

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation’s Opportunity Youth Initiative serves young people aged 16-24 who are disconnected from school and work. The Hilton Foundation and our partners provide access to meaningful career pathways, particularly in the hospitality and health care industries, including wrap-around supports and opportunities for advancement. Ultimately, this work aims to fulfill the economic and personal promise for the youth the Hilton Foundation serves, without outcome disparities dependent on race/ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. The Opportunity Youth Initiative operates in New Orleans, Los Angeles, Mexico City and Mombasa.

Ideal state

Young people, especially those seeking connection to education and employment, are able to utilize their talents and abilities to achieve economic security and financial freedom. Opportunity Youth in LA, New Orleans, Mexico City and Mombasa are ready to enter into quality employment that provides pathways to economic mobility; cities around the world are implementing similarly effective strategies to help youth reach their potential.

History and background

This work is rooted in the Foundation’s long history in hospitality. Until 2010, the Foundation focused on establishing and expanding the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston to develop the pipeline of future hospitality leaders. In 2015, our board approved the Hospitality Workforce Development Major Program, which focused on supporting opportunity youth (OY) in New Orleans by building hospitality career pathways, supporting youth workforce systems change and funding the capacity of local youth-serving organizations. Major accomplishments from this time period include establishing a collaborative focused on a “functional-zero” framework to end youth disconnection in the city and creating a data community practice to create a common, linked data system in use across key New Orleans service providers.

The Opportunity Youth Initiative began in 2020 to support ways for disconnected young people to achieve self-sufficiency and well-being through career pathways, especially in hospitality and health care. One in four young adults ages 15-24 globally (350 million) is an opportunity youth—that is, under- or unemployed and not in school. This includes 4.6 million youth throughout the U.S. Strategy25 expands our work to Los Angeles, Mexico City and Mombasa—and expands a focus beyond hospitality to include a holistic approach that provides wrap around supports and preparation for careers in growing industries. We will continue to explore other industries as we grow the Opportunity Youth Initiative.

Five-year goals*

20 percent decline in youth disconnection by decreasing disconnection in New Orleans to 12 percent and in Los Angeles to 9 percent

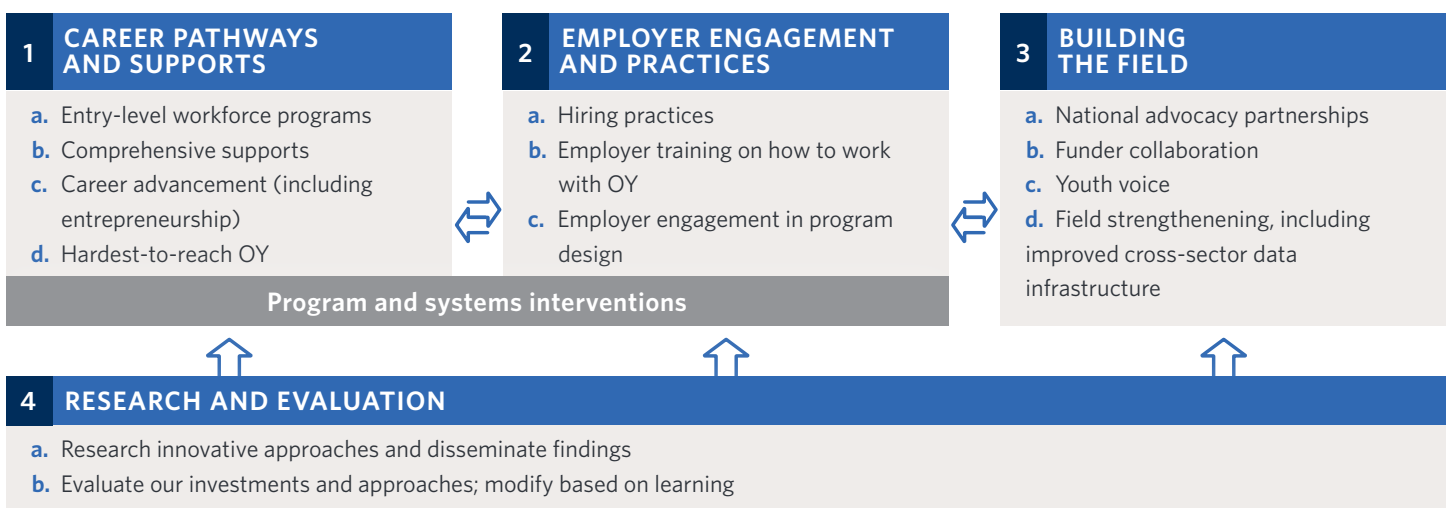
3,500 former opportunity youth are hired into jobs

30 percent decrease in disparities in disconnection by race/ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation in New Orleans and Los Angeles

Federal investment in WIOA youth programs increases to 2 percent above inflation

*Note that baselines pre-date COVID-19 and will be updated as newer data becomes available.

Strategy architecture



WHERE WE WORK



EQUITY FOCUS

- Youth of color (in the U.S.)
- LGBTQ youth (in the U.S.)
- Women, particularly young mothers (in the U.S. and internationally)
- Marginalized communities, particularly indigenous communities (Mexico City and Kenya)
- Build the capacity of local organizations to serve their communities

OTHER KEY METRICS

- Youth leaders are a formal, integral part of local decision-making, and at least 100 young people are trained and connected to these opportunities
- Public workforce development systems and funding streams serve 15 percent (~650,000) of opportunity youth in the country
- \$35-40 million in leveraged funding is aligned to the Foundation's work in Los Angeles and New Orleans

PROGRAM COSTS



**Strategy25
(2021-2027):**
Est. \$90,000,000

CHALLENGES



- Urgent public health and economic security challenges divert attention from workforce funding
- Persistent narratives around young people are deficit-based and often negative. They perpetuate harmful stereotypes and result in policies and practices that either discount the lived experiences of young people and/or actively harm them and their communities
- Pandemic-induced learning loss and disconnection from school likely will have wide-ranging negative impacts, leading to increased youth disconnection over time
- Persistent discrimination reduces pathways in higher-mobility or higher-wage positions for Black and Indigenous youth, people of color and other marginalized opportunity youth in international settings

OPPORTUNITIES



- A growing awareness of the need to create viable careers and job placements for the many young people around the world creates an opportunity to deepen impact and scale
- Working across four geographies allows the Initiative to create a learning community of practice that has the potential to strengthen the global movement
- Building the capacity of youth leaders to advocate on behalf of themselves creates long-term sustainability, future leadership and momentum.
- In the U.S. and many other places in the world, health care is a stable and growing industry that can provide career pathways for opportunity youth