

# YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR HEALTH EQUITY & COMMUNITY SAFETY

HOW FUNDERS CAN EMBRACE THE POWER OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO  
ADVANCE HEALTHIER, SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR ALL

*PREPARED BY MESU STRATEGIES, LLC FOR  
PHILANTHROPY FOR ACTIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (PACE)*

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**Mesu Strategies, LLC** is a research and strategy firm committed to realizing a more just and inclusive society. Based in Oakland, California, we work nationally to create healthier, more sustainable community environments for low-income people, communities of color, and other underserved groups. We partner with leaders in communities and organizations to operationalize equity and catalyze transformational change through action research, policy advocacy and organizational development approaches rooted in the principles of cultural humility.

**Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE)** is a community of funders that invest in the sustaining elements of democracy and civic life in the United States. PACE's mission is to deepen and enrich philanthropy's practice and support of U.S. democracy and to amplify the importance of philanthropic investment in civic engagement. We believe that American democracy will thrive when all of its people are informed and engaged in the process of creating it.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every person wants to lead a safe and healthy life. We want the opportunity to fulfill our greatest potential, and to receive the support and guidance we need to travel down our own unique path. We wish this for ourselves and seek it for our children and loved ones.

In fact, communities all over the country go to great lengths to create conditions for young people to thrive. Every year, efforts to promote youth wellbeing amount to hundreds of billions of dollars in public expenditures in education, health care, community development, and related fields. Together with significant resource contributions from the philanthropic, nonprofit, academic and private sectors, these investments make clear that creating, promoting, and sustaining health and safety for young people is a national priority.

Yet, despite this interest, the nation's wealth, and recent advances in health and technology, the United States consistently ranks lowest among developed countries for health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The US is also widely considered one of the world's least peaceful countries, ranking 121st among 163 nations in a recent study of safety and security around the globe.<sup>2</sup> A closer look at health and safety in America reveals significant gaps in outcomes between people of different races, ethnicities, and genders, influenced in large part by social, political, and historic factors beyond the control of the individual.<sup>3</sup>

Today, one of the greatest predictors of life expectancy at birth is zip code; where a child lives at birth can determine how long and healthy that child's life will be.<sup>4</sup> Zip code is also associated with safety: a child is more likely to experience community violence by living in a neighborhood with diminished economic opportunities compared to a more affluent one.<sup>5</sup> Children who grow up in poverty and economic hardship face greater obstacles to social and emotional wellbeing as well as to academic and economic success.<sup>6</sup> Growing evidence of health disparities across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines has given rise to community- and policy-focused interventions to address "the social determinants of health" through a focus on health equity and community safety.

Health equity is the principle that all people deserve the opportunity to attain their full health potential, regardless of their race, ethnicity, social or economic situation, or where they live.<sup>7</sup> Community safety is the notion that a social or physical environment can promote wellbeing; it's often associated with neighborhoods and homes where rates of violence and injury are minimal, and stress does not exceed the normal range.<sup>8</sup>

### The path to health equity and community safety

Achieving health equity and community safety in America will require radical imagination, courageous leadership, and persistent partnership—there is no roadmap to arrive at a destination no one has seen before. And young people are among the most important partners in imagining and creating this path.

Youth are born into communities, systems, and societies that were designed well before their arrival. However, children and young people are often the most familiar with the nuances of what feels safe and unsafe in their neighborhoods, as they often comprise a significant proportion of the users of public services and recipients of targeted programs. Youth also often have the most creative and robust ideas for what will help them and their families make healthy choices, and are likely to be less inhibited in speaking the truth about how inequities manifest in their communities.



Furthermore, our nation's young people face unique challenges to health and safety that either did not affect prior generations or have evolved significantly in today's day and age. For instance, there are several prevalent misconceptions about young people and violence today that derive from outdated beliefs from decades ago. An underlying narrative about 'safety' and what constitutes 'safe' communities—and who lives in them — surfaces issues of race and gender that have long been a part of our nation's history and require examination.<sup>9</sup> With the help of foundations that fund and hire mentors, young Black men and boys of color in communities across the nation are working to counter damaging narratives and stereotypes by increasing their participation and advocacy in decision-making processes to achieve healthier outcomes for their communities.

***Successful youth civic engagement involves situating young people in dynamic change processes by building trusting, intergenerational partnerships.***

When youth are meaningfully involved in efforts to address health equity and safety, the benefits can extend from dispelling problematic narratives, to improvements to systems of care, to better access to critical preventive supports. Young people have long served as instrumental catalysts for sweeping change. In America's recent history, young people have played a central role in social movements for civil rights, LGBTQ rights, and environmental issues.<sup>10</sup> Today's young people face grave threats to their wellbeing and the prosperity of their communities, and they are not only taking notice—in many places, they are taking charge. Some of the most prominent efforts led by youth touch on issues as far-ranging as climate change, gun violence, widening social and economic gaps, and a fragile health care system. Their wisdom and expertise might be more important than ever before.

Funders are also key partners in supporting health equity and community safety through systems change. By leveraging their power to inspire new ideas, introduce and cultivate new partnerships, support and amplify new work, and influence others, funders can help youth become more robust leaders in decisions affecting health equity and community safety. They can also serve as important resources for adults who aim to become important allies to young people, supporting and encouraging their success.<sup>11</sup>

## **Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) and youth civic engagement**

[Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement \(PACE\)](#) is a network of funders that invest in the foundational elements of U.S. democracy; its members are guided by a belief that America will be more healthy, successful, resilient, and productive if democracy is strong and the office of citizen is treated as central to how it functions. PACE works to uncover the value of civic engagement and democratic practice – to understand and showcase why it matters and is worthy of philanthropic investment.

Central to civic engagement is the health of communities, and PACE has noticed that although the health benefits of youth civic engagement are well documented,<sup>12</sup> philanthropic support for youth civic engagement remains limited. Curious to understand this phenomenon, PACE's Health and Safety Working group commissioned Mesu Strategies, LLC to explore the perspectives of leading practitioners in the field of youth civic engagement.

We asked them:

- *What is the value of youth civic engagement for health equity and community safety?*



- *What are the fundamentals of success – what must funders know about successful youth civic engagement?*
- *How can funders unlock their full potential to embrace the power of young people to lead the way toward health equity and community safety?* This report summarizes what we learned.

## **Why youth civic engagement for health equity and community safety?**

Youth are leading many important efforts nationally and locally on issues as diverse as food justice, gun safety, civic representation, quality foster care, and quality health care. Interviews revealed that youth partnership and participation are essential for improving not only their own health and safety, but also the programs and policies that shape environments to create greater opportunities for health equity and community safety for all.

