

**Public Meeting to Review the Council's  
Pre-Decision Recommendation Document**

**Wednesday May 9, 2012  
1:15 Eastern Daylight Time**

The Council will meet via phone conference call. The meeting will be open to the public in listen-only mode and it will be recorded. To dial in, please call 1-866-525-0652.

**WHCCS Draft Final Recommendations**

May 2012

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**The President's Charge**

In December 2010, President Obama created the White House Council for Community Solutions (the "Council") to encourage the growth and maximize the impact of innovative community solutions and civic participation. By convening a diverse group of leaders from a range of sectors, the President signaled this is an "all hands on deck" moment, requiring active engagement of individuals, businesses, nonprofits, philanthropy, and government.

Executive Order 13560 charged the Council with identifying key attributes of successful community solutions; highlighting best practices, tools and models of cross-sector collaboration and civic participation; and making recommendations on how to engage all stakeholders in community solutions that have a significant impact on solving our nation's most serious problems.

The Executive Order also directed the Council to identify specific policy areas in which the Federal government is investing significant resources that lend themselves to cross-sector collaboration.

The Council responded to the President's challenge by first focusing its attention on the broader question of what can be done to drive successful community solutions and second, how to apply these findings to create substantial opportunity for "disconnected youth" – young people ages 16 to 24 who are not connected to education or the workforce. The Council chose this often overlooked population because of the potential these young people have and the scale of the issue. The 6.7 million disconnected youth today cost our nation approximately \$93 billion in direct and indirect social costs in 2011<sup>1</sup> alone – making this issue both compelling and urgent. While all youth have potential, connecting these youth to education or employment will change the trajectory of their lives, as well as benefit their communities and our nation as a whole.

In its outreach and listening sessions, the Council discovered these young people have energy and aspirations and do not view themselves as "disconnected". To the contrary, these young people are eager to participate in community solutions, in fact to own the development of their lives. They want to create a successful future but need the tools and opportunity to create that success. To acknowledge their untapped potential, the Council chose to refer to this population as "opportunity youth".

The recommendations highlighted here focus on the four critical strategies we believe are most likely to result in significant progress on persistent community issues, such as assuring all our young people are on the path to prosperity:

1. driving the development of successful community collaboratives;
2. creating a nationwide awareness and accountability for opportunity youth;
3. engaging youth as leaders in the solution; and

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth, Columbia University, 2011.

4. creating more robust on-ramps to employment.

Before detailing each of these four strategies, following is a brief summary of the Council’s findings on the critical elements and potential impact of successful – or needle-moving – community collaboratives and how this framework can be applied to the issue of Opportunity Youth.

### **Successful Community Collaboratives**

Recognizing that most community efforts to collaborate are well-intentioned but have not achieved significant results, the White House Council for Community Solutions commissioned an analysis from The Bridgespan Group to identify where collaboratives have actually moved the needle on a problem, to understand what makes them effective and to determine whether these key characteristics could be adopted by other communities seeking greater impact.

The analysis identified a dozen communities across the country where all sectors have pulled together to make 10%+ progress on a community-wide metric, and another 100+ communities who are making progress in this direction. Examples include a 27% reduction in violent crimes in Memphis, TN, 21% increase in number of children at or above grade level in Orlando, FL and 31% decline in the teen birth rate in Milwaukee, WI. Profiles of each of these communities and their success can be found at [www.serve.org/council/resources](http://www.serve.org/council/resources).

What is distinct about these collaborations is that the unit of analysis for impact shifts from individual organizations' results to community-wide results. Organizations are no longer focused just on outcomes for the people they serve, but on partnering and coordinating with other groups to achieve community-wide outcomes. We found that these needle-moving collaboratives had five common characteristics:

- Shared vision and agenda
- Effective leadership and governance
- Alignment of resources toward what works
- Dedicated staff capacity and appropriate structure
- Sufficient funding

Based on these lessons and input from these successful community collaboratives, the Council created a “toolkit” for communities to help them jump-start or re-direct their efforts and help them better navigate the challenges they will face in pursuing needle-moving change. This toolkit can be found at [www.serve.org/council/resources](http://www.serve.org/council/resources).

