

**Analysis of Stakeholder Interviews
For the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth
2005**

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Introduction

Key to the success of a strategic planning process is input from stakeholders. For the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY)'s strategic plan, Gibson and Associates interviewed a wide range of leaders in the field who have worked in Oakland, often for many years. In all, we interviewed 67 stakeholders, including executive directors of community based organizations, directors of public agencies, program officers at foundations, faith-based Community leaders and city council members.

It should be gratifying for everyone who works in Oakland to know that we found a high level of convergence among our stakeholders, despite the fact that they differed widely in terms of where they worked in Oakland, their area of expertise, and their type of organization. This would seem to represent a unique moment in Oakland and in OFCY's history where leaders of very different backgrounds have a high level of commonality on the major issues affecting children and youth.

These stakeholders offered insights and often complex commentary on the general state of Oakland youth in terms of assets, needs, gaps, and priorities. They also offered recommendations, a vision of better services for Oakland youth, and thoughts on how to make collaborations successful. Specifically, these stakeholders brought to us concerns over the lack of academic, interpersonal, and social infrastructure and supports. They offered ideas of how agencies could collaborate on a city wide level and leverage greater funding and opportunities. And, finally, they envisioned a resource- rich Oakland linked by a cooperative network of neighborhood-based services.



Summary of Key Findings

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Youth-Related Assets

Assets were identified as the number, variety and quality of youth serving organizations; the public agency resources, including Parks and Recreation Centers, City Libraries and cultural institutions; the positive personal characteristics of Oakland's youth; and the diversity of Oakland as a city.

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Needs, Gaps, and Priorities

The needs, gaps, and priorities emphasized the immediate need to improve the educational system; to have productive activities available for young people after school; to offer a safer environment for young people in all aspects of their lives; to give young people access to health care information and services for mental and physical health; and to have a caring adult in the lives of every young person.

Stakeholders' Recommendations for OFCY

Recommendations centered on the application and grant administration process, specifically how it could be made more user friendly and fairer to applicants; how OFCY needed to increase youth service coordination on a city wide level by pooling political power with the other major players and increasing the funding base by applying for funds together, as a city.

Stakeholders' Visions for an Ideal Youth-Serving System

Stakeholders revealed a high level of agreement around their vision for Oakland youth with the vast majority advocating for a network of neighborhood-based multi-service centers that would serve youth and their families with everything from a full range of after school programs to employment and benefit services for their families. Respondents also wanted a city-wide coordination of youth services, including strategic planning and leveraging of funds by major institutional players.

Thoughts on Collaboration

Collaboration was a recurrent theme in discussions with stakeholders. They advocated for collaboration at all levels, in particular they emphasized the need for city wide collaboration between all the major players: public institutions, private foundations, and community-based entities. They wanted OFCY to look at how other cities, such as Baltimore and San Diego, had increased the city infrastructure for youth via collaboration of this type. They also had specific suggestions on what made collaborations effective -- planning, funding, and community involvement – and the particular need for collaboration at schools, in the community and to deliver services to disconnected youth.



Methodology

Decisions on who to interview were made based on recommendations from and approval of the Strategic Planning Committee of OFCY's Policy Oversight Committee. We interviewed 67 stakeholders from every community in Oakland. These interviewees held public office, or worked in foundations, public agencies, community based organizations (CBOs), or faith-based organizations. Interviewers used a standardized protocol and wrote up their notes into standardized summaries. A database was constructed in ACCESS and the interviews were entered into the database. The interviews were coded, recoded and then analyzed in ACCESS and EXCEL. This narrative is based on the final recoding. ACCESS databases are generally used for quantitative data, so constructing a database for qualitative data is unusual and presented many challenges. However, it also offered the opportunity to more easily categorize a large number of responses, and to accurately identify themes.

This write-up consists of an analysis of seven categories related to youth in Oakland: Assets, Needs, Gaps, Priorities, Recommendations, Vision and Collaboration. Responses to Assets differed greatly from responses to Needs, Gaps and Priorities, which, for the most part, had the same categories. We identified Needs, Gaps and Priorities as distinct areas, with Gaps identifying service and infrastructure deficiencies. However, many stakeholders saw these as overlapping, perhaps because some of the major needs were also the major gaps which in turn became the major priorities. Most striking about these three areas was how Education was seen as the major need, gap and priority. Recommendations had unique categories, as well as some overlap with the categories found in Needs, Gaps and Priorities. Vision and Collaboration also had unique categories.

