up with ideas for different things that they could do. They've asked about ... I'm not promising any of this stuff is coming. This is all still in the decision-making phase. The young people have had ideas about could we host a conversation, a dialogue between somebody on our editorial board and an expert on public health issues or on mental health and substance abuse issues? Could we have that conversation in a Instagram Live setting where young people could tune in and listen to another young person asking questions and helping to translate the information We've been talking about resources that we could offer.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:35:59](#)):

I think there's been a lot of this where there have been different news story, news programs, or different individuals who really been trying to highlight the positive that's happening. A lot of the stories that I see about people who are responding to the crisis in different ways have been about young people, have been about children who have thought about different ways that they can deliver food or resources to elderly people that are isolated in their community. I think continuing to highlight those really incredible responses would be great to continue to be able to highlight that we would love to.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:36:35](#)):

We have a portion on Youth Engage 4 Change that's called Changemakers, which highlights inspiring stories of youth. It's something that as we were user testing that website across a broad group of young people that was what really was speaking to them the most, reading about other individuals their age with similar characteristics to them, similar backgrounds and what big challenges they had been able to face and overcome and how they had done that. I imagine that we will use that Changemaker tool that we have to highlight some young people that have really stepped up during this crisis. That website, you can find it from youth.gov or if you go to engage.youth.gov, E-N-G-A-G-E .youth.gov, you will find the Youth Engage 4 Change website, which is the portion that is very directed at young people themselves rather than the adults who work with youth for youth.gov.

Karen Pittman ([00:37:33](#)):

Perfect. I think if you all are putting examples and clicking examples in that space and encouraging young people to think about that, that's a wonderful resource and that question has come up frequently on other conversations I've been on over the past two weeks, how do we really demonstrate that and even how do we get more creative about it to the extent that we are in an increasingly virtual environment that's a place where young people are often much more experienced than we are coming up with solutions about how to create community in virtual spaces.

Karen Pittman ([00:38:09](#)):

A couple of other quick questions which we can take care of and, again, I want to acknowledge for people who aren't in the chat. Apparently the links on youth.gov aren't working at the moment and come back later. Hopefully, it'll be fixed but folks are actually trying to find ...

Cheri Hoffman ([00:38:24](#)):

Yes. I have sent a text message to try to address that.

Karen Pittman ([00:38:28](#)):

We don't need more comments on that. We see that that's happening. The recording and the slides will be available afterwards.

Karen Pittman ([00:38:37](#)):

There's a specific question about SBIRT and whether it's only available to government organizations or to non-government? Do you know that or is that information going to be found on the website?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:38:47](#)):

Yeah. It's probably available as far as I know. That webinar that I mentioned is available to any community-based organization about how to use the SBIRT. I think community-based organization may even be too narrow. I think anybody can sign up for that webinar and learn how to use that tool. There's information about that tool, which I will write again in the chat group right there about SBIRT. If you go to the SAMHSA website, if you Google SAMHSA and SBIRT, you will come up with information about that tool as well.

Karen Pittman ([00:39:23](#)):

Wonderful. That's great. That sounds exciting.

Karen Pittman ([00:39:28](#)):

Before we shift over into research and evaluation and evidence, there are a lot of questions there and I think we can spend our last 15 minutes in that space. There was a question about the faith-based community and how they're engaged. I know that in various administrations over the decades, there have been real efforts to engage the faith-based community, is that something that the interagency working group is focused on, has information on?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:39:56](#)):

Yeah. At different times, I mean, we have a office in HHS, it's a faith-based partnership and community engagement office that we have worked with and they have brought various presentations to the

working group there. I'm recalling recent one that we did with a group called Open Table, which really worked on connecting young people. I think the program is for adults as well, but they were speaking about connecting young adults in their communities whether they're folks that are returning from a juvenile detention stay or young people that have had experience in the foster care system. When they come into the community, the church really, through this Open Table approach, has been bringing all the different individuals in the community who have something that that young adult needs in their life and sitting around one table and figuring out how all of those services can be provided to the young person.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:40:54](#)):

We definitely have presentations from different faith-based groups over the years that can bring in different information. The only rule really is that they are available in providing services to young people who might be being served by government programs. I did see a question in the chat about how folks can get their resources onto youth.gov. Just want to reiterate that this really is a one-stop-shop for federal resources. We are primarily highlighting resources that are coming from federal sources that have been produced by one of our partner agencies.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:41:30](#)):

We also tap into pretty heavily some of the large youth organizations and for youth investment and pretty much anything Karen and her team puts out we will put up on youth.gov and refer to it or organizations like America's Promise Alliance, or some of the large, really well-known and vetted youth organizations. We will share resources from them at times when we don't have federal resources to fill a particular gap or a need that we've noticed. That's really where the vast majority of the reasons versus come from that are on youth.gov.

