Pathways and Summer Success

YEAR ONE EVALUATION REPORT

LADUMA STRATEGY, LLC

Mayor's Office
of Youth & Families

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

As part of her commitment to prioritizing the wellbeing of New Orleans youth, Mayor LaToya Cantrell created the Office of Youth and Families (OYF). OYF's mission is to: "improve child well-being by increasing coordination between agencies, expanding resources, ensuring equitable policymaking, and engaging youth and community input." The **Summer Success and Pathways Programs** are a three-year strategic initiative created by OYF in partnership with the WK Kellogg Foundation and the Greater New Orleans Foundation to fill a critical gap in youth workforce development capacity. The programs connect services with youth who lack the ability or networks to reach out for help themselves. Through this pilot, OYF aims to engage system-involved youth in summer employment and year-round workforce assistance in order to improve economic mobility, safety, and overall well-being. The pilot programs seek to demonstrate that city resources can and should be used to serve the most difficult to reach young people, gather data points to share with stakeholders, inform future design conversation, and spark additional investment.

The Summer Success and Pathways Programs are designed based on the premise that system-involved youth can and will choose positive pathways when they are presented with real work opportunity, offered structured coaching/support, and incentivized through stipends. In particular, the programs prioritize employer engagement, case management, incentivizing participation through stipends, and hard/soft skills training as key components of a successful intervention strategy. The long-term goal is that youth benefiting from this intervention will change behavior patterns, improving their own safety and the safety of the community at large.

OYF has assembled a team with expertise in youth/workforce development and mental health/wellness to lead program design and implementation. Other key stakeholders include internship providers, supportive service providers, and referral partners.

Objective of Evaluation

With this evaluation, OYF is seeking support primarily to gather both qualitative and quantitative evidence and feedback on what has/hasn't worked related to the achievement of the outcome objectives outlined in the WKKF grant. To that end, the evaluation will present a SWOT Analysis and present insights about overall program design and implementation, systems and processes, and external challenges. Finally, the evaluation will make targeted recommendations for improvement as the program enters its second year of implementation.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology consisted primarily of individual interviews with stakeholders across all aspects of the program. It also included an extensive review of OYF documents (planning, promotional, record-keeping, etc). Finally, a focus group and survey were conducted with Pathways

youth. Key informant interviews were conducted with: The NET, Limitless Vistas, Heroes, Taking Back our Youth, Chicken & Watermelon (Franklin and Claiborne Sites), Milne Community Center (MicAmped), Orleans Detention Alternative Program, Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, Travis Hill School, Junior Achievement, Community Works, 4 OYF Staff, and 7 of 13 currently enrolled Pathways youth.

External Challenges

It bears noting at the outset that OYF faced a number of unpredictable and severe external challenges impacting their ability to implement the program fully as designed:

- The City of New Orleans experienced a cyber-attack on December 13, 2019, which resulted in the permanent loss of documents and extended loss of access to technology, significantly impacting the smooth functioning of city government (including OYF) for a number of months.
- OYF experienced the turnover of a key staff position in Year 1 of the grant. While the position has since been filled, there was a period of a few months where remaining staff were required to assume the departing staff member's responsibilities.
- The Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 presented a huge challenge to the successful implementation of the program. For the safety of youth, staff, and partners, OYF suspended the Summer Success 2020 cohort. Pathways internships continued to take place as conditions allowed, but supportive services like case management, tutoring, and financial literacy were offered virtually, making the relationship-building component of the program much more difficult. Access to reliable technology was also a barrier to full participation.

II. SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT Analysis was completed to help OYF think strategically about how to maximize program impact by amplifying strengths, addressing weaknesses, exploring opportunities and anticipating/responding to threats.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Qualified, passionate, dedicated OYF team • Pathways and Summer Success fill a critical service gap for youth 14-17 • Attaching stipends to work experience is a significant motivator • Focus on minority-owned businesses offers youth a chance to envision themselves in future leadership positions • Partners almost unanimously identified strong communication and desire to help from OYF team • Reliable 3-year funding stream through WKKF	• Partners lacked clarity regarding goals/expectations for youth • Substantial Pathways attrition in first week. • Clear outcomes goals were not articulated • Pre-/Post-testing was not administered • Summer Success partners reported negative perceptions of JOB1, particularly related to timely stipend payments • "Light touch" case management limits data collection and follow up

	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
	- Improve relationship with JOB1 - Internship providers are open to additional structure and guidance regarding how best to achieve program objectives - Nearly all internship providers report having room to accommodate additional youth - Supportive service providers are open to expanded roles - Proof of concept and additional funding demonstrated by pilot may present opportunities for community partner to assume project management	- Covid dramatically impacted OYF's ability to implement the program as designed, and the second Summer Success cohort was canceled entirely - The cyber-attack on the City of New Orleans resulted in the loss of documents and significantly slowed OYF's momentum as it attempted to launch the program in early 2019. - Sustainability at conclusion of WKKF grant period is uncertain - When operating at full enrollment, program may prove difficult to manage at current staff capacity, esp. with regard to case management

III. PARTICIPATION

Summer Success Youth Participation

Across 8 partner sites, 91 youth enrolled in Summer Success, with 9 not showing up for at least one day or being removed from the program due to a rule violation. Of the 82 who regularly attended through the summer, the average attendance rate was 16/24 days (66%). Partner sites had the following attendance rates:

	Average Attendance (Days)	Minimum Attendance (Days)	Maximum Attendance (Days)	Total Youth
MicAmped	12 (50%)	3	18	14
Taking Back Our Youth	14 (58%)	5	23	17
YEP	18 (75%)	4	24	20
Heroes	19 (79%)	14	21	6
Chicken & Watermelon (Franklin)	19 (79%)	13	24	10
Chicken & Watermelon (Claiborne)	22 (92%)	18	24	5
Limitless Vistas	6 (25%)	3	11	5
The NET	17 (71%)	11	22	5

Average	16 (67%)	9	21	9

Pathways Youth Participation

Of the 35 youth initially enrolled in the Pathways, only 23 (66%) showed up at least once. This is a disappointing number to both referral providers and OYF, suggesting that additional recruitment strategies should be developed to help youth and parents understand program benefits. Of those youth who did participate, 13 of 23 (57%) persisted through all of Phase 1. While the completion rate falls short of OYF's articulated goal of 75%, this number must be considered in light of the multiple challenges presented by the pandemic, which necessitated that services be delivered virtually for months on end. As the youth survey results underscore, youth who have persisted through the program report high overall satisfaction and generally appreciate the program's purpose.

Of the youth who did not persist through the program, 3 of 10 (30%) had childcare obligations that prevented full participation, 3 of 10 (30%) moved or cited a change in schedule that prevented them from participating, 2 of 10 (20%) reoffended and were incarcerated, and 2 of 10 (20%) lost interest in the program. Participants came from 12 different Zip codes, with 39% of participants coming from the Upper/Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans East.

IV. YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

Pathways Youth Survey Results

In general, youth who are active participants in Pathways report very favorable impressions of the program. Of particular note, 86% reported that they enjoy coming to their internship "always or most of the time." Also, 86% described "always" feeling respected by their supervisor. 100% described their stipend as a motivating factor in their coming to work. No youth reported transportation challenges related to getting to their internship. Responses were most varied when youth were asked to describe how busy they are at their internships, with 67% reporting being too busy "always or most of the time."

	Always + Most of the time	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Does not apply
I enjoy coming to work.	86%	4 (57%)	2 (29%)			1 (14%)
I learn something at work every day.	71%	4 (57%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)	

Statement	%					
My supervisor treats me with respect.	86%	6 (86%)		1 (14%)		
Earning a paycheck makes me want to come to work.	100%	5 (71%)	2 (29%)			
It's easy to balance work with school.	43%	3 (43%)		3 (43%)	1 (14%)	
If I have a problem at my job I know who to talk to.	71%	5 (71%)		1 (14%)		1 (14%)
Getting to my job every day is easy.	100%	4 (57%)	3 (43%)			
The work I'm doing at my job is hard.	29%	2 (29%)		3 (43%)	2 (29%)	
I have a lot of down time at my job.	29%	2 (29%)		5 (71%)		
I'm too busy at my job.	67%	3 (43%)	1 (14%_	1 (14%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)
The work I do at my job is too easy.	43%	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	
The people at my job make me want to come to work.	57%	3 (50%)	1 (17%)		1 (17%)	1 (17%)

