

Pathways and Summer Success

YEAR TWO EVALUATION REPORT

LADUMA STRATEGY | NEW ORLEANS, LA
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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.

Evaluation Objective and Methodology

With this Year 2 evaluation, OYF is again seeking support to gather both qualitative and quantitative evidence and feedback on overall program effectiveness. To that end, the evaluation presents observations and insights about overall program design and implementation, systems and processes, and external challenges. The evaluation revisits recommendations from one year ago and offers new recommendations for continued growth and improvement as the program enters Year 3.

The evaluation methodology consisted primarily of individual interviews with stakeholders across all aspects of the program, as well as direct observation of programming. It also included an extensive review of OYF documents (planning, promotional, record-keeping, etc). Pathways and Summer Success youth offered feedback through surveys. Information was gathered from 2 OYF team members, 4 Gracefully Mindful staff, 5

Pathways employers, 7 Summer Success partners, 3 referral partners, 13 currently enrolled Pathways youth, 30 Summer Success youth, and 3 Pathways alumni.

External Challenges

In addition to the ongoing threats posed by Covid-19, New Orleans was significantly impacted by Hurricane Ida in late August 2021. The storm resulted in a large-scale city evacuation and disrupted life for a month or more. The hurricane struck the city as another cohort was being recruited to participate in Pathways and, as a result, some young people faced long-term displacement or other life challenges that prevented them from participating in the program as planned. This resulted in lower than anticipated participation in Cohorts 4/5.

II. YEAR TWO SUMMARY

In Year 2, OYF contracted with **Gracefully Mindful Wellness Institute, LLC** to oversee and conduct all operations related to the Pathways Program, while Summer Success continued to be operated internally by OYF. With Gracefully Mindful's input, the Pathways Program structure evolved significantly. The 15-week Pathways Program now includes two initial weeks of Life Skills Workshop, followed by 13 weeks with time evenly divided between internship and life skills workshop each week. Additional funding secured by the Mayor's Office also enabled OYF to expand the capacity of both programs, running two Pathways cohorts concurrently as well as offering additional Summer Success internship sites.

A. PATHWAYS

In Year 2, **Pathways** made a number of significant programmatic enhancements, including:

- Creation of a comprehensive Pathways handbook
- The introduction of an overnight, out of town retreat experience for every Pathways participant
- Development of a comprehensive Life Skills curriculum, including routine mindfulness, meditation, and other wellness programming into the Pathways Life Skills Workshop
- Expansive facility for Life Skills Workshop with separate classroom, counseling, and activity/game spaces, and easy access to computers at the public library one floor below
- Intensive case management for every Pathways participant with active follow up and support
- Increased diversity of internship options offering a wide range of professional experiences for youth to explore
- Implementation of a graduation with cap and gown for each cohort
- Incorporation of community mentors, elders from the community who meet regularly with participants to educate them in areas like etiquette, character development, emotional awareness, and de-escalation

- Improved system for time sheet submission
- Transportation assistance for youth
- Monthly leadership and career development workshops for Pathways alumni with weekly check-ins from Gracefully Mindful staff

It bears noting that on three separate visits to the Gracefully Mindful facility, staff were witnessed engaging closely with youth. All youth appear loved, valued, and supported, and this observation is clearly corroborated by their feedback surveys.

Pathways Youth Participation

Pathways participation improved in Year 2, with 77% of Cohort 2/3 participants completing the program (compared to 57% in Year 1). In the current group, Cohort 4/5, 19 youth have attended at least one day, and 13 (68%) have remained active through week 11 of 15. Another 5 youth were engaged by program staff but never attended a class. Some of these youth were severely impacted by Hurricane Ida and may participate in a future cohort.

Of the youth who did not persist through the program, 2 of 6 (33%) reoffended, 2 of 6 (33%) elected not to continue, 1 of 6 (17%) was dismissed due to excessive absences, and 1 of 6 (17%) had a family member become seriously ill. Participants came from 13 different Zip codes, with the heaviest concentration of participants coming from Treme/Mid-City, Upper/Lower Ninth Ward, and New Orleans East.

Pathways Youth Survey Results

There were no absences on the days we surveyed Pathways youth, resulting in a full sample of 13 youth between Cohorts 4 and 5. Across the board, survey responses reflected **positive trends** when compared against responses from one year ago. In particular, 100% reported learning something every day at work “always or most of the time.” Also, 100% described “always” feeling respected by their supervisor. Youth also reported high confidence knowing who to talk to if there is a problem, with 100% responding “always or most of the time.” Despite concerted efforts on OYF’s part to address perceived transportation challenges (including the utilization of ride share services like Uber), 61% of youth described getting to their internship as challenging “always or most of the time,” and another 38% reported “sometimes” having transportation challenges. Youth had highly varied responses related to how “easy” or “hard” their internships are.