Karen Pittman ([00:42:04](#)):

Great. There are more questions coming in that I know what to do with. I will let you scan those and see if there are other specific ones that you want answered. I think some of them you've just reminded people that this is this is a federal interagency workgroup. Folks can't join unless they happen to be a federal agency. That these common outcomes that are up on the screen certainly are outcome domains that are pretty generally recognized as things that all come together to add up to what we were talk about to youth thriving. What's thriving young person really is doing well in most of these domains and usually not having serious problems in any with unevenness in the domains. There are various ways that you can measure them. As you said, you all are in the early stages of thinking about what it is you're going to do from a measurement perspective to move forward.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:43:06](#)):

Yeah. From the measurement perspective, we really focused on not adding to the burden of any of the agencies who are our partners. It is a Herculean task to get a federal agency to change the way that they measure something or tools that they use. We really have focused on having folks bring to the table what they are already measuring, what they are looking at in their either federal grantee reporting or the evaluations that they're doing.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:43:35](#)):

We have put place the burden on our contracting team really and our staffs from ASPE to think through how we can take all of the different ways that things are being measured, the specific outcomes are

being measured in these domains, and then roll that up into one way of reporting out what's happening. There may be some measure out there that gets that all of these things. I haven't found one that's perfect yet.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:44:02](#)):

What we did as we were coming up with as part of our two years worth of work has been comparing what we were hearing from the federal agencies that got us to these seven domains against a lot of existing frameworks. One of which is one that you all put out from the forum for youth investment to put out a number of years ago and they Youth Thrive that you just mentioned something that CSSP has, the Center for Study of Social Policy has. I'm having to spell out all these acronyms that we live in the federal government and sometimes I forget what they stand for.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:44:36](#)):

We really looked at a number of different taxonomies and ways of thinking about what all young people need and made sure that ours was fitting with that. As Karen just said, these are all areas that are essentially recognized across any number of reputable groups that have taken on very rigorous approaches to coming up with a set of domains like this.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:45:02](#)):

We didn't find one that fit exactly all of our federal programs. We did end up creating this to make sure that all of our programs could see themselves somewhere in this setup that we have with the domains and we're taking what they're already measuring and rolling that up into how we'll be reporting on these outcomes.

Karen Pittman ([00:45:20](#)):

I think that that approach is one that the forum has used over the years and working with Children's Cabinets at the state and the local level. I think to great benefit. As you said, it's a Herculean task to think that you're going to come up with common measures. Often a very useful task to just compare across these silos what measures people are using, put them up into a common framework, and then just look at that data collectively and ask questions in the same way that you gave that very specific question example of how the Department of Labor came to the table with a problem that was able to be handled from the substance abuse side.

Karen Pittman ([00:46:07](#)):

What we have found is that when you create this bigger picture of how well young people are doing in multiple areas and give agencies a chance to look at trends and look at subpopulations, ideas pop up, connections pop up that wouldn't be there otherwise. That's a fundamental part of when we talk about taking a youth development approach. It is this holistic approach that says "Just because your responsibility only for one of these boxes doesn't mean that the young people that you're working with don't come with all of these boxes." That's really important.

Karen Pittman ([00:46:45](#)):

One of the questions that was asked earlier, I think, by Sharon Adams-Taylor was we talk a lot about evidence-based programs, but we're talking about a Positive Youth Development approach. Do we actually have evidence that a Positive Youth Development approach helps? What's the evidence around why we need to use this bigger approach? I would just add into that. As we're acknowledging this

approach, we also have the challenge that evidence-based programs often have fidelity and fit issues when organizations and communities start to implement them.