Those who work with youth report that youth participation can afford young people with the skills and valuable experiences to help them rise out of challenging environments (e.g., economically disinvested communities, foster system, juvenile justice system). As the users and beneficiaries of many public services and the target audience of many programs, youth have unmatched firsthand experience about what works in their communities, what might not be effective or relevant, what changes are needed, and why. Together with the uniquely open, honest and forthright approach of youth to addressing problems, youth can be instrumental in accelerating change, and can draw attention to issues and sway public opinion in ways adults cannot.

Youth civic engagement has contributed to major institutional changes, policy wins and election victories signifying historic changes in leadership. These shifts are key, as the fulcrum for large-scale change in America lies in our government systems.

There is critical urgency to improve health and safety for communities across a range of issues, and many efforts are underway to close widening gaps across generations, races, income levels, and geographies. Youth civic engagement offers a pathway that can address underlying root causes and promote health and safety in both the short and long term, for youth and their partners.

## **Youth civic engagement: what does it take?**

With careful research, planning and implementation, youth civic engagement efforts can yield many rewards to those involved, their communities, and beyond. Successful youth civic engagement involves situating young people in dynamic change processes by building trusting, intergenerational partnerships. Leveraging the wisdom of young people to strengthen efforts for change requires demonstrating an authentic appreciation for the knowledge and experiences of young people and the creative, innovative ideas they have to offer.

For communities to benefit from the wisdom and ideas of young people, engagement efforts must also work to build power for shared decision making. Young people must have genuine and meaningful opportunities for impact – opportunities to share leadership and decision-making on the issues that matter. And, adults must also evaluate what skills they must learn, and what practices they must let go of to support meaningful partnerships.

Meaningful change to advance health equity and community safety calls for continuous research and innovation on effective youth engagement strategies, and support for complementary practices such as



community advocacy and coalition work. It also requires attention to care for the unique needs and vulnerabilities of young people.

## What can funders do?

There is critical urgency to improve health and safety for communities across a range of issues, and many efforts underway to close widening gaps across generations, races, income levels, and geographies. The results of this qualitative research reveal and underscore the important role of philanthropy in ensuring youth perspectives and ideas are reflected in efforts to achieve healthier, safer communities for all.

Philanthropy plays a critical role in ensuring youth perspectives and ideas are reflected in efforts to achieve healthier, safer communities for all. For funders to realize their full potential to embrace the power of young people in building healthy communities, they must consider their unique potential to create change, as grantmakers, partners to youth, conveners in the field, and respected leaders in communities.

Funders can create new initiatives to challenge the status quo, expand resources to deepen promising work, target resources to push the boundaries of research and innovation, and fund important activities like training, technical assistance, and evaluation to sharpen the work of those in the field. Funders often have a bird's eye view of what's happening in and across a community, field, or sector, and can help to create connections, cross-pollinate ideas, and foster new partnerships by convening and connecting youth and youth organizations, with other leaders. The voices and resources of foundations can help to amplify the priorities, needs, and concerns of young people and their partners.

Moving youth civic engagement away from the margins and closer to the center of strategies to improve community health, safety, and equity has enormous potential. Youth civic engagement can be both a short-term catalyst and a long-term investment toward the system change that is required to attain better health and safety outcomes for everyone.

Recognizing this sparks the question of not only *What can funders do?* but rather, *What will funders do?*





"Visions of a Healthy Community" youth mural, Groundswell NYC © 2012

*Mural images included in this document are intended to represent the efforts of select youth civic engagement activities in cities across the country promoting health and wellness.*

The image above features an installation at the South Bronx Center for Children and Families. Developed as part of a collaborative community health education and art project called "Visions of a Healthy Community," the mural aimed to address the themes of individual and community health through the eyes of local youth. In the Spring 2012, five groups of high school-aged youth explored health in their communities and their visions of what their communities would look like as places of health. With support and guidance by artists from [Groundswell](#), and the support of [Montefiore Medical Group Healing Arts Program](#), youth developed the themes they wished to communicate and conceptualized and designed murals. The finished murals are installed at the Center for Child Health and Resiliency at the South Bronx Center for Children and Families.

All images, murals and otherwise, used with permission.



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## INTRODUCTION



Youth mural in Greenville, Mississippi © 2007 Dave Lowenstein

Since the birth of modern American philanthropy at the turn of the 20th century, funders have sought effective strategies to improve health and social welfare.<sup>13 14</sup>

Over time, philanthropic support for health has evolved along with our collective understanding of what it takes to support healthy populations. Today, a more comprehensive and equity-oriented approach to health prevails. Health is widely considered to be a state of total physical, mental, and social wellbeing--not simply the absence of disease. There is also broader recognition that social and physical environments can influence wellbeing as much as genetic makeup, behaviors, and health care. Growing evidence of health disparities across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines has given rise to community- and policy-focused interventions that address “the social determinants of health.” Growing urgency to promote health equity focuses on addressing biases in the delivery and design of systems and correcting historic decisions to improve conditions for communities of color to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live safe and healthy lives.<sup>15</sup>



Philanthropic practice in health has evolved significantly in the last twenty years, and current trends show:

- Significant growth in philanthropic investments to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young adults over the past 20 years<sup>16 17</sup>
- Increased interest among health funders to promote strategies for policy change over the past 10 years<sup>18</sup>
- Specific efforts among funders over the last 5 years to improve community wellbeing through policy and organizing strategies to change neighborhood conditions<sup>19</sup>
- A strong emphasis on health equity today, with significant attention to addressing the conditions of racially and ethnically diverse urban communities, LGBTQ populations, immigrant populations, and other historically disadvantaged communities<sup>20</sup>

Philanthropic efforts to advance health equity and address the social determinants of health are varied in their scale, scope, and approach. A 2016 assessment found that local health funders employ a diverse set of strategies to inform and influence public policy to advance community health. These include coalition building (84%), policymaker education (78%), advocacy capacity development (69%), public education (54%), public awareness campaigns (46%), and developing champions who support relevant issues (23%).<sup>21</sup> These systems-oriented approaches are essential for addressing the community environments that have given rise to inequities. Decades, if not centuries, of decisions at the federal, state, and local level that have placed a disproportionate burden of disease on communities of color and other marginalized groups.<sup>22</sup>

As a result, funders focused on health equity are increasingly looking to better understand and address the ways they can help to build, share, and wield their power as funders with the communities most affected by health inequities.<sup>23</sup> Assessing and addressing power is a fundamental strategy to promoting racial equity and cultural humility within organizations and across communities.<sup>24</sup>

With growing attention to community partnership, youth civic engagement remains a promising and effective – yet often overlooked – strategy to advance health equity.<sup>25</sup> Young people often speak out about what is needed for change, but their voices are often silenced or simply unheard. Many young changemakers seek ways to break down the barriers to their participation, but they need help. Practitioners of youth civic engagement in philanthropy and the nonprofit sector widely laud youth engagement as both important and effective in addressing social and economic issues, including community health and safety.<sup>26</sup> Yet, many foundations interested in promoting healthier communities do not consider youth civic engagement activities as part of their grantmaking or programming decisions.