The exact questions we asked stakeholders are the following:

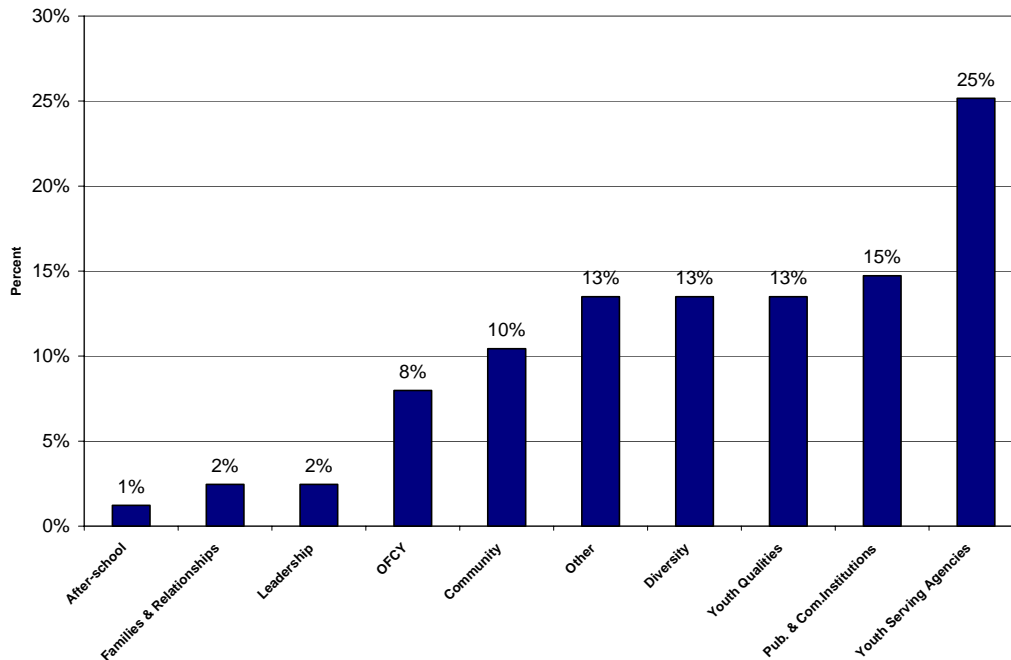
- Assets:** What and where are Oakland's greatest assets related to youth?
- Needs:** What and where do you see the greatest needs related to youth in Oakland?
- Gaps:** What and where do you see the greatest gaps related to youth in Oakland?
- Priorities:** What do you see as the highest priority areas overall for youth in Oakland?
- Recommendations:** If you could make one recommendation to OFCY what would it be?
- Vision:** Pretend for a moment the current structure for providing services to youth in Oakland no longer exists, and you are asked to decide what would most help youth in Oakland. You have as much money as you want to implement your changes. What would you say?



Collaboration: Do you see opportunities for better collaborating or coordinating youth services among multiple partners?

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Assets

Oakland's Youth-related Assets



1. Youth Serving Agencies (25%)

Stakeholders expressed admiration for the high number and wide variety of programs and youth populations these agencies served. Specific programs mentioned included those providing youth leadership, arts and culture, athletics, and school-based agencies. Stakeholders praised these programs for their sophistication, their advocacy abilities, their grassroots organizing, their strong frontline staffing, their intellectual progressivism, and their ability to both reflect and strengthen the communities they work within. Specific groups mentioned as being well-served by these programs included high risk youth who had had contact with the criminal justice system, youth who spoke languages other than English, youth of multiple ethnicities, foster care youth, youth who were not performing well in school, and LGBTQQ youth.

2. Major Public and Community Institutions (15%)

Institutions mentioned most often were predominantly Parks and Recreation Centers. In addition, City Libraries were mentioned as were colleges and universities, and specific resources within OUSD, such as the Resource Coordinator. A handful mentioned cultural institutions such as the museums, and faith based institutions, such as church programs.