### **Community Solutions for Opportunity Youth**

To answer President Obama’s call to win the future by out-educating and out-innovating the rest of the world, our nation needs all young Americans to be on a path to become productive citizens. Strategically re-connecting this population will help address the skills gap that exists in many industries

and also provides a good return on investment for youth, the taxpayer, and society.<sup>2</sup> The high cost of inaction, approximately \$93 billion in direct and indirect social costs in 2011 alone, makes taking action urgent.

### **Fundamental Principles Underlying the Council's Recommendations**

To develop our recommendations, the Council reviewed research and conducted extensive outreach to understand successful community collaboratives and the demographics, needs and existing programs for opportunity youth. Compelling input came from young people themselves, but the Council also spoke with over 300 youth-serving organizations, families, mentors, businesses, the social sector, and agencies of government, including site visits to communities around the United States with promising community collaborations.

Through its research, the Council developed three fundamental principles to guide all strategies addressing the needs of opportunity youth:

1. **Young people themselves are key to the solution.** Research shows that opportunity youth have clear views of what works for them and their peers.
2. **All sectors must pull together in the same direction to create lasting impact.** The challenges facing opportunity youth are complex and cannot be solved by families, communities, schools, employers, nonprofits or the government alone. To see dramatic, measurable progress in the lives of opportunity youth requires the engagement of all sectors pulling together to provide the diverse range of services needed.
3. **Policies and funding must be data-driven to ensure limited resources are invested wisely.** Policy and funding decisions need to be guided by accurate data about opportunity youth and effective interventions to meet their needs and challenges to ensure the most effective use of limited funding.

Opportunity youth reside throughout our nation. Without support from individuals, community leaders and government, they may fail to bridge to a successful career and civic life that will improve their own futures as well as those of their communities and our nation. The good news is that strong examples of success exist. While not an exhaustive list, the following four strategies and recommendations have the potential to make significant progress on community-based issues and specifically toward ensuring more of our nation's young people are on a path to prosperity.

#### **STRATEGY ONE:**

##### **DRIVE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCCESSFUL CROSS-SECTOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVES**

**Cross-sector community collaboratives that actually move the needle – realize at least a 10% change in the problem they aim to address – share a select set of attributes and must be increasingly replicated across the nation.**

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**Key Recommendations:**

Based on the findings outlined above, the Council recommends:

- 1. Prioritize Funding for Best Practice Cross-Sector Community Collaboratives.** Public and private funders should prioritize successful collaborative efforts that exhibit best practice characteristics. We strongly support the \$20 million Disconnected Youth Initiative proposed in the President’s 2013 budget. The Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor are proposing a total of \$20 million to develop interagency strategies to strengthen the impact of federal programs serving opportunity youth and identify opportunities for enhanced flexibility and collaboration. This initiative would take the lessons from the Administration’s Promise Neighborhood and Choice Neighborhood initiatives that support place-based collaborative activities in communities across the country, as well as from other collaborative efforts such as the Department of Justice and Department of Education’s National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, and adapt the work to promote collaborative work focused specifically on opportunity youth.
- 2. Promote Collaborative Use of Data Across Agency Lines.** Given that the ability to access and share data across systems is critical to successful solutions for complex social issues, the Administration should allow local communities access to critical data across the continuum of a young person’s life, improve the connection between Federal, state and local data sources, and provide clarity about the ability of stakeholders to share data. This increased access must be consistent with the intent of relevant privacy laws and ensure responsible data use. We recommend the Administration:
  - a. Align funding for state and local data systems. The Administration should encourage states and localities to provide more flexibility in existing programs to build, adopt, or adapt data systems and to connect disparate data collection efforts that receive federal funding.
  - b. Propose changes to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA was originally written before personal computers were invented, and creates barriers to the responsible use of data across agency lines. We applaud the Department of Education’s new guidance interpreting the FERPA legislation, and call on the Administration to go further by recommending changes to the legislation itself. More immediately, relevant agencies and their privacy attorneys should provide more helpful guidance, promising practices, and tools (i.e., sample MOUs and consent forms) for inter-agency data sharing for opportunity youth.
- 3. Align Policies to Reduce Fragmentation, Improve Efficiency, and Achieve Better Results.** Communities often have multiple, fragmented efforts to address complex issues, each governed by a separate federal policy which makes it difficult to align services into a coherent strategy. The Administration should simplify and align eligibility criteria, uses of funds, and reporting requirements across programs and agencies to allow coordination of services. We applaud the President’s Memorandum on Administrative Flexibility, and strongly support the \$113 million Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth proposed in the President’s 2013 budget. These pilots will improve outcomes for opportunity youth by supporting state, regional or local efforts to align funding from several different federal sources into coherent, efficient and effective pathways to prosperity. Pilot sites will be allowed the flexibility from federal regulations necessary to work across agencies lines to achieve a better efficiency. Where pilots are successful, this flexibility should be made widely available.
- 4. Create a National Community of Practice.** The non-profit sector should establish a community of organizations dedicated to identifying and sharing best practices and developing tools for