	Always + Most of the time (2020)	Always + Most of the time (2021)	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Does not apply
I enjoy coming to work.	86%	92%	6 (46%)	6 (46%)	1 (8%)		

I learn something at work every day.	71%	100%	10 (77%)	3 (23%)			
My supervisor treats me with respect.	86%	100%	13 (100%)				
Earning a paycheck makes me want to come to work.	100%	85%	11 (85%)		2 (15%)		
It's easy to balance work with school.	43%	84%	6 (46%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	
If I have a problem at my job I know who to talk to.	71%	100%	12 (92%)	1 (8%)			
Getting to my job every day is easy.	100%	61%	5 (38%)	3 (23%)	5 (38%)		
The work I'm doing at my job is hard.	29%	8%		1 (8%)	7 (54%)	4 (32%)	1 (8%)
I have a lot of down time at my job.	29%	8%	1 (8%)		4 (32%)	5 (38%)	3 (23%)
I'm too busy at my job.	67%	55%	3 (23%)	4 (32%)	1 (8%)	5 (38%)	
The work I do at my job is too easy.	43%	37%	2 (15%)	4 (32%)	3 (23%)	4 (32%)	
The people at my job make me want to come to work.	57%	70%	8 (62%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)		2 (15%)

In their free response questions, Pathways participants highlighted the importance of “earning a stipend” as well as the opportunity to “learn new things” as key reasons why they enjoy their internship experience. Youth communicated the importance of being “hard working” and being “on time” as key attributes of a great employee.

<p>I like coming to work because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can learn new things (4) • I get paid (3) • It's like having a second family • I love to do hair so I could do my own and others 	<p>One thing that makes me a great employee is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm very hard working (5) • Coming to work on time (2) • I build unity • I show a lot of dedication and respect
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to become something • I learn how to draw, and I learn how to paint • I just love how work helps me get my mind off everything • It's fun and keeps me out of things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know how to greet customers and wash hair • Never giving up on myself • I'm a quick learner • Getting my job done • I'm respectful to elders and the students • I will ask questions when I need to
<p>The most important thing I have learned at work is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code switching (2) • Learning how to plant (2) • Holding yourself accountable is the first step to success • Computer work and better communication skills • To clean up the hair after you're done • Mixing colors • Being on time • This is getting me ready for the real world • Not dropping your comb or putting it down • There are a lot of good ways to make money • Always keep going 	<p>One way I could improve as an employee is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming to work on time (3) • My work ethic (2) • Practice on my skills • To keep being respectful and responsible • By coming to work dressed and prepared • If I learn how to mix colors better and if I knew how to draw better • Nothing • Getting my job done • If I talk more and ask more questions
<p>One thing that would make my work experience better is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having days off • Getting along with the people • One-on-one talks about me improving the company • Having a ride to work every day • Nothing • Braiding to the scalp and closures • To come every day and get used to it • If I had some stuff to help me with my art • More hours • If we had time to experience more things • Learning life skills • Working indoors 	<p>If my friend asked me what I do at the Pathways Program, I would tell them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I meditate • I do garden work • I do things to improve myself personally, and work on being successful • Learn how to prepare and work for a job in the real world • Code switching • Learn about code switching, meditation, and learn skills how to be calm • We learn what to do on an actual job, and how to ask or tell other employees something • We learn how to breathe deep, and other stuff that's fun • Getting ready for a real job • What to do, or tell them to ask someone who works here

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I improved on my manners and voice tone • I learn things that will help me in a real job • I learned how to be an employee and also get skills I need to know
<p>One thing I like about Pathways is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-building, resume building • It's not hard work to do • The love and care they have for us • It's easy and not stressful • It's a place that I can show my best personality • The people who work there, they help me a lot • Ms. Nita and Mr. Brian and what they do for us • They help me get ready for a real job • They teach us how to code switch • Everything • My case manager loves me like I'm her actual family • Make easy money • They are always here for you whenever you need it 	

B. SUMMER SUCCESS

Year 2 **Summer Success** program enhancements include:

- Increased diversity of internship options offering a wide range of experiences for youth to explore
- Three job fairs to expose youth to different internship opportunities
- Two dedicated case managers to support youth needs, conduct data collection, and track progress