***Youth civic engagement focuses on building capacity and removing barriers so youth can partner on efforts to strengthen communities.***

To explore the potential for funders to embrace the power of young people to advance health equity and safety, Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) commissioned Mesu Strategies, LLC to explore the perspectives of some of the leading practitioners in the field on the value and promise of youth civic engagement for health and safety outcomes, and what it takes for funders to meaningfully support the work.



PACE is a diverse network of funders and foundations that invest in civic engagement and democratic practice in the United States. The PACE Health and Safety Working Group is a partnership of foundations, nonprofit organizations, researchers, and thought leaders committed to promoting civic engagement to advance health and safety outcomes in communities. Members share a conviction that civic engagement can empower youth and community members to take charge of their futures. They see youth civic engagement as a vital factor in moving from incremental progress to system-wide change.

In early 2018, the PACE Health and Safety Working Group hypothesized that limited philanthropic attention to youth civic engagement might stem, in part, from a lack of awareness among funders about the substantial, long-term benefits of youth civic engagement as well as information gaps concerning practical approaches to funder-supported youth civic engagement. This report reflects the product of interviews and desktop research carried out by Mesu Strategies, LLC in summer 2018. A detailed description of methods and interviewees can be found in the Appendix.



## GLOSSARY

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

“The process of helping people be active participants in building and strengthening their communities, whether ‘community’ is defined as a place or a shared identity or interest. Civic engagement is an approach that encompasses a wide spectrum of activities – ranging from the individual to the systems level – to impact decisions locally, nationally, and at multiple levels in between” (Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement, 2018).

### YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A range of activities focused on removing barriers and building the skills of multiple groups to enable youth to participate in efforts. The term has many meanings and the differences among them are important. The term is often used in the field interchangeably with “youth engagement” and “youth leadership” to refer to a range of different but related activities, including: (1) positive youth development (e.g., skill building, mentorship, teamwork, and recreation), (2) youth organizing (e.g., peer education to engage in identifying priorities, advocating for solutions, and contributing to local decisions), and (3) including youth in broader campaigns or efforts for community and systems change.

### HEALTH

A state of complete social, physical, and mental wellbeing, not just the absence of disease (World Health Organization, 1946). Leaders in public health use an expansive framework for understanding and addressing health, one that is inclusive of social, economic, and environmental influences as well as genetic and behavioral factors, as well as access to and quality of care.

### HEALTH EQUITY

The condition that will be achieved across populations when race, place, nationality, age, gender identity, and income no longer predict health outcomes. Health equity requires a focus on issues of power and privilege, across lines of race, as well as the systems that create and reinforce disparities within and across communities.



## GLOSSARY

### COMMUNITY SAFETY

The concept of safety, or protection from harm, is complex, nuanced and closely related to health. Safety has implications at the individual and community levels. It is affected by unique individual experiences and triggers, real and perceived threats of violence at the community level, and decisions that have historically excluded certain groups, such as communities of color, low-income people, women, the elderly and youth.

### YOUTH

Broadly speaking, the term refers to people under a certain age, and typically to those in the school system. However, despite some shared experiences, young people are not all on a level playing field: many experience systematic inequities associated with race, class, and location.

### OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

An emerging term referring to people under a certain age (typically ages 18-24) in marginalized groups who may experience a relative lack of opportunity compared to their peers. Many are not employed and not in school. In discussing opportunity youth, many youth advocates urge new partners to remember that it is the systems controlled by non-youth that have failed young people, not the young people themselves who have failed.

*This report applies broad and expansive definitions of terms throughout.*

*Care has been taken to make any distinctions clear when a more specific definition is intended.*

*Definitions listed here were compiled from interviews and materials in the references list, unless otherwise noted.*



Health equity and community safety are...

".... what our communities can achieve when we secure resources, create economic mobility and reduce violence to ensure that individuals don't have to leave the community to get a quality education, job, or lifestyle.

It happens when we create a culture of civic engagement that gets the attention of decision-makers and increases investment in the community so that we have more locally-owned businesses in town, youth completing college, and parents getting fair wages, so kids aren't left in the street.

It recognizes how previous generations were disenfranchised, and that we need to establish a new culture around youth civic engagement."

*Statement from an interviewee regarding health equity and community safety*

*Fall 2018*





## WHY YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR HEALTH EQUITY & COMMUNITY SAFETY?

**Leading practitioners of youth civic engagement name a wide range of benefits for the health equity and safety of individuals and communities.**

When youth are meaningfully involved in efforts to address health equity and safety, the benefits can extend from improvements to systems of care to better access to critical preventive supports. Youth and their families can experience direct health and safety benefits when cycles of violence and trauma in neighborhoods and systems are interrupted. They can experience improved opportunities for physical health and wellbeing, better access to healthy foods, and greater safety from violence and crime.

Engaging youth in efforts to create change in their lives and environments can also bring numerous immediate benefits to community change initiatives. Youth participation can help create greater clarity on the problem or goal the group seeks to address, better buy-in from decision-makers who believe in the stories and solutions youth share, stronger solutions to address problems or advance goals, and enhanced individual- and community-level impacts for health and safety outcomes.

### Problem and Goal Definition

Youth contributions to a change process can expand the vision for what's possible in a community, adding nuance to determining priorities and strategies for change. Youth voices can help to overcome misconceptions or assumptions about existing conditions in communities because they are often the target or primary users of services in communities, such as transit, education, public housing, and the juvenile justice system. Unlike adults who might have longstanding perceptions or biases shaped by recurring experiences or expertise acquired from learning theory or understanding examples, young people can bring fresh knowledge and honest, unmarred feedback to a change process to deepen collective understanding of current priorities, help identify local assets and challenges, and inspire creativity to locate and generate appropriate solutions.

#### ***Understanding Access to Healthy Foods in North Carolina***

The Food Youth Initiative (FYI) is a project housed at the [Center for Environmental Farming Systems \(CEFS\)](#) with support from several community partners. FYI Youth are a collective of youth representatives (high school, continuing GED, and recent grads) across the state who share a vision of food justice and are working towards food justice in their own communities. As a state-wide network, youth are supported to build relationships and capacity on issues emerging from food justice organizing work in communities across urban and rural areas of North Carolina. They engage in professional development and advocacy trainings to improve their capacity, forums and conferences to build their knowledge on food justice issues across the state, and engage in networks of youth and adults actively creating change in community food systems.<sup>27</sup> This development support and network allows youth to identify and act on problems in their communities and inform the efforts of others to create change.<sup>28</sup>



## Persuasive Power

Involving youth in change efforts can lead to more effective outcomes. Youth partners can bring an additional layer of visibility that captures the attention of the broader community and key decision-makers to the most critical issues affecting health and safety. The integrity of their honest opinions and authentic voice often strikes a contrast to the language of adults, which can seem polished or political in different circumstances. At times, even the best-intentioned adults will allow unconscious biases and dominant social and political narratives to shape what they believe to be ‘true.’ Though the stereotype of youth expertise is that “youth don’t know better than adults,” youth have a unique ability to sway others when they do have a seat at the table. Some call this persuasive power moral power – “the degree to which one’s moral status and standing affects their ability to sway others.”<sup>29</sup>

### ***Influencing Foster Care in Kansas***

Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope is an independent coalition dedicated to reforming Kansas’s foster care system. It is comprised of organizations and individuals – including young people – working side-by-side to identify opportunities to improve the system for improved health and safety outcomes for youth.