organizations committed to creating opportunities for opportunity youth. With focused thought leadership, success could be more easily leveraged and replicated.

5. **Replicate Successful Aspects of Youth Opportunity Grants.** From 2000-2005, the Workforce Investment Act's (WIA's) Youth Opportunity Grants (YO) funded 36 high poverty rural and urban communities and Indian Reservations to improve education and labor market outcomes for youth age 14-21. YO sites brought education, job training and wrap-around support services together in a safe, accessible Youth Community Center. An independent evaluation on the over 90,000 youth participants, released by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2008, found that while results varied significantly by location and by subgroup, employment impacts were positive for most groups, especially younger youths, Blacks, and native-born youths. YO also had a positive impact overall on increasing the percentage of the youth population with at least an eleventh-grade education and increasing the percentage in secondary school. We recommend the Administration encourage funding the successful aspects of YO through WIA.
6. **Create an Incentive Fund.** The Administration should allow for the use of existing WIA formula funding to create a pilot "Collective Impact Fund" for communities who are committed to aligning existing community resources and setting specific targets to reconnect young people to school and work. This "Collective Impact Fund" would be open to all proven programs and provide local communities with \$1 million to \$1.5 million for three years, to be matched at the local level, with resources to support data collection and other infrastructure for the community collaborative.

## **STRATEGY TWO:**

### **CREATE SHARED NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Shared national responsibility for opportunity youth requires high-level consistent leadership to coordinate efforts across agencies and the collection, reporting and sharing of rigorous data to shine a national spotlight on who these young people are, what they need and what they are capable of doing. Shared accountability also requires a clear understanding of available public and private efforts to allocate limited resources with the greatest return on investment.

#### **Research and Outreach Findings:**

Because there is no widely accepted definition of this population, and there is no related statistic or report that is regularly published in our nation, opportunity youth remain a population "below the radar" for most national and community leaders and the public. Additionally, there are common misperceptions about these young people, leading to stigma and little action.

Opportunity youth are often presumed to have low motivation or lack personal responsibility. However, Council listening sessions and the recent report, "Opportunity Road: The Promise and Challenge of America's Forgotten Youth"<sup>3</sup>, have clearly dispelled those myths. Key findings from this national cross-section survey include:

- **Opportunity youth are optimistic:** Despite their challenges, 73% are very confident or hopeful about achieving their goals; 85% want a good career and job; 67% want a college or technical degree; and 65% have a goal to finish high school or college and know they can achieve it;

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<sup>3</sup> Opportunity Road: The Promise and Challenges of America's Forgotten Youth. Civic Enterprises, et al., 2011.