3. **Qualities of Oakland's Youth (13%)**
Stakeholders described youth themselves as a major asset. Youth were described as full of energy, hope, idealism, and resiliency, as well as entrepreneurial, tenacious and full of the desire to succeed. Some stakeholders noted that the same qualities which could get youth into trouble could also be used to help them succeed.
4. **Diversity (13%) of Oakland's population**
Most defined diversity as ethnic and cultural diversity, though some had broader definitions. Most comments centered on how exposure to different groups of people with different beliefs and different ways of expressing themselves would be important for youth in adulthood, when they would need those skills in the work world. Some interviewees focused on how diversity was a double edged sword, because it could also lead to misunderstanding and violence, but all agreed that, if handled effectively, exposure to differences could be a positive factor in the lives of youth.
5. **Other (13%)**
This category was filled with disparate responses as varied as "progressive thinking" "volunteerism" and "the emerging consensus among city and county leaders that we need to be more strategic in our use of resources."
6. **Community (10%)**
Stakeholders noted the importance of dedicated community members who work with youth in neighborhoods and on school-related issues. Some stakeholders focused on the community more broadly as an electorate that supports policies that put youth as a priority, such as Measure K.
7. **OFCY (8%)**
Many commented that having OFCY for Oakland youth had led to the creation of many youth serving programs and the expansion of others.
8. Falling below 5% and accounting for only a few responses were comments about **Youth Leadership, Families and Relationships, and After School Programs.**



Stakeholders Perceptions of Needs, Gaps, and Priorities

Many stakeholders viewed Needs, Gaps and Priorities as overlapping and as a result many of their responses overlapped. They are combined in this narrative to reduce repetition. Stakeholders identified 7 major categories as important to look at in these three areas:

- **Education**
- **After School and Recreation**
- **Safety**
- **Physical and Behavioral Health**
- **Disconnected Youth**
- **Families and Relationships**
- **Coordination**

Education

Most responses were about improving the education delivered by the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) including decreasing the high dropout rate and increasing the low test scores, the low graduation rate and the low number of students who continue on to college. A number of stakeholders also focused on barriers to school attendance including:

- A pervasive feeling among students that schools are unsafe,
- Financial hardship on the part of families and youth,
- Hate crimes against LGBTQQ youth,
- Recent immigrants who don't speak the language, and
- Youth homelessness.

People commented that changes were needed in the school system, including reducing classroom size, increasing the effectiveness of the administrators and teachers and decreasing the district's disorganization, which practically prohibits partnerships with other organizations.

After School and Recreation

Many stakeholders advocated for fun, creative programs, including recreation programs, sports programs, and arts programs. Many respondents noted the lack of general activities available to older teens, such as school dances, etc. that were more common in the past. An equal number of interviewees discussed the need for programs that integrate academic assistance with enjoyable and engaging after school activities. Some wanted programs oriented to helping youth connect with their peers while others wanted youth development programs or school-based programs. Many cited the need for:

- Evening hours in most existing programs,
- Safe spaces for recreation,
- A coordinated city wide approach to after school programs,



- Need for programs located outside school sites, since many young people have negative associations with school,
- Others spoke about the lack of recreational programs for specific groups, such as girls and young adults.

Safety

Responses in this category focused on the need to reduce the prevalence of violence and lack of safety youth experience at home, at school, and on the streets. This included instituting programs to help youth process their traumas as a result of being victims of violence and to help youth avoid becoming perpetrators of violence. Some interviewees advocated for more youth training in conflict resolution as a solution. A few mentioned the impact of a dysfunctional juvenile justice system. Some noted that LGBTQQ youth were often targeted.

Physical and Behavioral Health

Responses were mostly related to increasing physical and mental health services including direct services, especially school-based care, and health education. Many interviewees cited the need to reduce chronic health problems, such as obesity, diabetes and asthma; and to increase physical activity; pregnancy prevention, especially among Latinas; and substance abuse services.