Karen Pittman ([00:47:23](#)):

If we start with this very narrow thing of here's an evidence-based program that was designed to address a particular issue with a particular strategy and we're trying to put it in the context of this interagency work have a holistic definition of young people and of the fact that by the time these things get to communities they often don't fit, where often isn't funding, how do you reconcile those two things with the work group?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:47:50](#)):

Yeah. That's a great question. Really nice setup Karen, thank you, for some work that we've been doing and actually doing in partnership with the forum around thinking about the core components of successful programs for young people.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:48:05](#)):

I'm not sure that those two things should be reconciled. I think maybe we need to add to the way we think about evidence-based programming. For the reasons that you just were saying, I think we learned about some really great examples in the Juvenile Justice field where there have been some studies done looking at all of the evidence-based programs that were out there. Juvenile Justice has a couple of different lists that they put on a website. The way that we traditionally have been funding and doing evidence-based program from the federal level has been looking at specific programs and doing a randomized controlled trial study of that to find effectiveness on one of the outcomes that was targeted.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:48:48](#)):

If there was statistical evidence of effectiveness on that, saying that this program has evidence that it addresses whichever issue that happened to be if it's teen pregnancy prevention or home visiting effectiveness, lots of different areas where these kinds of evidence-based programs were studied. Those programs got on a registry and then those were the programs that the feds would fund grantees to implement in their communities and in their settings.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:49:19](#)):

A researcher out of Vanderbilt University named Mark Lipsey took a look across all of the Juvenile Justice programs that were happening out in the community and knowing that there were these registries that had really had had millions and millions of dollars poured into them to develop and found that only 7% of the programs that were functioning in the community were being drawn from those registries. There were lots of barriers to using those programs. Those programs are branded model programs that come with a cost for people to buy that program and learn how to implement it.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:49:56](#)):

That cost was a barrier. Implementing those programs with fidelity to exactly the way that they were studied, which might have been studied with a population, not exactly the population that folks in the community were trying to serve was in the same age group, it was a different demographic makeup, a different community of a maybe a rural community wanted to use an evidence-based program that had

been ... the studies had been done in an urban environment. There are a whole lot of reasons why just grabbing a program off of a registry and implementing it in the community doesn't really work.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:50:29](#)):

We've been thinking about how we brought in this and think about across all these programs that we know have some evidence on particular outcomes. How do we focus on what the core components of those programs are and show that those are the pieces of a program that matter when you implement them correctly that that's how you are going to have the best chance of improving that particular outcome. You can implement those practices and those strategies and wrap the rest of your program around that because we believe that the individuals that are out there on the ground serving young people have the best understanding of what the young people in their community need. We want them to look to the research and to look to what has been shown to have effectiveness through rigorous research standards of what to implement. We think you should have flexibility to do that in a way that makes the most sense for your community.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:51:24](#)):

We've been partnering with the forum and there's a great paper on the forum's website on what it means to take a core components approach. We have funded some other research that is still in progress and coming soon that's looking at some specific outcomes. If you are a program that's really working with a lot of young people who are struggling with externalizing behavior, they're acting out the things that might get young people in trouble at school or suspended from school or fighting or aggression, aggressive behaviors, those sorts of things, we will be coming out with some research around what the core components are, programs that have effectiveness for that outcome, also for social skills and interpersonal skills and for self regulation.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:52:10](#)):

I know I'm teasing that because it's going to take probably another year before all of those are out and available and ready. That's the kind of way that we're starting to think about this. We were certainly not the first people to think of it. When we brought this to the forum they said, "Yup, lots of people are talking about that. Let's work together about how we broaden this conversation." That's been a really exciting endeavor to be partnered with you all. Karen and I know that you guys have a lot of work on that front.

Karen Pittman ([00:52:38](#)):

Yes, absolutely. We'll make sure that we put a link to that paper into the chat box as we're moving toward the end or send that out as we send the archive out for this session as well to everybody who participated or who signed up. Again, more questions than we can answer. We will come off of this. If there are other questions, Cheri, that we didn't have time to answer that you'd like to we'll send those answers out as well when we send out the archive and the updates.