- **Opportunity youth accept responsibility for their futures:** 77% believe getting a good education and job are their own responsibilities; and
- **Opportunity youth want to reconnect** to work, school and service, but need help:
  - The top obstacles youth face in reconnecting to work are: no jobs are available where they live (51%) and they don't have enough work experience (50%) or education (47%) to get the job they want. Thirty-nine percent cite family responsibilities as an obstacle to working full-time. Transportation is a concern for 37% and 32% say they do not know how to prepare a resume or interview.
  - The top obstacles to reconnecting to school are: cost is more than they or their families can afford (63%); they need to make money to take care of their families (48%); they do not have transportation or they need to work and cannot balance work and school (40% in each case). Nearly one-third (32%) say no one showed them how to apply to college or figure out how to pay for it.

The obstacles these young people face are countered by their resilience and optimism. The Council believes that an investment now to put them on a path to prosperity will transform them into powerful assets for our communities and a source of leadership and productivity in our workforce and economy.

#### **Key Recommendations:**

**Establish High-Level Consistent Leadership.** The need for senior-level prioritization, coordination and accountability has been demonstrated in recent presidencies. President Clinton created the President's Crime Prevention Council to coordinate federal efforts in support of at-risk youth. President George W. Bush Administration created a White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth. President Obama created the White House Council for Community Solutions. Rather than recreating the function ad-hoc in every new administration, we recommend that the federal government establish an ongoing function, possibly within the Domestic Policy Council, and charge this leadership with creating goals and clarifying responsibilities amongst agencies for improving outcomes for disadvantaged youth. The Council applauds the Department of Education's creation of the Interagency Forum on Disconnected Youth along with the existing efforts of many coordinating bodies including The Interagency Working Group for Youth Programs and the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Their work would be better coordinated through a single entity anchored by an annual strategy. This strategy should encompass all efforts on behalf of opportunity youth, set clear goals and detail how federal resources will be coordinated to achieve these goals.

1. **Lead with Data.** To create greater national, state and local accountability for reconnecting opportunity youth and to empower communities with the information they need to drive change, the Administration should begin regularly collecting and reporting information on opportunity youth through the Current Population Survey or American Community Survey. Such information should include the size of this population, demographics and activities. In other countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, data on so-called NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) has been reported for more than a decade.
2. **Evaluate Current Programs.** To understand the role that the federal government itself plays in reconnecting youth to education and work, the Administration should conduct a comprehensive survey across departments and agencies to understand what programs and initiatives are currently serving opportunity youth, how effectively they reconnect youth to education or

employment and at what scale, perhaps through the Interagency Forum on Disconnected Youth. This evaluation can be used to allocate existing funding to the most effective programs.

3. **Scale Up and Reward Effective Programs.** The fastest way to reconnect opportunity youth is to support effective programs, that have waiting lists of young people eager to transform their lives, but for whom no slots are available. We encourage the Administration to support and Congressional leaders, state and local governments to respond by scaling evidence-based federal and government – private programs. The Administration should also encourage scaling of successful programs through establishing selection criteria for Pay for Success proposals serving opportunity youth. The innovative “pay for success” funding model provides programs with a guaranteed pre-determined amount of funding if they achieve agreed upon outcomes for the population it is serving.
4. **Invest in Innovation.** We applaud the Administration’s Investing in Innovation Fund, Social Innovation Fund, and the Workforce Innovation Fund and urge the Administration to establish selection criteria for proposals serving opportunity youth and to open eligibility to non-profit programs.

### **STRATEGY THREE:**

#### **ENGAGE YOUTH AS LEADERS IN THE SOLUTION**

**Engaging youth as leaders in developing and highlighting solutions that work will create more relevant, higher quality and increasingly effective programs and resources for opportunity youth.**

#### **Research and Outreach Findings:**

Youth want their voices to be heard and have strong, informed opinions about what will help them reconnect. Young people have a critical stake in the quality and sustainability of the solution as the Council heard in youth roundtables, United Way Community Conversations and the national survey as presented in the report “Opportunity Road.” Specifically:

- Almost 80% of opportunity youth want to connect with mentors to whom they can relate, such as successful peers, business mentors and college mentors<sup>4</sup>.
- Opportunity youth are more likely to respond to reconnection strategies that provide strong, integrated supports and treat youth as part of the solution rather than the problem.

