

FRAMING YOUR ORGANIZATION AS AN INDISPENSIBLE ASSET

Background

Disruption creates opportunity. Now more than ever, schools and school districts are looking for value-added partnerships that can help them meet the critical needs of children, youth, and families. Similarly, community-based organizations are looking for new ways to connect with schools, school districts, and each other to ensure engaging and enriching learning and development experiences for young people.

How can you better position your organization in ways that make your assets, connections, and resources more visible, compelling, and relevant? How can you use this moment to build reciprocal relationships where each partner has something concrete to offer and to receive as you work together to ensure that youth thrive?

This tool will help you answer questions and compile data for nine key asset areas that you can use to help schools, school districts, and other community partners more fully understand what you have to offer. By taking time to discuss and answer these questions, you will be better prepared to come to the table as a negotiating partner, not just a willing volunteer. You can use this tool to:

- ◆ Think differently about how you describe your organization to schools, school districts, and other partners.
- ◆ Build consensus within your organization about your greatest strengths and the opportunities you have for growth in capacity, reach, and the services that you offer.
- ◆ Prepare talking points and plan conversations that result in mutually beneficial partnerships rooted in each partner's assets and designed to add lasting value.

We are committed to continuing to refine and enhance this tool. Please be sure to share your feedback with us both on the tool itself and how you were able to use it. You can send your comments and suggestions to readinessprojects@forumfyi.org.

1. Thinking about the young people you serve as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Who, generally, is your target population? ◆ What is/was your maximum capacity? What is your current enrollment? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In what neighborhoods do young people live? What schools do they attend? ◆ What attributes might be important to your partners? (age(s), demographics, and/or language(s) spoken) ◆ What else do you want to share about your participants? ◆ How has your access to and engagement with youth and families changed during the past year? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To what extent could you help your district engage young people in listening to and learning with their peers? ◆ To what extent could you help your district engage parents and families in listening to and learning with their peers? 	

Potential Next Steps:

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2. Thinking about your staff and volunteers as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Who, generally, are the staff and volunteers on your team? What is/was your total number of staff members and volunteers? What is your current model for staffing and volunteers? ◆ How diverse is your team? How representative are your staff members and volunteers of the youth with whom you work? ◆ How would you characterize the training, expertise, and credentials that they have? ◆ What else do you want to share about your staff/volunteers that might be important to discuss with your schools? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What social networks, civic organizations, faith communities do your staff and volunteers access in their roles? ◆ What specific connections do your staff and volunteers have with school personnel? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What kind of capacities could you add to your schools (i.e., more mentors, coaches, family outreach workers, extracurricular content specialists, and/or tutors)? ◆ In what ways could you support your schools and the district in reaching aspirations for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion? 	

Potential Next Steps:

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3. Thinking about your partner and family relationships as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What partners and/or public agencies do you regularly collaborate with (e.g., libraries, public housing)? ◆ What relationships do you already have with the business community and civic organizations that could be helpful? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ With whom do you currently collaborate (i.e., schools, teachers, principals, and others) at the district? Who are your champions that could help you build a stronger partnership? ◆ How do you engage parents and caregivers in discussions about the learning and development needs of their children? ◆ How do you engage parents and caregivers in planning discussions about learning opportunities for their children? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What kind of brokering capacities could you add to schools in helping them develop stronger relationships and partnerships with other community organizations and agencies? 	

Potential Next Steps:

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4. Thinking about your content expertise as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What are the various programs and services that you offer? ◆ How might each of these programs and services be valuable to schools? ◆ How have you been able to successfully transition content offerings to a virtual environment? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What specialized content does your organization offer (e.g., arts, technology, sports, etc.)? ◆ What types of credentials and/or areas of expertise do you have represented within your organization’s staff and/or board? ◆ What is your organization’s history and reputation in the community? How well known are you for having expertise in particular areas? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How might your district and/or schools be able to use any of your curricula and approaches to support learning and development more broadly? ◆ How could you provide virtual tutoring and/or mentoring for more children and youth than you serve currently? 	