Karen Pittman ([00:53:16](#)):

One final question and this is a question that I asked because I know in our work at the state and local level with these kinds of coordinating agency groups. The education system at every level seems to be ... I don't have a polite way to say it ... the weak link at the table. Are you experiencing that? Do you have any thoughts about that? Especially, I just did a blog, titled, what happens when out of school time is all the time? Many of the agencies that are around the table or agencies that work with young people

either in those out of school hours or in crisis times, etc. Our schools are the organizations that have that ... or supposed to have them full-time. Yet it seems to be hard to get them to come to the table to really think about coordination. What are your thoughts on that and your last [inaudible 00:54:16]?

Cheri Hoffman (00:54:16):

Yeah. We have success spots that we can point to. I think these relationships can always be improved. I think for a long time the Department of Education has been the agency that is assumed to be responsible for youth development. Because kids are in school most of their hours, because that's where a lot of all of these different programs, so many of the social-emotional learning programs are now being incorporated into schools and really it's something that COVID-19 has shown for us, all right, how much schools have been depended upon to do.

Cheri Hoffman (00:54:54):

We're really having to think about how do we feed kids now because they're not in school because schools have been doing that and how do we ... child maltreatment reports are dropping because so often it's been teachers and school nurses and school personnel who have been making the calls to the hotlines to report abuse. It's really making us realize how much schools have been considered responsible for and that we really should be thinking about other ways to deliver a lot of those services.

Cheri Hoffman (00:55:22):

We've had some great partnerships over the years with the Office of Safe and Healthy Students at the Department of Education. There is an Office of Student Engagement. There was a person who was considered the coordinator for student engagement. That person isn't there anymore. We struggle with that [inaudible 00:55:38] people come and go from federal agencies. I think we can always improve those kinds of partnerships in those kinds of relationships. That really is what it's based on.

Cheri Hoffman (00:55:51):

It's a staff level group. We tend to be staffed by those people who remain in government for a while they don't change as the administration's change so that we can keep this work going. I really think what it speaks to is that we need these partnerships more than ever to be able to deliver all these kinds of services, because we have experts in the federal government on providing all of these different needs, making sure that all those different needs are met for kids. If we can improve the coordination and the partnerships with the Department of Education and other agencies, we really can take some of the burden off of one agency to try to do all of those different things.

Karen Pittman (00:56:32):

I think that's a really important way to think about this. I agree with you 100% that the incredible amount of things that happen in this thing that we call school get underestimated when, from an outcome's perspective, we think they're just responsible for academic development. This crisis that we're in demonstrates the range of both people who are in the building, services that are in the building, things that are made. Hopefully, we can flip that.

Karen Pittman (00:57:03):

I think Allison raised a question and maybe this is the one to end on, which is what would be the most impactful next steps to advance positive development efforts for federal staff and others in the field to take advantage of? People want to know how to work with you more. One way is to do that through

federal staff. What are some of the most powerful things that we could do next? How can we on the call be helpful?

Cheri Hoffman ([00:57:29](#)):

Yeah. This is a little bit of a soapbox for me. Federal agencies at this point, we can really only do what we've been mandated to do. We're doing the best that we can to get this information out about Positive Youth Development and thinking about the overall development of every young person in our country thinking about their success. This country really doesn't have a plan for Positive Youth Development. We don't have a Positive Youth Development policy. We have policies in this country for when things have gone wrong. We have a Juvenile Justice policy for when someone's gotten in trouble. We have a child welfare policy when there's been a breakdown in the family. That's really the way that our policy system is built.

Cheri Hoffman ([00:58:07](#)):

What about shifting that to think about a national policy for whatever young person needs to survive. These common outcomes that are listed here on the screen could really be the foundation for starting to think that way. That kind of change and that kind of cultural shift really has to come from outside. It has to come from generating ideas from community-based organizations and groups like you all represent here on this call and putting pressure on our legislators to think about that and to think about creating a policy that would ensure all of our young people can thrive.

Karen Pittman ([00:58:42](#)):

Cheri, I think you've handed it back to me for the final kickoff. That's exactly the work that the forum is trying to do at the national, state, and local levels in raising the idea of these thriving youth fields. Can we think about a thriving youth policy that adds these things together or set of policies that we at least look at through a single lens? I think you're 100% right that this is a place for us to partner with you.

Karen Pittman ([00:59:10](#)):

I want to thank you for taking the time to join us. Hand it back to Ian for last minute to give him any last minute instructions that he wants to give our listeners. Thank you again for what was a wonderful conversation.