In summary, when youth are involved as community leaders, the decisions are more relevant and reliable, and more likely to be embraced by them. Perhaps most importantly, their innate understanding of their generation allows them to develop more authentic solutions to the issues they face.

For example, Nashville, TN has raised high school graduation rates by more than 20 percentage points to 83% and reduced truancy by 35 – 40%. Youth were involved on every level of this effort, through the Youth Co-Chaired **Child and Youth Master Plan Task Force**, providing unique insight into solutions.

#### **Key Recommendations:**

1. **Formalize Youth Input.**

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<sup>4</sup> Opportunity Road: The Promise and Challenges of America’s Forgotten Youth. Civic Enterprises, et al., 2011.



- a. **Create a Presidential Youth Working Group.** We applaud existing efforts to reflect youth input in the Administration via the White House Liaison to Young Americans and the recent White House Young America Series. The Administration should expand on these efforts and establish a Presidential Youth Working Group composed of young people that reflects a diversity of backgrounds and experience, including opportunity youth, to advise the President and his cabinet secretaries on the perspectives of young people, offer input on how to make federally funded youth programs more effective and support activities by each department to better engage young people in the policymaking process.
  - b. **Call on the non-profit and faith-based sectors to create a National Youth Council.** To ensure youth voice is incorporated in creating more effective programs outside of the government, the Council calls for the creation of a non-profit National Youth Council, in addition to creating the Presidential Youth Working Group.
  - c. **Incorporate Youth Input Into Program Development and Evaluation.** Non-profit organizations (and foundations that support them) should incorporate authentic youth input in the design and evaluation of programs and services for opportunity youth. Specifically, nonprofits are encouraged to conduct constituency/beneficiary surveys of programs when assessing effectiveness and quality.
2. **Create an On-Line, Youth-Rated Service Directory.** Social sector and faith-based leaders in every community should create a community-wide service inventory, youth networking and/or “customer feedback” tool that can be used for youth to be able to assess the quality and availability of local support services. We applaud FindYouthInfo.gov, and encourage the Administration to challenge the non-profit sector to identify a third party to extend the reach of the information in FindYouthInfo.gov and to incorporate the ability for youth to rate and recommend listings.
  3. **Hire Opportunity Youth in Program Roles.** To create more relevant youth programs and reduce stigma mistakenly attached to opportunity youth, all youth-serving programs (government, business, nonprofit, faith-based, cross sector, etc.) should assess which of their program and advocacy needs can be filled directly by the youth they aim to serve. The Council suggests that The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs may be appropriate to undertake this assessment for the Federal government.

#### **STRATEGY FOUR:**

##### **CREATE MORE ROBUST ON-RAMPS TO EMPLOYMENT**

**Opportunity youth can be successfully connected to employment when multiple on-ramps that are highly relevant (linking to education and employment) and designed to fit their community and youth needs are available and growing.**

#### **Research and Outreach Findings:**

**Youth unemployment is higher than other age groups.** In February 2012, the unemployment rate among youth was 17%. By contrast, the unemployment rate for those 25 and older was 7.4 percent. And the 11 percent who never graduate or obtain a GED find it even harder to find employment. The unemployment rate for non-graduate adults was 14.8 percent, compared with 9.2 percent for high school graduates.

**Existing workforce does not have the skills needed to fill the jobs available today or in the future.**

Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce predicts a skills gap of approximately three million post-secondary degrees and 4.7 million post-secondary certificates by 2018. Even today, 80% of manufacturers report they cannot find people to fill their skilled production jobs translating to over half-a-million unfilled manufacturing jobs and 53% of large employers and 67% of small business leaders report they cannot find qualified non-managerial employees.<sup>5</sup>

**Well-developed youth employment pathways programs can benefit youth, the employer and the community.**

Gap, Inc. created a program called *This Way Ahead* (delivered in partnership through a NY based non-profit, The Door) to expose opportunity youth to career exploration, job readiness training, internships, and follow up support. In this program, 80% of employees improved their leadership skills as a result of volunteering in the program leading to better business performance.