In February 2018, a group of lawmakers and child welfare stakeholders presented to the Kansas legislature’s Child Welfare System Task Force to share recommendations to improve the safety and well-being of children in the child welfare system. Young people who had been through foster system stood alongside independent advocacy organizations to inform the work of the task force, sharing stories of their personal experiences as well as their perspectives on what’s needed for change. At the end of one young person’s presentation, one of the taskforce members noted that the testimony was “one the best I’ve heard in my nine years of service.”<sup>30</sup>



Young leaders and former foster care youth testifying before legislators. Kansas Appleseed © 2018

As part of a larger body of statewide advocacy, the testimony ultimately contributed to major changes in the state-wide agenda: the next year, Governor Laura Kelly – a former member of that taskforce – included welfare as one of her four top priorities. Today, within months of her election, the state budget for welfare has increased by many millions of dollars.

## Solution Identification

It is widely recognized that people with firsthand experience of the conditions in their environments are often best positioned to identify the health equity and community safety solutions worthy of often-limited resources.<sup>31</sup> However, young people are often overlooked in these situations, and rendered



invisible and voiceless. Cities, communities and programs are designed for young people and adults, but decision-making bodies are rarely designed with their input. By participating in efforts to identify solutions to issues affecting environments, youth can help steer the proposed solutions for community improvement to success by ensuring that solutions match up with identified priority problem(s).<sup>32</sup>

### ***Tailoring Health Care Services to Student Needs in California***

The past decade has seen a surge of activity in schools across the nation to create wellness centers to provide care to children and adolescents in school. In California communities, school-based health advocates have prioritized youth organizing and engagement in the design and implementation of these efforts. In 2018, youth engagement efforts paid off for students in Los Angeles, thanks to the contributions of youth engaged in local advocacy with neighborhood organization [InnerCity Struggle](#). Young people helped to identify the strong need for and potential impact of trauma-informed mental health services, ultimately resulting in the district-wide adoption of a “trauma informed schools” approach by the Los Angeles Unified School District. Today, the clinics now offer trauma-informed mental health services in addition to physical health services and have been recognized locally as a major success that would not have happened without youth engagement.

## **Direct Benefits to Health Equity and Community Safety**

Those that work with youth report that youth participation not only enriches community efforts, but also brings direct health and safety benefits to youth by giving them tools and knowledge that can help them rise out of challenging circumstances when they're ready (e.g. from the foster system, economically disinvested communities, juvenile justice system) and by providing a productive alternative to potentially unhealthy, unsafe activities. Opportunities to become meaningfully engaged in their community might also afford youth an unprecedented chance to avoid dangerous circumstances by having an alternative to unsafe activities that might threaten their wellbeing.

### ***Playing Safely in Maryland Communities***

Young people and their families in the Oliver neighborhood of East Baltimore have seen more than their share of challenges in recent decades. One in three homes in Oliver is vacant. Gun violence has claimed the lives of over 20 young people in recent years. Disinvestment resulting from a long history of racial segregation, a drug epidemic, and local violence serve as ongoing threats to the wellbeing and safety of residents.<sup>33</sup>



Youth engaged with Meraki Community Uplift pose for a photo on the court. Kirsten Allen © 2018



[Meraki Community Uplift](#) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization focused on educating, cultivating, and transforming the community. Recognizing the profound and complex nature of the challenges facing Oliver, Meraki involves youth in efforts to create change by partnering with them to identify problems and tangible local solutions. Through this partnership, Meraki has launched a range of programs to engage young people in educational and recreational activities, community gardening, and economic development. Founder, Kirsten Allen, has reported tangible benefits of youth engagement to the health and safety of the youth in her community. “When I think about youth safety, I think about keeping these kids engaged and keeping the community together, especially to help people turn their lives around. For instance, every Sunday, we have between 150-250 youth at the basketball court, interacting with one another positively, and getting exercise. This was one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the city, and it’s a little safer today for these kids.”

## Systems Changes Influencing Health Equity and Community Safety

The potential of youth civic engagement to influence the systems that support healthy and safe communities ranges from small to sweeping. Public policies and professional practices influence many aspects of health and wellbeing by shaping the social, economic, physical, and service environments that influence individual and family health behaviors.<sup>34</sup> A quick scan of news media, professional reports, or websites of community organization shows that communities large and small across the country have found that youth civic engagement leads to positive shifts in organizational processes, program designs and implementation strategies, partnerships, and public policies. When paired with fearless imagination and courageous communication, these incremental changes serve as the building blocks to larger systems change required for social transformation.

### ***Making History and Setting Examples in Massachusetts***

[Opportunity Youth United \(OYUnited\)](#) is a national network of organizations working to improve policies and strengthen civic engagement at both the local and federal levels. Community Action Teams are the grassroots organizing arm of OYUnited and consist of local youth-serving organizations addressing issues that affect low-income communities, including issues related to health and safety.<sup>35</sup> In the 2017 election, the Community Action Team in Boston undertook a major Get Out the Vote effort to advance the youth agenda in local elections. The election ultimately resulted in the unprecedented election of six women of color to Boston’s city council, a legislative body fluctuating between 9 and 22 members since its establishment in 1909 that had only elected its first woman of color in 2009.<sup>36</sup> The candidates ran on platforms prioritizing education, housing affordability, and the opioid epidemic – priority issues for many of Boston’s young people.<sup>37</sup> Some attribute the historic win to the group’s strong relationships with candidates and successful voter registration efforts. One adult involved in the effort stated: “We see people care about them and look like them, and they care about issues and candidates. It’s a prime example of what’s possible.”





## YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: WHAT DOES IT TAKE?



Youth mural in the Bronx, New York. Groundswell NYC © 2012

### What do funders need to know about successful youth civic engagement? What does it take?

The experts we interviewed shared their deep wisdom on the topic, discussing both the principles that guide effective and responsible youth engagement, and the supportive actions funders can take to integrate these principles into their grantmaking. In this section, we outline these principles and potential guidelines for funders.

