

YO! Baltimore Community Impact Survey Summary

Executive Summary

The original Baltimore Youth Opportunity System (YO! Baltimore) design was the product of a team of 33 key Baltimore City community partners who work with or represent the youth of the city. These partners included representatives from the school system, social services and foster care providers, the Department of Juvenile Services, the city's community college, and a wide range of non-profit, community-based organizations. This team not only formed the core YO! Baltimore service plan, it also stressed the need to build a collaborative youth service system of multiple service providers as a foundation element for a productive and sustainable approach. To ascertain the success of YO! Baltimore in achieving this part of the original plan, it was decided to reconvene the original 33 members of the team to ask how YO! Baltimore achieved its system-building objective.

In the summer of 2004, the MOED director, Karen Sitnick, reconvened the members of the original workgroup to discuss the status of the YO! Baltimore efforts to build an effective system that included multiple city service providers. As a result of this meeting, it was decided to survey all of the key Baltimore youth service provider community to formally gain their feedback on this important issue. This survey, which has been completed and analyzed, indicated that significant levels of collaboration and partnerships have ensued through the YO! Baltimore initiative.

In summary, 94% of survey respondents believed YO! Baltimore met or exceeded their expectations. This data validated the original partners' belief in the effectiveness of a network approach to service delivery. Survey respondents reported that functioning within a collaborative system or network provided benefits such as greater access to out-of-school youth; improved understanding and responsiveness to youth; and expanded resources to address the multiple issues faced by this difficult-to-serve population. The survey indicated community partners are serving youth in new ways, which helped to streamline and enhance services.

Partners agreed that building a collaborative service system, utilizing a broad-based youth development model, had improved program outcomes qualitatively and quantitatively. Additionally, staff members increased their skill sets through the collaborative, intensive staff development used. Partners expressed the belief that youth were now more likely to obtain a consistent message from the partners in the system – for example, the important message that *employers will not tolerate drug use* was now a message that all partners conveyed to participants.

Looking to the future and the prospect of significantly reduced federal resources, partners expressed the commitment to a comprehensive youth development model and the continuation of a collaborative approach in serving Baltimore's youth. Many offered creative options and potential avenues to explore facilitating the sustainability of YO! Baltimore. All expressed a willingness to explore mutually beneficial fund raising options and the continuation of systemically working together to better serve Baltimore's youth.

Overview:

The Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) convened community partners in focus or work groups to help develop the Youth Opportunity Grant plan for the United States Department of Labor (DOL). These partners ranged from the public school system to a shelter for homeless youth and the juvenile justice system. It is through this collaboration that the development of a Youth Opportunity *System* was one of the pivotal components of the Grant application. It was the intention of all partners to create systemic change--institutionalizing collaboration as a way of doing business in the service of Baltimore's youth. Utilizing the resources and expertise of each partner has helped youth access a broader range of support services and given each partner the option of offering what they do best.

To measure community impact of the Youth Opportunity Grant, the following evaluative survey was distributed to the original 33 members, who helped to develop this grant, and the following report summarized the results.

Survey

The following eighteen organizations responded to the survey:

1. Sinai VSP
2. Chesapeake Center
3. Mayor's Office of Children Youth and Families
4. Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks
5. Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development (CFFWD)
6. Baltimore City Health Department
7. Baltimore City Community College (BCCC)
8. Maryland State Department of Juvenile Services (DJS)
9. Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS)
10. Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition (HEBCAC)
11. Civic Works, Inc.
12. Johns Hopkins University Sar Levitan Center
13. McKim Community Center
14. East Baltimore Community Corporation
15. Fellowship of Lights
16. College Bound Foundation
17. Community Building in Partnership, Inc.
18. Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS)

A summary of responses to survey questions follows:

1. How would you rate the Youth Opportunity System overall?

Respondents overwhelmingly responded that the Youth Opportunity System met or exceeded their expectations. Of those surveyed only one organization said that YO! did not meet his/her expectations.

2. Have the Youth Opportunity Grant and the efforts to build partnership in providing services for Baltimore’s youth changed anything about the way your organization does business?