**Many more youth aspire to graduate from college than are able to complete their degree.** Although a recent MetLife survey of American teachers found that virtually all students plan to continue on to higher education (with three-fourths expecting to attain a bachelor's degree), census data show that only slightly more than two-fifths of Americans obtain any college degree.<sup>6</sup>

**Education needs to be relevant to employment possibilities.** Young people cite that they drop out of school most often because they do not find school interesting or see how what they are learning in the classroom will affect their lives and strengthen their opportunities outside of the classroom.<sup>7</sup>

**Many more youth desire to be engaged in service than have opportunities to serve in structured programs.** Nearly seven in ten opportunity youth (69%) want to make a difference in improving life for others, while only three percent report they are volunteering in their communities. These findings suggest their disconnection from school and work is impeding their ability to give back. Additionally, national service has proven to be an on-ramp to the non-profit field, which is one of the fastest growing occupations in the economy<sup>8</sup>

**Key Recommendations:**

**1. Encourage All Sectors to Increase Job Opportunities for Opportunity Youth**

- a. The Council was honored to participate in the Administration's Summer Jobs+ initiative that partnered with corporate leaders with a goal of providing 250,000 private, government and non-profit sector opportunities for disconnected and disadvantaged youth in the summer of 2012. We recommend the Administration continue and deepen this initiative by increasing the target for jobs and other opportunities as currently

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<sup>5</sup> Across the Great Divide, Perspectives of CEOs and College Presidents on America's Higher Education and Skills Gap, Civic Enterprises, et al., 2011.

<sup>6</sup> The Metlife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, May 2011.

<sup>7</sup> The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts, Civic Enterprises, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Occupational Outlook, Occupational Outlook Handbook Projections 2010 – 2020.

defined in Summer Jobs+ every year, encouraging the creation of more year-round opportunities in addition to summer jobs, and by expanding this initiative to include the faith-based community. All employers should be made aware of the tools available in *A Toolkit for Employers: Connecting Youth and Business* and should be encouraged to include mutually beneficial youth employment programs as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility strategy.

- b. We applaud the Administration for pledging to hire over 20,000 opportunity or disadvantaged youth through Summer Jobs+. We encourage the Administration to continue and deepen this initiative by committing to increase the number of jobs each year and by providing year-round opportunities in addition to annual summer opportunities.
  - c. We applaud the Administration's support of the Disconnected Youth Opportunity Tax Credit, which was authorized in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2010 and provides a tax credit to employers who hire disadvantaged youth. We recommend the Administration, with the support of Congress, continue to build on the Disconnected Youth Opportunity Tax Credit and to strengthen it by including incentives for employers to provide a range of valuable experiences from job shadowing, career awareness or mentoring or internship programs, to hiring opportunity youth.
- 2. Provide High-Quality, Relevant Educational Opportunities for Opportunity Youth<sup>9</sup>**
- a. The Administration should encourage the K-12 system to do more data-driven, early identification and prevention of school disconnection. Specifically, early warning information and intervention systems should be put in place in schools to identify those students whose attendance, behavior and course completion record signal the need for school-based and community-based supports. These systems should be combined with appropriate programs for recovery.
  - b. Incentivize school districts, community- and faith-based organizations to provide high-quality remedial and dropout recovery services to opportunity youth. Current offerings are not sufficient to meet the need. Regulations should encourage dropout recovery services and Race to the Top should include selection criteria for applicants including reconnecting opportunity youth strategies in their state plans.
  - c. We applaud the Department of Education's Together for Tomorrow initiative to involve faith-based and other community organization in developing and supporting programs that increase school attendance, improve behavior, support academic achievement, and increase college accessibility. We recommend the Administration encourage the post-secondary education community to scale effective examples of community- and faith-based organizations to provide opportunity youth the remediation, support services and career-oriented instruction necessary for their success.
  - d. We applaud the Administration's support of Skills for America's Future, an industry-led initiative to dramatically improve industry partnerships with community colleges and build a nation-wide network to maximize workforce development strategies, job training programs, and job placements. We recommend the Administration continue its support of efforts that meet the needs of local employers in today's dynamic economy.
  - e. We recommend the Administration encourage the military and employers to work closely with higher education institutions to align work experience with curriculum for