## Trust Young People and Build the Trust of Young People

### **Strengthen change efforts by demonstrating authentic appreciation for youth and what they have to offer.**

Young people have long served as instrumental catalysts for sweeping change. In America's recent history, young people have played a central role in social movements for civil rights, LGBTQ rights, and environmental issues, like promoting access to water on Native lands.<sup>38</sup>

Today's young people face grave threats to their wellbeing and the prosperity of their communities, and they are not only taking notice; in many places, they are taking charge. Some of the most prominent



efforts led by youth touch on issues as far-ranging as climate change, gun violence, widening social and economic gaps, a fragile health care system, and juvenile justice reform.

In communities across America, young people are making meaningful contributions to defining problems and goals, persuading decision-makers, identifying solutions, and influencing systems change for health and safety. Building youth power for shared decision making is fundamental for achieving these outcomes—youth must have the power to participate and to authentically use their own voice in doing so. As the examples shared throughout this report illustrate, youth contributions can lead to direct impacts both in their own health and safety and for their community members.

## **Recognize that young people must trust the process and the people with whom they engage.**

Trust is the bedrock of authentic engagement, allowing for effective collaboration by ensuring safety, reliability, integrity, and support between partners. Organizational development wisdom holds that organizations that trust one another are more likely to share knowledge and communicate openly. Secondary data from the Tufts University Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) National Youth Survey, comprising 1,000 young people between ages 15 and 25 years, show that youth who trust in others and trust in government are more likely to participate in community service, voting, and political volunteerism, even among young minorities.<sup>39</sup>

Building the trust of young people requires actively listening to understand the conditions, needs, and priorities of youth, as well as nuanced attention to the social, economic, and geographic contexts of youth in each community. Young people in America are more racially, economically, and socially diverse than ever.<sup>40</sup> Racial and ethnic minorities make up more than 40% of the millennial population – people aged 21-37 in 2018 – in twenty states.<sup>41</sup> Postsecondary education attainment rates have risen across all racial and ethnic groups, although millennials are more likely to be in poverty than those in the generations before them, and rates of marriage have dropped compared with prior generations at a similar age.<sup>42</sup> Children under 10 are even more diverse, comprising the first minority White generation since the country was founded.<sup>43</sup>

Building trust across diversity requires cultural humility, a framework that encourages tools of self-assessment and dialogue to diminish harmful power imbalances to transform communities and systems.<sup>44</sup> The approach encourages lifelong learning, listening, curious inquiry, and dialogue as strategies for transformational change. Derived from the medical fields, cultural humility has wide applicability for actors in and across multiple fields.

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### **YOUTH LEAD ON GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

In the aftermath of tragic gun violence at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL on February 14, 2018, students joined together with other victims of school shootings to launch the Never Again MSD. Never Again MSD is a political action committee for gun control that advocates for regulations that will prevent gun violence. Youth leaders of Never Again MSD have rallied youth and communities across the country in the fight against gun violence through the March for Our Lives protest and Get Out the Vote initiatives in November 2018.

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Funders can help build trust in youth by:

- Encouraging their grantees to consider the value of youth partnership in efforts to promote health and safety.
- Serving as sponsors for youth engagement by extolling the benefits of youth engagement and amplifying specific youth needs and assets, at scale.
- Making grants that support the time and resources needed to build trusting partnerships.
- Supporting a cultural humility approach for building trusting relationships with youth.

## Build Youth Power for Shared Decision-Making

**For communities to benefit from the wisdom and ideas of young people, young people must have genuine and meaningful opportunities for impact – opportunities to share leadership and decision-making on the issues that matter. Meaningful engagement is key, at every stage of a change process.**

Young people hold unparalleled wisdom regarding the state of health and safety conditions in their communities, and unique potential to make a difference. Their meaningful partnership in local change processes can sharpen the understanding of barriers, problems, and assets; help design effective and sustainable solutions; and motivate and mobilize action for health equity and community safety.

However, young people are often excluded from many key decision-making processes affecting communities: voting, organizing, or participating in nonprofit boards or other advisory groups. The consequences of such exclusion extend from the community level to the personal level.

[Mikva Challenge](#) is a non-partisan organization founded on the premise that youth voice and participation matter that operates action civics programs for thousands of youth across the country every year. Through findings derived from their research and evaluations processes, they confirm that “youth who miss out on civic learning opportunities are more likely to be students of color and low-

“The more we can incorporate youth into systems work, the greater the impact. This should extend beyond getting youth input. Youth should be engaged in delivery of the solution wherever feasible. This effort must be about more than committee work. Engaging youth in authentic ways around crafting and delivering the solution will keep them engaged and allow them to provide ongoing feedback and insights based on their real-world experiences.”

*Statement from an interviewee concerning meaningful partnerships with youth.  
Fall 2018*



income. The consequence of unequal civic learning experiences is not only that disadvantaged students lack civic skills, but they also suffer academically.”<sup>45</sup>

One interviewee delved into deep detail on a sentiment shared by many of the experts we spoke to: “Young people should be involved early in the process of planning an activity or initiative – this includes generating project objectives. Young people will bring valuable ideas and perspectives to the table and can help ensure the initiative will resonate with other youth. Young people often get excluded from these early stages due to adult assumptions about their interests or skills. Counter to these assumptions, many young people enjoy strategic planning and have lots to contribute. In addition to their own learning, youth also teach adult members a great deal about practicing and modeling effective youth engagement throughout the entire project.”

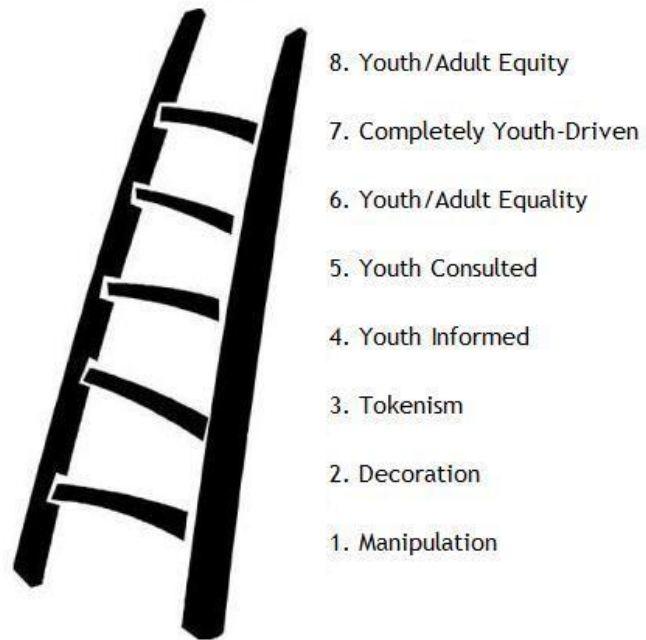
[The Freechild Institute](#) is an international youth advocacy organization focused on empowering youth to advance social justice. Their “Ladder of Youth Voice” provides a framework for youth engagement building

off of sociologist Roger Hart’s Ladder of Youth Engagement (1997).<sup>46</sup> The “Ladder of Youth Voice” teases apart the gradations of youth engagement from the harmful to the transformational. Steps along the way include decoration – where young people help to promote a cause but play no meaningful role in the effort, and tokenism – where young people are presented as influential but have no real decision-making power. The ladder moves up to efforts that involve youth leadership – efforts initiated and directed by young people or in partnership with adults. Each rung offers challenges and rewards to consider in designing any youth engagement process.