The Youth Opportunity System had a pronounced impact on the way its partners do business with 13 of 18 respondents saying “yes” the initiative changed the way they do business.

In general respondents who answered **Yes** commented along one of three themes:

- ④ They appreciated access to, and utilized more, the expanded resources and referral opportunities;
- ④ They were able to better access a hard-to-serve population through YO! Baltimore;
- ④ They were able to modify programming based on their increased sensitivity to the needs of the youth population

3. What are the top 3 things that worked best about the Youth Opportunity partnerships and/or system?

Answers were wide ranging but the majority focused on similar themes outlined below:

- ④ Appreciation for the comprehensive services made available to participants through the **youth development model**.
- ④ Valuing of partnerships, collaborations, increased resource and referral sharing.
- ④ Successful program outcomes both quantitatively and qualitatively
- ④ Staff development and staff members’ responsiveness to participants
- ④ An environment of continuous improvement

4. What do you see as the positive impacts of Baltimore Youth Opportunity Movement on the community?

Answers were wide ranging but the majority focused on similar themes outlined below:

- ④ Positive outcomes for youth including educational attainment and college admissions; job training, placement and increased incomes for youth.
- ④ Comprehensive **youth development** model, which supported the wellness of participants.
- ④ Accessibility of services in neighborhoods
- ④ Reduced drug use through education about employer drug testing.

5. Given the limited funding resources available in the coming year, what do you see as the essential elements of the Youth Opportunity System, which should be saved?

Answers were wide ranging but the majority focused on similar themes outlined below:

- ④ Keep the caring adult/case manager model
- ④ Career training and literacy/GED classes
- ④ Life skills and parenting support
- ④ Access to health care
- ④ Maintain centers and partnership system

6. What resources or strategies can you and /or your organization offer to sustain the best parts of this initiative?

Partner (see above for complete organizational name)	Resources or strategies offered
VSP Sinai	Will continue to take YO! referrals and provide services occupational skills training for members with learning disabilities
Chesapeake Center	Will continue to offer alternative education and limited specialized training in hospitality
Mayor's Office of Children Youth and Families	Participation on workgroups and committees such as Transitional Housing
Baltimore City Recreation and Parks	YO members may access their recreational programming
Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development	Will provide support through existing core programs such as STRIVE and support for young fathers, including parenting rights and responsibilities.
Baltimore City Health Department	Depending on financial resources, BARH can maintain the YO Health Suite component.
BCCC	BCCC will offer 15 slots in data-entry in Bank One training
DJS (Dept. of Juvenile Services--provided referrals)	Training for MOED staff in Justice System and methods for dealing with resistant delinquents
BCPSS	The public school system will recommend that dropouts enroll in YO programs
HEBCAC (Community-based organization which runs the east-side comprehensive center)	Fund raising; expanding partnerships, developing youth entrepreneurial strategies, identifying resources and building a learning disabilities pilot project, provide the youth center with a building
Civic Works, Inc.	Continue to provide academic remediation, skills training and job placement for participants; request funding from AmeriCorps to support a team of eligible youth; cash match from MOED would be required to defray costs
McKim (community organization which runs a neighborhood satellite location)	Fund raising to sustain YO at McKim. The YO program should form a direct partnership with Baltimore's exciting alternative out-of-school program to maximize resources.
EBCC (community organization which runs a neighborhood satellite location)	Basic skills workshops, job readiness and employment placement
Fellowship of Lights	Commitment to try to bring DSS, DJS into system

Partner (see above for complete organizational name)	Resources or strategies offered
College Bound (college prep; admissions and retention)	Hope to open a city-wide center where anyone who wants information about college can get it
Community Building in Partnership	May be able to offer some job training slots
DORS (provided support and referral for disabled members)	Assessment, support and training for disabled population

7. Are there ways in which you believe the current system can be improved?

Responses were minimal but included the following:

- ④ Invite more partners and resources to the table.
- ④ Focus more on education, employment and training
- ④ Increase youth participation

8. If work groups are required to sustain the YO! Baltimore System, are you willing to participate?

All 18 respondents answered Yes