Disconnected Youth

Stakeholders commented on the need to target services to students who are disconnected because they were particularly vulnerable. These included the disabled, LGBTQQ youth, Latino youth, foster care youth, youth who struggle with substance abuse, and “at risk” youth. Several responses related to LGBTQQ youth who are not adequately served by most agencies, and not protected from daily abuse by schools or other agencies. Others discussed the need for programming to engage out of school and disconnected youth.

Families and Relationships

Most responses focused on the need for youth to have a connection to a caring adult. Some advocated for more connection between youth and mentors in agencies that serve youth. Others said youth needed better parenting at home and advocated for more training and support for parents, for better adult role models and for programs that served youth and adults together. It was also noted that due to the limited availability of support services workers, there is a need for an informal network of support, such as peers, community people, and families.

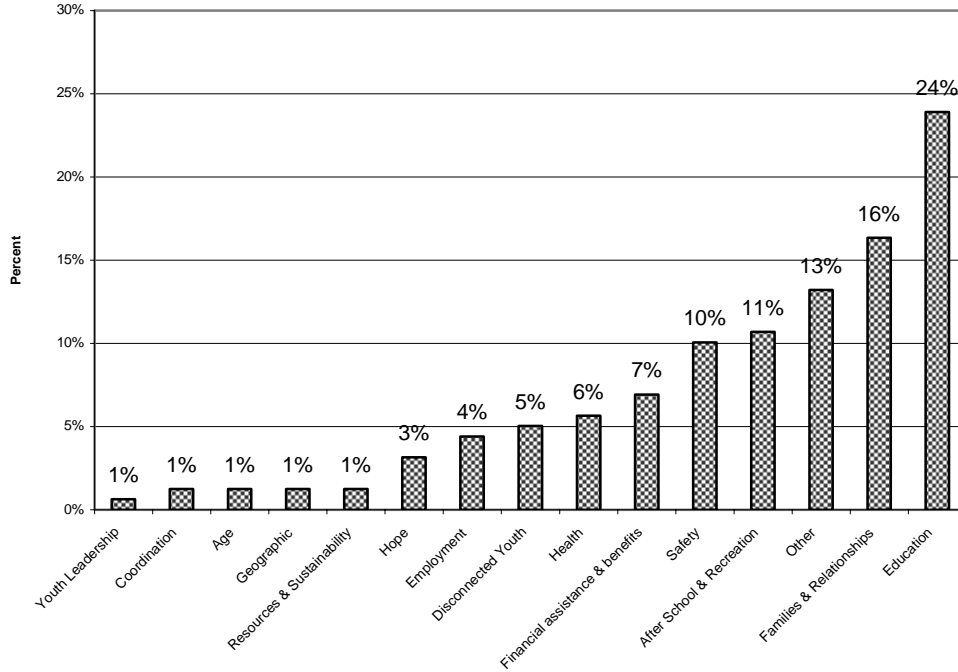
Coordination

Stakeholders also focused on the coordination of services at an agency-to-agency -level and at a city wide level. They mentioned increasing the use of “people” resources; marshaling resources in a strategic fashion where the major players were all at the table together making decisions; and the need for OFCY to make hard decisions in determining targets for coordination.