Funders can help to build power for youth by:

- Supporting grants and efforts that encourage youth partnerships at the top of the ladder of youth voice.
- Promoting awareness and attention of grantees to power dynamics and opportunities to build power for youth.
- Encouraging assessment and promotion of youth leadership development and capacity building to support youth success in civic engagement efforts.
- Looking beyond investments in youth voice and leadership development to specifically promote youth power, which can involve youth organizing as a strategy to encourage youth to engage in policy and systems change. These collaborations afford youth partners with valuable exposure to significant experiences associated with community transformation, including community mobilization and base building, policy implementation, and accountability.

### Ladder of Youth Voice



*Adapted by Adam Fletcher (2011) from work by Roger Hart, et al. (1994)*



## Care for the Unique Needs and Vulnerabilities of Youth

### Ensure that engagement efforts to promote health and safety are themselves healthy and safe engagements for youth.

Young people need safe, supportive environments to learn, grow, and act. This is particularly true for youth who face the most unhealthy or unsafe conditions, including victims of trauma.

Research into childhood trauma has found a strong correlation between a wide range of health problems and adverse childhood experiences (ACES) – including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; physical and emotional neglect; and substance misuse, mental illness, divorce or incarceration of parents or other family members in the home.<sup>47</sup> Recent studies have shown that ACES are highly prevalent among the general population – just under half (45%) of children in the US have experienced at least one type of trauma in their youth.<sup>48</sup> Rates vary by geography, race, and ethnicity; in some states, the rate is as high as 56% and among some communities of color, as high as 61%.<sup>49</sup>

“We can’t just expect young people to take leadership roles,” stated one interviewee. “We need to invest wholly in their needs. This falls under the banner of healing and trauma-informed care. So many young people have a history of trauma.”

Trauma-informed care is “an organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. Trauma-informed care also emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both consumers and providers and helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.”<sup>50</sup> Adults who regularly work with young people emphasize the importance of a trauma-informed approach that consistently assesses and diminishes risks, prioritizes the wellbeing of young people, and reduces chances for exploitation.

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#### **YOUTH LEAD ON JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM**

Youth across the country are organizing to improve access to opportunity for health and safety through juvenile justice reform. Opportunity Youth United is a national organization that supports Community Action Teams in seventeen cities to engage youth in efforts to increase federal spending on opportunity youth – the “hardest to reach, hardest to engage” people ages 18-24 who are unemployed and not in school. In November 2017, youth in the Boston Community Action Team led efforts to identify barriers to healthy living, and helped mobilize, organize, and pass a state policy to expunge juvenile records. The decision promises to increase employment opportunities for young people, and open multiple pathways to better health and safety.

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Many interviewees stressed that trauma-informed care requires intention and persistent consideration of the health and well-being of youth and other partners who may have experienced trauma. In one experience, one interviewee working with youth on juvenile justice issues found the challenges to be profound: “[By inviting youth experienced with the juvenile justice system to engage], we have defined [the youth] by their eligibility... It’s why we wanted [them]. Then, we were asking them to focus their attention almost exclusively on juvenile justice advocacy. So, not only was it defining [them], but now [they’re] just expected to talk about juvenile justice, and they’re full human beings. Yes, they’ve been in the juvenile justice system. But they’re also interested in environmental advocacy and other things.”

One important consideration for groups aiming to engage youth is to understand and exercise caution around invitations to youth to discuss and potentially repeatedly revisit a past trauma. Survivors who share their stories might have the most compelling cases to



make for change, but are also subject to the potential harm of re-traumatization, and young people are particularly vulnerable.

Another approach some groups are taking when bringing in a focus on youth is to broaden the inclusion of youth to include full families. Another interviewee shared: “These kids are raising themselves and are so traumatized and have so much pressure and responsibilities, they’re taking care of households and working – people are struggling. Parents work all the time... When the parents have issues and know you have the resources, you can’t turn them away. What it actually takes to make an impact with these families and with these children is not reflected in an itemized budget.”

Caring for the diverse needs of youth can also include making the environment a welcoming one for them: offering food and drink at meetings, and other necessities that many adults have learned to bring along to care for themselves. It can involve addressing their individual needs, such as offering tutoring, access to substance abuse and treatment resources, therapy, or healthy activities and outlets for support – pick-up sports games, chess, and other social activities. To support creative approaches to youth care, some organizations have developed guidelines based on desired outcomes. For instance, [RYSE Center](#) in Richmond, California provides programs, supports youth organizing, and creates safe spaces grounded in social justice for young people to love, learn, educate, heal and transform lives and communities.<sup>51</sup> In 2018, as part of an organizational strategic planning process, RYSE developed a Theory of Liberation to articulate its approach and philosophy to healthy, safe and equitable community change. The theory articulates the vision, core outcome, and implementation strategy for achieving “strong, healthy communities where equity is the norm and violence is neither desired or required,” as well as the principles and values driving the work.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Defining the Desired Results of Caring Partnerships with Youth***

RYSE is a nonprofit organization that was created at the behest of youth after a traumatic incident in Richmond, CA catapulted health and safety concerns to the forefront. The organization, whose programming, staffing, and success measures are determined with significant input and direction from youth, is dedicated to transforming the systems that impact young people by offering youth the space to dream and innovate in a safe and caring environment. RYSE Community Health Core Principles were drawn from a Theory of Liberation the organization created to help guide health-focused work, and these principles can offer inspiration to other such initiatives (Table 1). The guidance and accountability offered by this Theory of Liberation and the Community Health Principles have allowed RYSE to shift the norms in their community, particularly with regard to discussions about what health and safety mean locally. “There is a shift in culture in the community,” reported Youth Organizing Director Jamileh Ebrahim. “When there are discussions about community safety or health equity, youth are invited to the table, their voices are included.”