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<sup>9</sup> Improvements to the K-12 education system are central to addressing the issues of opportunity youth, however, are outside of the scope of the Council's work.

degree-granting programs to allow those participating in qualifying military and employer training or work experiences to earn academic credit.

- f. We applaud the Administration's Blueprint for Investing in America's Future: Transforming Career and Technical Education (CTE) and in particular its four core principles: alignment, collaboration, accountability, innovation. The Administration's proposal would use a combination of technical assistance, competition, and a system of structured rewards to ensure that more students, regardless of backgrounds or circumstances, have access to high-quality CTE programs. The current Act provides separate funding streams for local education agencies and postsecondary institutions, making alignment challenging, and weakens a student's ability to transition between secondary and postsecondary systems. The Administration's proposal would discontinue this approach by requiring States to competitively fund consortia of LEAs, postsecondary institutions, and their partners. The proposal includes provisions to ensure competitive funding will have no adverse impact on access for vulnerable student populations including, for instance, the authority for States to establish absolute funding priorities. The proposal would also require that at least one of the LEAs in the consortia serve a high concentration of students from low-income families and allows resources for states to provide services for opportunity youth.
3. **Increase Service Opportunities Available to Opportunity Youth and Ensure Strong Linkages to Education and Employment**
    - a. We applaud National Civilian Community Corps' (NCCC) 50% target for disadvantaged youth members and the new Federal Emergency Management Agency/NCCC initiative that creates more service opportunities for opportunity youth. We recommend CNCS expand this effort by annually increasing the percentage of disadvantaged youth slots available and by establishing a cross-cutting priority for all programs that engage opportunity youth in service, to ensure that its impact priorities do not disadvantage programs that engage such young people. Grant-based service programs should provide incentives through rewarding programs that propose and show evidence of successfully serving opportunity youth.
    - b. We applaud the inclusion of The Opportunity Corps in the Serve America Act. The Council recommends implementing this initiative to reconnect youth and enlist their help in boosting the social mobility of others in their communities.

We applaud the progress being made by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Corps Initiative in creating stronger links between Corps service and successful careers. The Corporation for National and Community Service should continue to promote stronger linkages to education and employment including elements from transition to work programs such as providing academic credits from educational institutions and certifications from training programs and focusing on critical workforce skills that can be developed through service.
  4. **Help Opportunity Youth Find Mentors**

We applaud the Administration's mentoring efforts including the First Lady's Corporate Mentoring Challenge and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's multiple mentoring initiatives and recommend that these efforts be expanded and deepened by encouraging youth-initiated mentoring.

## Summary

The Council has learned that community collaboratives with specific key attributes can achieve significant improvement in persistent community issues.

The Council has also learned that too many of the nation's young people are out of school and out of work. They are not on a path to prosperity. This affects all of us. For the 6.7 million disconnected young people and their families it has disastrous consequences. For employers it means not having sufficient qualified applicants for job opportunities. For taxpayers it means absorbing \$93 billion in direct and indirect social costs every year.

These young people reject the label of "disconnected"; instead they take responsibility for their futures, and express optimism that they will overcome short-term obstacles and succeed in providing for themselves and for their families.

The Council believes implementing the four core strategies and accompanying recommendations highlighted in this report:

- driving the development of successful community collaboratives,
  - creating a nationwide awareness and accountability for opportunity youth,
  - engaging youth as leaders in the solution, and
  - creating more robust on-ramps to employment,
- will create needle-moving progress on many persistent community issues, and specifically place more opportunity youth on the path to prosperity.

DRAFT