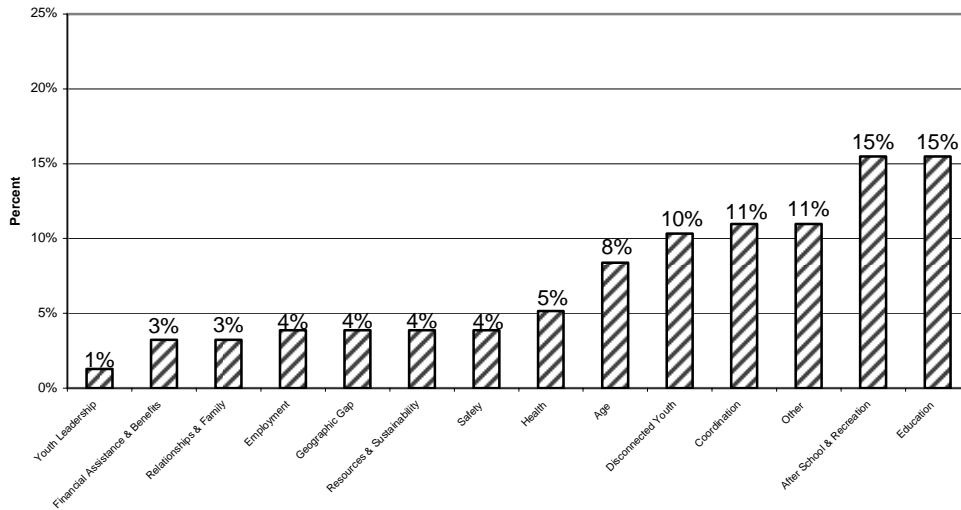


The charts that follow show the detailed breakout for each question and how responses concur and differ across categories.