In their free response questions, youth again highlighted the importance of earning a stipend as a motivating factor in coming to their internship. Though they were not tested for skills acquired through their internship, their responses indicate an encouraging level of understanding about what it takes to succeed in the workplace. They also were able to accurately articulate behaviors that would make them better employees.

I like coming to work because:	One thing that makes me a great employee is:
- It's a good time - I make money to pay my bills - I get paid - The people are nice and it's a good challenge - You get paid while you learn	- I do what my boss tells me to do - I love to work - I do my job - I'm on time, helpful, and fun to work with - I speak out a lot

• It's a chance to make money	
The most important thing I have learned at work is: • Nothing • Work hard • Work isn't easy • I learned how to turn "trash" into something useful • To be at the best workplace I can have • Patience and "teamwork is dreamwork"	**One way I could improve as an employee is:** • I could stay focused more (2) • More hours • Pay attention and stay off my phone • Come on time every day • Proving myself
One thing that would make my work experience better is: • Nothing (2) • Making more money (2) • Less talking and more hands-on	**If my friend asked me what I do at the Pathways Program, I would tell them:** • I do my job • Listen and learn • Learning how to get a job • Looking for job opportunities • Learning how to do different things and have options • Come and see about it!

V. INSIGHTS

The following insights reflect qualitative data and feedback from individual interviews with 4 OYF team members, 3 of 4 Pathways employers, 6 of 7 Summer Success partners, 2 supportive service providers, and 3 referral partners. It also incorporates OYF document review, including youth enrollment and attendance, outcomes data collected, and partnership applications/agreements.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION	
Program Purpose/Goals/Objectives	
Strengths • All Summer Success partners said the **program was important and needed**, and all would be excited to participate again once some of the kinks from 2019's first cohort are resolved.	*Challenges* • Nearly all partners reported **confusion and uncertainty with initial program roll out.**

• Referral partners cited Pathways as a unique program. No other program really focuses on the 14-16 ages. There are other workforce programs aimed at older (17-24) youth – Grow Dat, LK, Green Corps, etc. But **Pathways was a much-needed intervention** for younger youth. • The initial grant application identified the target age group as 16-21. **During implementation, OYF identified a critical gap in programs serving the needs of the 14-17 age range**. This, combined with the realization that 14-17 year olds present an opportunity for early redirection away from negative behaviors, prompted OYF to re-center its attention toward this age range. This had **implications for the program's longitudinal outcomes goal of transitioning youth into living wage jobs**, as very few of them were both old enough and sufficiently skilled could to make this transition.	• Baseline life skills, hard skills, and general work readiness skills **goals were not clearly defined for partners**

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<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Program Activities</td></tr>
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Strengths	*Challenges*
• Attendance at Summer Success was **more than 70% at 5 of 8 placement sites**. • Pathways youth overwhelmingly reported **enjoying and learning something at their internships.** • Supportive service providers felt like they we**re empowered to codesign their offerings with OYF team.**	• Pathways and Summer Success placements varied between general work readiness programs and on-the-job training, making it **difficult to align training priorities across different sites.** • **Financial literacy and tutoring attendance dropped off precipitously**, perhaps partly due to their being scheduled on Friday afternoons . • **Pre-Post Testing was not completed** to establish baseline or measure growth in life skills, hard skills, or general work readiness skills. • Case management was described as "light touch," with only 10 hours per week allocated, and **case management plans were not created for all students.** • **Feedback and coaching varied widely** from site to site • Some employers reported a **discrepancy between number of youth promised, number referred, and number who showed up.**