Potential Next Steps:

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5. Thinking about the training and professional development that you offer as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To what extent is your staff trained in social-emotional learning, the science of learning and development, trauma-informed practice, and/or topics of interest to your partner school district? ◆ How does your staff support young people in self-directed and/or project-based learning? ◆ Are there gaps in your current capacity to deliver high-quality training and professional development? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To what extent have you provided training and professional development for other staff and volunteers outside of your organization? ◆ How have your staff participated in training and professional development offered by the district or other organizations? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What youth development practices utilized by your organization might be especially relevant to K-12 teachers? ◆ What types of training and professional development could you offer and/or jointly pursue with your district and schools? Are there particular collaborative topics or issues that might be most interesting or helpful to your team? 	

Potential Next Steps:

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6. Thinking about your funding as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To what extent have you accessed recovery/stimulus dollars and/or other public funding streams? How have you used these funds? ◆ Where are your current funding gaps and where would you have the greatest leverage? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Who are the private funders and/or board members who might be most interested in your partnership? ◆ Who are some funders that you might consider approaching together with a joint proposal that would support a partnership? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How might you consider using some existing funds and/or grants to help your districts and/or schools accomplish something important that they are currently unable to fund? 	

Potential Next Steps:

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7. Thinking about your marketing and communications as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What communications vehicles or tools are you using to re-engage with children, youth, and families? ◆ Could schools use and/or adapt your communications tools? ◆ How well are you using social media? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How have you been able to raise awareness and increase visibility of your organization in the past year? ◆ Do you have relationships with the media that could be helpful in communications efforts? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How could you help your district communicate and build support for key messages that they need to send to parents and the community as a whole? ◆ How could you help track and tell the story of how public dollars are being used to support COVID recovery in your community? 	

Potential Next Steps:

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8. Thinking about your space and/or facilities as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Where does your programming take place? How has that changed in the last year? Are there times during the day/week/month/year when the building or space that you occupy is not in use? ◆ To what extent do you have procedures and protocols in place that enable young people to gather in-person safely? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To what extent do outside groups regularly access your facility? ◆ What other spaces and/or facilities in the community do you have access to through your partners? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What are the ways that your facility could be used creatively to support learning pods, hubs, or other opportunities? ◆ How could you broker and/or provide access to space such as a gym, recreation room/center, and/or outdoor fields, playgrounds, etc.? ◆ What ways could your facility function as a go-to distribution center for critical supplies/materials? (books, instructional materials, kits, PPE, devices, etc.) 	

Potential Next Steps:

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9. Thinking about your other infrastructure as an asset.

Key Questions	Notes
<p><i>Capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What types of equipment and/or technology (devices, connectivity, software, and or hardware) are available through your organization? ◆ How do you provide food and transportation? <p><i>Reach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How have you invested in infrastructure over the years that enables you to reach more youth more efficiently? How has that differed from years past? What types of infrastructure have you prioritized? <p><i>Unique Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How could you partner with your schools to support families in overcoming technology/digital access barriers? ◆ How could you offer vans and/or other vehicles that might be used to support materials distribution and/or student re-engagement efforts? ◆ How could you offer access to a commercial kitchen? How might you assist with food delivery and/or meal preparation for children, youth, and families? 	

Potential Next Steps:

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Closing Activity

After you have taken notes and generated next steps, please consider the following questions as you prepare for meetings with schools, school districts, or other community partners to discuss partnership opportunities.

1. What are the three most important assets you have as an organization that you want to be sure to convey to your partners?
2. For each of these assets, what is the one key data point and the one personal story or illustrative example that you can share that would bring these assets to life for prospective partners?
3. What would need to be true in order for your organization to be able to share your assets and build a stronger partnership with your schools and/or district(s)?