Oakland's Youth-Related Needs

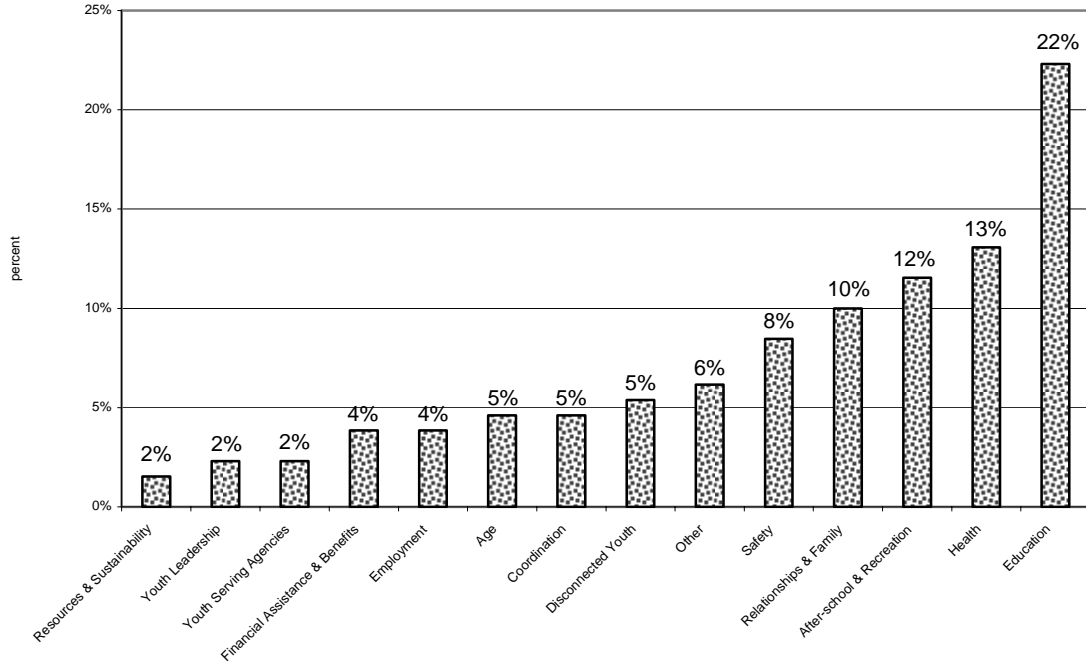


Gaps in Services for Oakland's Youth



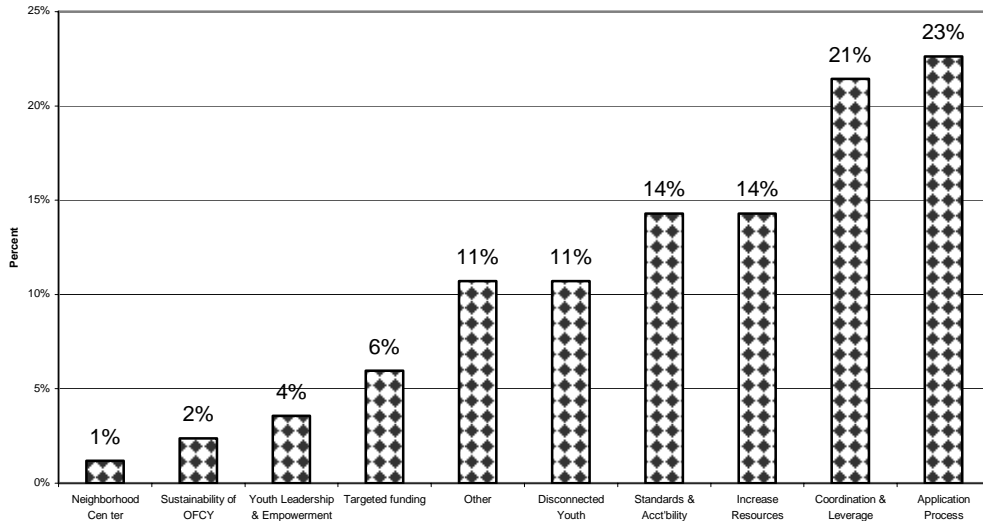


Priorities for Oakland Youth



Stakeholders' Recommendations for OFCY

Recommendations



1. OFCY's Application Process (23%)

Most of these recommendations were related to reducing the bureaucracy involved in the RFP application and reporting processes, and changing the timing of the deadline so that it is not immediately after Christmas break. One funder commented that, as a funder, you never want grantees to be focused on you: you want them to be focused on the programs they are delivering. Some interviewees suggested that there should be ways to reduce the amount of time it takes to get their first check and suggested looking at First Five to see how they were able to speed up payment. A few asked to raise the administrative funding cap over 10%. Evaluations of RFPs, it was noted, should be based on performance instead of the current selection system, which was described as "like a lottery."

2. Coordination and Leverage (21%)

Stakeholders suggested that OFCY work with other funders and city institutional partners on a city wide scale to increase the overall budget available for OFCY's target areas and expand services to Oakland's youth. Stakeholders exhorted OFCY to see itself as part of a larger vision and larger strategy. They also recommended that OFCY consider how best to coordinate all the state and federal dollars Oakland receives or could receive. Some interviewees recommended that OFCY work more with specific institutions, such as the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), the Oakland Children and Family Services Department, and Oakland Children's Hospital. Still others suggested that OFCY aid the funded organizations in forming and maintaining their own collaborations. They also wanted the funded organizations to be better integrated into the



planning process for initiatives, and for OFCY to provide more time and thought regarding collaborations.

3. Increase Resources (14%)

Interviewees recommended that OFCY fund for multiple years. Some suggested that OFCY continue to fund broadly. Others suggested that OFCY should only continue to fund programs that have proven their effectiveness.

4. Standards and Accountability (14%)

Most felt that OFCY had not effectively demonstrated that they funded the best programs. One stakeholder said that OFCY needs an evaluation and publicity that clearly demonstrates to the public that OFCY funds the best programs. Many felt OFCY should enforce standards of program effectiveness as a way of prioritizing programs since the Fund will get “the most bang for their buck” that way. Some felt that the overall impact of the fund should be assessed— how many of the agencies funded are still in existence and what have they accomplished? A few said that the evaluation did not necessarily provide programs with strategies to improve.

5. Disconnected Youth (11%)

Recommendations on disconnected youth included children 0-5. Proponents for more funding in this area said that this group has been overlooked. Other interviewees advocated for high risk youth, generally older youth, who they said needed more services because these youth are at a higher risk for partaking in and succumbing to violence. A few stakeholders focused on LGBTQ youth and said OFCY should acknowledge that this group has different needs and fund accordingly. One stakeholder advocated that all youth be seen as “at risk” and not “just the youth of the Flatlands.”

6. Other (11%)

These included recommending that OFCY develop a media strategy to publicize all the good things going on in Oakland related to youth and advocating for funding specific to certain topic areas such as mentoring, recreation, after school programs and neighborhood centers.

7. Targeted Funding (6%)

These stakeholders agreed that the Fund needs to tighten its focus in order to have a significant impact. A few suggested picking 3 to 4 target topics and funding them while others suggested picking programs to fund based on location and “area needs.” One suggested funding after school programs for all Flatlands and underperforming schools. Another suggested allocating 70% of OFCY funds for the targeted areas,



spreading 20% to be across all neighborhoods and using 10% for discretionary funding. Some mentioned that effective organizations need to be pinpointed to make the targeted funding effective.