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### ***YOUTH LEAD ON CLIMATE JUSTICE***

Recognizing the government’s awareness and lack of action on the threats of extreme weather events associated with climate change over the last fifty years, a group of 21 young people took action on October 21, 2018 to file a lawsuit to defend their “rights to life, liberty and property.”<sup>1</sup>

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**Table 1. RYSE Center Community Health Principles for Youth**

- 1. Systems and adults responsible for young people are safe, loving, welcoming, and responsive.**
- 2. Systems, both in policy and practice, are responsive to the priorities and needs of young people as defined by young people.**
- 3. Young people feel loved.**
- 4. Young people have the emotional, physical, and political safety to acquire tools, skills, and resources they need to understand and change inequities.**

Funders can support successful youth engagement efforts with caring environments for youth by:

- Creating conditions to allow youth to help define the agenda for local change efforts, rather than holding strict guidelines on health and safety issues of priority interest to the funder or other stakeholders.
- Creating conditions for youth to have space to grow and learn. “We can backslide,” said one of the participants in our interviews. “We lost one of our important [youth organizing] leaders one night [to gun violence]. There are multiple examples of how this is difficult territory.”
- Promoting better assessment and communication among grantees and partners, and safe engagement guidelines with grantees and partners.

## For Intergenerational Work, Everyone Benefits When Everyone Learns

Youth engagement involves youth engaging (1) with one another (2) across generational and community lines and (3) with broader movements in order to achieve advocacy success. The success of these three types of engagement hinges on both growing the capacity of young people to engage in established systems of power, and on the ability of adults to increase their awareness of systems of power and capacity to work with young people.

Many adults involved in youth engagement interviewed for this report discussed how a preference and belief that adults ‘know best’ often serves as a significant barrier to progress in efforts to advance health and safety in communities. Adults can ensure youth power in decision-making and promote participation by truly assessing how the design of the effort encourages young people to share their perspectives and potential, given traditionally adult-dominated spaces. Likewise, adults can work together with youth to elevate their ability to make impact, by giving attention to the amount of power adults wield to make decisions – and how they share and help to build it.<sup>53</sup> Adults can miss many important benefits of working with young people because of poor design or mismatched principles. One interviewee invoked a line from the James Bond movie, *Skyfall*: “Age is no guarantee of efficiency and youth is no guarantee of innovation.”

While many youth-oriented programs include efforts to build leadership and capacity of youth, rarely do efforts focus on building the skills and capacities of adults. Many groups across the country are working to address this disparity through a focus on intergenerational equity. [Everyday Democracy](#), a national nonprofit working to strengthen democracy through authentic engagement and public participation since 1989, has defined intergenerational equity as “the practice of treating everyone justly regardless of





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### **YOUTH LEAD ON HEALTH CARE REFORM**

Youth have had a consistent voice in debates over health care reform in the past decade. Recent threats to coverage for young adults and DREAMers have led youth organized through Young Invincibles to develop and take action around a policy agenda for health care. This is one of the priorities of Students Learn Students Vote Coalition (SLSV), run by Young Invincibles. SLSV promotes civic learning and engagement on campuses across the country by providing a series of key steps and information on best practices that institutions can use to create a more voter-friendly campus.

age and considering the structural factors that privilege some age groups over others. We do this by building strong relationships and partnerships, sharing power across generations, creating mentorship and cross-generational learning opportunities, and making space for youth voice.”<sup>54</sup>

The concept of intergenerational equity is linked to access to healthy environments. “Intergenerational equity is a notion that views the human community as a partnership among all generations. Each generation has the right to inherit the same diversity in natural, cultural, health, and economic resources enjoyed by previous generations and to equitable access to the use and benefits of these resources. At the same time, the present generation is a custodian of these resources for future generations, obliged to conserve this legacy so that future generations may also enjoy these same rights. In this way, intergenerational equity extends the scope of social justice through time.”<sup>55</sup>

Some researchers break down the concept of intergenerational equity to discuss youth-adult partnership (Y-AP), an approach that involves authentic decision making, natural mentors, reciprocity, and community connectedness.<sup>56</sup> Others focus on leadership development and capacity building among youth. As part of their intergenerational equity work, Everyday Democracy and Mikva Challenge work to grow community engagement skills among young leaders through training.

To support intergenerational partnership, funders can:

- Support the inclusion of youth in co-designing initiatives alongside adults to account for the need for continued engagement as youth advance into adulthood.
- Ensure that youth engagement efforts include an exploration or assessment stage to identify best opportunities for adults to change behaviors to support authentic relationships with youth.

## **Support a Broad Infrastructure for Civic Change**

**“Structuring authentic ways to engage youth in ongoing, real-world solutions and problem solving is key. Short-term activities like committee work and production of recommendations are important, but civic engagement is about playing an ongoing role in community. Wherever possible, work should be crafted in ways that are integrated with the ongoing activities of civic life. It should not be a special project.” – Interview Participant**

Successful youth engagement involves more than leadership development and organizing activities among youth; a healthy and robust system for advocacy is essential for meaningful youth participation. Experts in youth civic engagement across the country noted the relationship between the local infrastructure of nonprofit, advocacy, and organizing groups and the success of youth civic engagement. In places where the infrastructure is robust – where there is a healthy amount of civic activity, fueled by





resourced nonprofit organizations, informed advocates, and engaged communities – youth have greater opportunities to participate. In other areas, efforts to increase youth involvement are relatively limited.

Funders play a unique role in supporting organizing and advocacy on an issue and/or in a community – they have a broader view of the infrastructure and networks for activities that add up to success. This situates funders in an important position to spark change: on one hand, their resources can support youth engagement; on the other, they can work to build the field. This approach requires funders to focus attention and resources to parts of the existing infrastructure that need development in order to support youth voice. This might call for a shift in strategy to use a broader range of desired outcomes, extending from systems-level changes to individual-level impacts. [The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities Initiative](#), for instance, centers power building as its north star for advancing health equity, allowing the initiative to fund a wide range of programs and activities to engage communities in their full diversity.

To leverage the value of youth civic engagement, funders can:

- Reimagine the outcomes of their work and the institutions they can partner with to strengthen the network into which youth civic engagement will play a role.
- Root definitions of success in community priorities.
- Consider the full cost of advocacy activities, including both the spectrum of activities to pursue effective advocacy and the resources required to involve youth. For some funders, this might mean rejecting proposals that aim too low. One expert we spoke with noted, “We [nonprofits] play into that, as well. We’re seeking funding and are reliant on it, and we know we’re much more likely to get it if we do five things for this small amount of money [that in the end] undercuts our colleagues, because we have to put in these unrealistic proposals. What we are trying to do at the level of support for our project is unsustainable.”



## WHAT CAN FUNDERS DO?



There is critical urgency to improve health and safety for communities across a range of issues, and many efforts underway to close widening gaps across generations, races, income levels, and geographies.

Youth civic engagement offers a path to identifying and addressing the underlying root causes that promote health and safety for both the short- and long term, for youth and their communities.