Summer Success Youth Participation

Across 12 partner sites, 95 youth participated in Summer Success. Of those 95 participants, 5 did not return after Week 1. Average attendance was 73%, an 11% improvement over Year 1. In addition, twelve youth (15%) had perfect attendance, and another 14 youth (16%) missed only one day. In all, 80% of youth achieved at least a 50% attendance rate. Similarly, all partner sites showed strong overall attendance, and all returning

partner sites showed improved average attendance when compared to Year 1. Participants came from 31 Zip Codes, with heavy concentrations of youth in Central City, New Orleans East. Upper/Lower Ninth Ward, Uptown, and Westbank. Partner sites had the following attendance rates:

	Average Attendance (Days)	Minimum Attendance (Days)	Maximum Attendance (Days)	Total Youth
MicAmped	16 (67%)	2	24	8
Taking Back Our Youth	14 (58%)	2	23	7
HONO	20 (83%)	13	24	10
YRNO	15 (63%)	5	22	12
Studio Be	23 (96%)	22	23	2
Studio 4212	19 (79%)	7	23	13
The Black School	18 (72%)	15	23	7
LevelUp	19 (79%)	8	24	16
NOTEP	14 (58%)	3	18	4
Revolution Real Estate	14 (58%)	2	23	3
Nonno's	8 (33%)	8	8	1
The NET	16 (67%)	3	23	11
Average	17 (72%)			9

Summer Success Youth Survey Results

About one-third of Summer Success participants completed a survey to assess their program experience. Overall, survey responses reflected **positive impressions of the program**. Of particular note, 100% described “always” feeling respected by their supervisor. Also, 93% said they enjoyed coming to their internship “always or most of the time.” 87% said their Summer Success experience helped them stay away from making bad choices “always or most of the time.” Summer Success youth reported fewer transportation barriers than their Pathways peers, with 80% saying it was easy “always or most of the time” to get to their internship sites. Only 33% of youth reported having significant down time during their internship experience.

	Always + Most of the time (2021)	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Does not apply
I enjoy coming to work.	93%	22 (73%)	6 (20%)	2 (7%)		

I learn something at work every day.	83%	22 (73%)	3 (10%)	5 (17%)		
My supervisor treats me with respect.	100%	30 (100%)				
Earning a paycheck makes me want to come to work.	90%	24 (80%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)		1 (3%)
If I have a problem at my job I know who to talk to.	87%	23 (77%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Getting to my job every day is easy.	80%	18 (60%)	6 (20%)	6 (20%)		
The work I'm doing at my job is hard.	10%	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	5 (17%)	22 (73%)	
I have a lot of down time at my job.	33%	7 (23%)	3 (10%)	8 (27%)	11 (37%)	1 (3%)
The work I do at my job is too easy.	36%	4 (13%)	7 (23%)	12 (40%)	4 (13%)	
The people at my job make me want to come to work.	77%	18 (60%)	5 (17%)	4 (13%)	3 (10%)	
Summer Success helped me stay away from doing negative things.	87%	24 (80%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)		3 (10%)

III. INSIGHTS

The following insights reflect qualitative data and feedback from individual interviews and/or completed surveys with 2 OYF team members, 4 Gracefully Mindful staff, 5 Pathways employers, 7 Summer Success employers, 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	
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral partners all spoke strongly about the importance of Pathways as a critical intervention for system involved 14-17 year olds – they all say there are no other options out there to serve these young people. Recruitment has improved significantly, with increased participation and fewer challenges related to youth showing up during the first week 	<p><i>Challenges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure and timeline of the Pathways Program are not always clearly understood by judges Inability for a young person to participate in Pathways more than once can limit opportunities for diversion from incarceration for youth who remain system-involved, given the lack of other program options
Program Activities	
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation at Summer Success was up across the board at all returning sites. Pathways and Summer Success youth overwhelmingly reported enjoying and learning something at their internships. Pathways youth use words like “family,” “love,” and “help” when speaking about Gracefully Mindful staff Incorporation of an overnight retreat introduces additional depth to program experience for Pathways youth Mindfulness activities mentioned by Pathways youth as useful coping tools Detailed written curriculum in place for Pathways life skills workshop component Case management improved significantly, with a transition to much more intensive engagement, especially with Pathways youth General Pre-Post Testing was established for Pathways Life Skills Workshops Alumni programming implemented for those who wish to continue with Pathways experience 	<p><i>Challenges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some internship locations are heavily dependent on materials and/or weather, limiting activities when either or both of those areas are not right Pre-Post testing doesn’t measure skills attainment related to specific learning modules Some Pathways employer sites tend to have fewer related activities scheduled after the school day ends, making it more difficult for the employer to offer a meaningful internship experience
SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES	