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES	
Data Collection	
Strengths	*Challenges*
• **Attendance records** were maintained and submitted consistently for most partner sites	• **Data systems were not well developed or maintained** for critical indicators like skill development, basic needs referral, or contact information • At least one partner allowed students to **self-report attendance** • General perception from case managers that **youth seemed to enjoy the program**, but none had collected/recorded any notes on this
Communication	
Strengths	*Challenges*
• Nearly all partners reported that OYF staff were **highly accessible and proactive communicators**	• One Pathways employer described **difficulty with youth receiving constructive feedback** – suggested that **additional partner training** on how to do this effectively would be useful. • Partners had **varied reaction to effectiveness of onboarding/orientation** process, but all suggested that **additional structured onboarding would be welcome and useful**.
Training	
Strengths	*Challenges*
Multiple partners said that **OYF team was not afraid to pause ineffective activities** in order to make improvements and reintroduce at a later time. There was **no sense of obligation to stick with an approach** simply because it was the initial plan	• Summer Success and Pathways partners had **widely varied objectives** related to workforce readiness training.
Operations	
Strengths	*Challenges*
• **Stipend payments to youth** through employer partners in Pathways program went smoothly	• Multiple Summer Success employers reported **negative issues with JOB1 regarding late payments of stipends to youth**. This

	- was significantly demotivating for the young people and caused some to drop out. - Multiple employer partners reported **lack of a clear goal**. There is a desire to know what program is leading young people toward, and to have **more structure/systems all around** - It was a **challenge when youth were paid regardless of whether they showed up or not**. - When enrollment was less than expected, the one partner reported that OYF **reduced his organization's payment, causing his organization financial distress.**

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended to support internal conversation about how to achieve maximum programmatic impact in years two and three of Pathways and Summer Success.

SUCCESS FRAMEWORK

1. **Define Success**
   - What does a "win" look like for this program? Clearly articulate and establish measurable output and outcome goals in key areas.
2. **Develop Systems and Processes**
   - Create and refine systems and processes to ensure consistent service delivery for all participants.
3. **Recruit Aligned Partners**
   - Ensure that all partners have the internal capacity and desire to implement the program effectively.
4. **Track Progress**
   - Collect and evaluate data to inform decisions and continuously improve program model

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

☐ Streamline logic model and share with employers/partners as a part of orientation/onboarding.

☐ Establish and articulate clear outputs/outcomes goals with numeric targets wherever possible.

☐ Clarify expectations for internship providers around attendance, training/coaching, and record keeping; select only partners who are able to demonstrate that they can meet those expectations.

☐ Strengthen recruitment of youth, working more closely with referral partners to ensure that youth and families fully understand the benefits of the program.

☐ Provide conflict resolution training for internship providers.

☐ Establish baseline expectations for life skills and general work readiness skills to be learned, and where they will be taught (on site with internship provider, in group workshops, in individual counseling sessions, etc.).

☐ Develop skills assessment tools to measure skills development in related areas.

☐ Move supportive services away from Friday afternoons to promote more consistent engagement by youth.

☐ Combine Summer Success and Pathways into a single program in order to streamline internal efforts, right-size the population of youth served by the program to align with staff capacity, and embrace a longer-term intervention

☐ Formalize follow up with participants upon program completion in order to continue tracking their development.

☐ Eliminate goal of connecting youth to livable wage jobs and increase focus on promoting stable connections to education, training, and positive perceptions about work.

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

☐ Develop data collection tool to maintain updated records and track progress for all participants.

☐ Create master schedule for each cohort that identifies important dates, including when pre- and post- test will be administered.

☐ Establish a program waitlist in order to maximize participation if pattern persists where significant numbers of youth are enrolled but do not show up in week one.

☐ Develop training collateral to be shared with employers; provide them with reporting templates to track relevant skill acquisition by youth under their supervision.

☐ Conduct onboarding with each new partner and do a refresher each year with returning partners.

☐ Ensure that stipends are processed and distributed in a timely fashion

VII. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The following tools were created to assist OYF in the continued development of internal systems to support and monitor overall program effectiveness.

☐ Logic Model (revised)
☐ Program Activity Checklist
☐ Data Collection Checklist

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