Philanthropy plays a critical role in ensuring youth perspectives and ideas are reflected in efforts to achieve healthier, safer communities for all. For funders to truly embrace the power of youth to advance health equity and community safety, they must consider the unique potential they have – as grant makers, partners to young people, respected and influential community anchors, and connectors and conveners across fields and sectors – to encourage safe, healthy strategies for meaningful intergenerational partnerships.

### As Grantmakers

As grant makers, funders can be intentional in selecting grantees that prioritize youth engagement, perhaps integrating a screen for civic engagement as well as for equity in their decision processes. They



can influence grantees to engage in partnerships and implement practices and measures to define and monitor effective youth engagement. They can make multi-year investments and provide broad core support that allows grantees, once they meet threshold criteria, to build capacity and nimble responses aligned with the priorities of their constituents and communities.

For funders who have not yet invested deeply in youth civic engagement, pooled funding may be another promising avenue to engage. Pooled funds can allow deeper investment in innovative practices, as well as a framework for support and evaluation for demonstration projects that individual funders might not otherwise pursue. Emerging youth priority areas, like climate change and gun safety, may lack the funding needed to get off the ground to effectively respond to pernicious problems. Pooled funding could create dedicated, more sustainable support for emerging or otherwise under-resourced issues.

## As Partners to Young People

As partners to youth, funders can act as advocates and amplifiers of youth priorities and use their platform to gain the attention of policymakers and other institutions to both engage youth and learn from them. The priorities and needs of young people can easily be overlooked and unmet, simply because they are not known or fully understood. Funders can communicate these messages as individual stewards and through communication campaigns.

## As Connectors and Conveners across Fields and Sectors

With a bird's eye view of the work in communities, funders serve as critical connectors and conveners, and can bring together experts across fields and sectors to share ideas, innovate, and create change. Drawing from the messages they hear from youth and youth partners, and building on their grantmaking capacity, funders can pull together meetings and conferences to foster new partnerships and innovations that will accelerate youth influence in safety and health-related decision-making.

## As Respected and Influential Community Anchors

Finally, funders can leverage their stature as respected and influential anchors of communities to help shift norms. They can use their positions to elevate and reinforce the value of true partnership and full engagement of youth in identifying and addressing community health, health equity, and public safety needs. As an integral part of the ecosystem that helps to shape, amplify, perpetuate, and refute norms, funders can demonstrate, illuminate and communicate the important role youth play when they are well-supported and appropriately respected.

Moving youth civic engagement away from the margins and closer to the center of strategies to improve community health, safety, and equity has enormous potential. Youth civic engagement can be both a short-term catalyst and a long-term investment toward the systems change that is required to attain better health and safety outcomes for everyone.

**Recognizing the power of youth to achieve holistic health and safety outcomes not only leads one to ask, *What can funders do?* but rather, *What will funders do?***



## APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

To explore the opportunities and challenges of funders regarding youth civic engagement, Mesu Strategies, LLC led qualitative research involving mixed methods, including semi-structured interviews, literature scans, and document review. Interviews were carried out with nearly a dozen experts in youth civic engagement to understand:

- How does supporting youth civic engagement help to produce health and safety outcomes?
- What does it take to support successful youth civic engagement?
- What can funders do to realize their potential to support youth?

Interviewees were identified based on eligibility criteria established by the research team and client. Eligibility required experience and/or expertise in both youth civic engagement and health equity and/or community safety. The team strived to achieve demographic, geographic, regional, organizational, and sector diversity among the full collection of individuals invited to interview. Interviews were ultimately completed with 11 individuals (Table 1).

Interviews employed a common set of questions for all interviewees, with room for the interviewer to probe as needed to elicit explanation or verify meaning. Findings were reviewed and coded for common themes, prominent ideas, and illustrative stories, and crosschecked by a second reviewer to reduce bias. Initial findings on key themes were shared with members of the PACE Health & Safety working group for review and input.

The following working group members provided written and verbal feedback on the report in October 2018:

- Deborah McKoy, PhD, Executive Director, Center for Cities and Schools; Lecturer, Department of City + Regional Planning & Graduate School of Education
- Curtis Holloman, Senior Director Grants & Programs, Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg
- Ed Foster-Simeon, President and CEO, US Soccer Foundation
- Marian Mulkey and Kristen Cambell, PACE
- Additional comments were obtained by PACE from their partners in December 2018:
- Carolyne Abdullah, Director of Strengthening Democratic Capacity Team, Everyday Democracy
- Jen Algire, President and CEO, The Greater Clark Foundation

To triangulate findings, interviewers completed literature scans and conducted brief “low-touch” follow-up interviews as needed to flesh out ideas and examples. Findings were written up and submitted as a draft for review by the PACE Health and Safety Working Group in November 2018. Feedback from working group members and PACE staff helped shape the final report.



**Table 2. Interviewees**

<b>Name and Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>Carolyn Abdullah</b> Director of Strengthening Democratic Capacity Team	Everyday Democracy
<b>Kirsten Allen</b> Founder	Meraki Community Uplift
<b>Lashon Amado</b> National Coordinator of Opportunity Youth Community Action Teams	YouthBuild USA – Opportunity Youth United
<b>Sheri Brady</b> Associate Director for Strategic Partnerships	Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions
<b>Eric Braxton</b> Executive Director	Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing
<b>Jamileh Ebrahimi</b> Youth Organizing Director	RYSE Center
<b>Gustavo Herrera</b> Western Regional Director	Young Invincibles
<b>Benet Magnuson</b> Executive Director	Kansas Appleseed
<b>Yelena Nemoy</b> Senior Program Manager	Opportunity Youth Forum, Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions
<b>Malana Rogers-Bursen</b> Program Associate	Everyday Democracy
<b>Clarissa Unger</b> Director of Civic Engagement	Young Invincibles
<b>Hanh Cao Yu</b> Chief Learning Officer	The California Endowment





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<sup>14</sup> The formalization of public health as a distinct field of study and practice has been credited in part to the charitable contributions of John D. Rockefeller. Building upon nearly a century of rapid advancements in microbiology, epidemiology, sanitation, urban development and government, in 1909, Rockefeller provided \$1 million to establish the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for a period of five years to bring together the expertise of diverse leaders to eradicate hookworm disease in the American South (Rockefeller 2018). This effort laid the groundwork for RSC "to promote the creation of an organized and well-funded public health network across the southern United States, a region where health programs had long been neglected" (Rockefeller 2018). In subsequent years, funding from Rockefeller via The Rockefeller Foundation would support the establishment of the first school of public health at Johns Hopkins University, and programs also at Harvard University and the University of Michigan (LaMorte 2018).

In a similar vein, funding from The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching supported research and practices that made significant contributions to shape medical education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bernholz, Seale, and Wang 2009; Rodin 2013; Flexner 1910; Cooke et al. 2010).

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