Data Collection	
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records were maintained and submitted consistently • Data systems were significantly improved for Pathways, with much more detailed records kept of contacts with youth and/or their parents 	<p><i>Challenges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of documentation for youth (birth certificate, social security card, etc.) was a significant challenge for referral partners and some even mentioned it as a disincentive for them to refer youth to the program
Communication	
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners were able to name a particular individual either at OYF or Gracefully Mindful who they felt comfortable approaching with a question or problem. • All partners had a positive experience with the orientation/onboarding process 	<p><i>Challenges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant communication challenges observed
Operations	
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, partners appeared to have much improved perceptions of the smoothness of the program this year. 	<p><i>Challenges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments to Summer Success employer partners continued to be a challenge, with multiple partners stating that payments were significantly delayed.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

YEAR ONE

The following recommendations were intended to support internal conversation about how to achieve maximum programmatic impact in years two and three of Pathways and Summer Success. Below is a one-year status update:

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION	
Recommendation	Status

Streamline logic model	Completed
Establish and articulate clear outputs/outcomes goals with numeric targets wherever possible.	Participation goals have been established. Additional output/outcomes goals should still be developed.
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.	Diversity, commitment, and program understanding of employer partners appears strong across the board in Year 2
Strengthen recruitment of youth, working more closely with referral partners to ensure that youth and families fully understand the benefits of the program.	Communication with referral partners is strong. All partners named a clear point of contact either with OYF or GM (or both). Partners request additional support with fulfillment of documentation requirements.
Provide conflict resolution training for internship providers.	Some partners requested additional training/support here.
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.).	Gracefully Minded has created a detailed curriculum map for Pathways participants, accompanied by learning objectives and suggested activities.
Develop skills assessment tools to measure skills development in related areas.	Gracefully Minded has developed a basic Pre/Post Test for Pathways participants. Additional detail and/or additional testing points could be useful in measuring/assessing participants' growth.
Move supportive services away from Friday afternoons to promote more consistent engagement by youth.	Gracefully Mindful completely reorganized the approach to supportive services with their commitment to intensive, individualized case management, including development of a detailed management plan for each participant.
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	Some Pathways participants did participate in Summer Success, but the programs have not been merged or combined.

Formalize follow up with participants upon program completion in order to continue tracking their development.	Gracefully Mindful tracks alumni and keeps in close contact with them following program completion. They maintain records of contacts.
Eliminate goal of connecting youth to livable wage jobs and increase focus on promoting stable connections to education, training, and positive perceptions about work.	Primary goal is connection to education, life skills acquisition, and surrounding youth with positive role models.

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES	
Recommendation	Status
Develop data collection tool to maintain updated records and track progress for all participants.	Data collection improved significantly for Pathways and Summer Success
Create master schedule for each cohort that identifies important dates, including when pre- and post- test will be administered.	Pathways master schedule created and managed by Gracefully Minded
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.	Inflow of youth has improved significantly despite complications caused by Hurricane Ida.
Develop training collateral to be shared with employers; provide them with reporting templates to track relevant skill acquisition by youth under their supervision.	Most employers are confident training youth in industry-related skills. Some requested additional help with conflict resolution.
Conduct onboarding with each new partner and do a refresher each year with returning partners.	All referral and employer partners reported attending orientation/onboarding session and described it as useful.
Ensure that stipends are processed and distributed in a timely fashion	This continues to be a challenge for Summer Success.

YEAR TWO

The following new recommendations are intended to refine and build on the significant programmatic enhancements made in the past year.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Summer Success

- Consider contracting with external partner (Gracefully Mindful or similar entity) to oversee/manage Summer Success.
- Initiate recruitment process for Summer Success in January to ensure timely collection of documentation and reach full enrollment
- Provide support for referral partners with collection of all documentation required for Summer Success participation
- Provide a Certificate of Completion to each Summer Success participant who completes all five weeks of the program

Pathways

- Explore possible scheduling integration with public schools in order to make Pathways Program a part of the school day, and potentially for credit
- Consider opportunities for youth who remain system-involved to participate in Pathways a second time (possibly in a newly defined “peer mentor” or “counselor in training” role)
- Continue to strengthen Pre-Post Testing to measure skills gains related to specific program modules
- Support employer partners by helping them develop back-up plans for their participants when obstacles prevent them from conducting regular training activities

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Summer Success

- Continue to improve timeliness of payments to internship providers

Pathways

- Consider all options to improve transportation access for Pathways Participants

- Ensure that internship sites have back-up plans in order to provide training when unforeseen issues (supply chain delays, weather events, etc.) prevent anticipated work activities from happening
- Actively educate judges on the program's structure and duration, as they frequently lack understanding

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