8. Youth Leadership and Empowerment (4%)

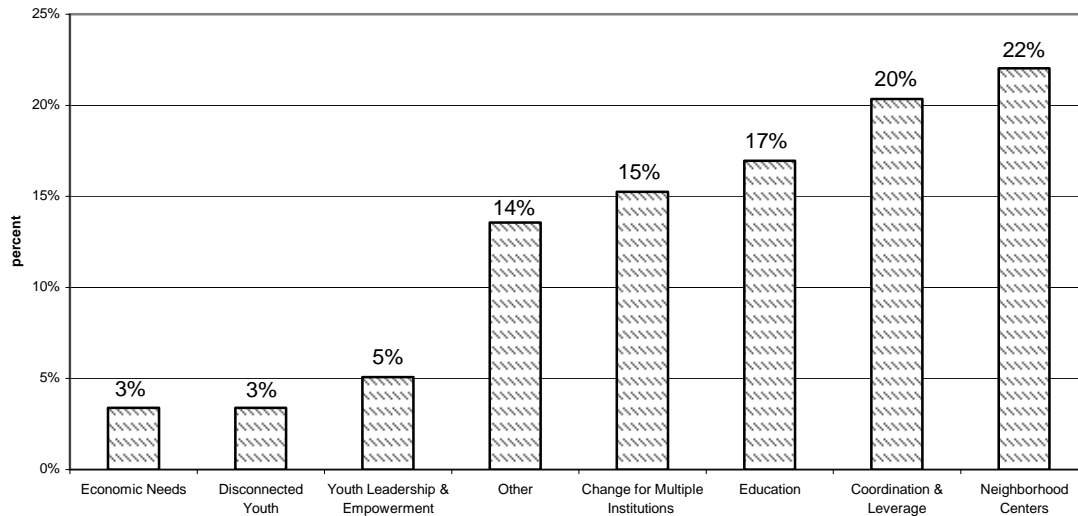
Stakeholders wanted to see youth empowerment integrated into everything OFCY did; to have more training and youth empowerment of youth who serve on the POC; and to develop youth leaders who can impact the electoral process.

9. Sustainability of OFCY (2%).

One stakeholder wanted OFCY to think about what infrastructure would have been created to-date if OFCY ceased to exist. Stakeholders wanted OFCY to think about reauthorization now and to gravitate towards partners, including businesses and developers, who could contribute to an ongoing funding effort.

Stakeholders' Visions of an Ideal Youth-Serving System

Stakeholders' Vision of a System to Serve Youth



1. Neighborhood Centers (22%)

The highest percentage of stakeholders had a vision of city-wide neighborhood-based centers for youth. The makeup of these centers varied depending on the stakeholder, though all advocated for multi-service centers. The most comprehensive center would offer multiple health and social services, as well as a host of different activities including recreational, artistic, media, skills building, academic assistance, job training and/or entrepreneurial development programs. Many argued for extended evening and weekend hours; some for youth-led centers or centers where youth could help plan and shape the programs. School-based centers were advocated by those who viewed schools as the natural gathering places for youth, and believed that these programs would enhance academic performance. Some specifically advocated for models expanding upon existing school-based multi-service programs such as those at McClymonds or Roosevelt. Others felt strongly that centers should be off school grounds, since so many youth had such negative associations with school that they didn't attend. A few wanted specific groups, such as disabled youth, LGBTQ youth, and high risk youth to each have their own specialty center, as part of a city wide plan for neighborhood centers for the rest of the youth and their families. These stakeholders anticipated that their respective groups would not be well served by general neighborhood centers.



2. Coordination and Leverage (20%)

Almost as many believed that greater coordination of service providers at all levels and leverage of resources could increase the services to youth in Oakland. Many of these stakeholders also advocated for wraparound multi-service centers, but all had a prime belief in the importance of communication and collaboration as the means to achieve more integrated service delivery. Stakeholders discussed how providers worked in “silos” that didn’t interact with each other. Examples included recreation sites or churches located right next door to school sites that did not collaborate. Some felt that this was due to the funding structure, where programs are put in competition with each other or left out of initiatives, such as the After School Initiative specifically excluding libraries. Some of these stakeholders envisioned OFCY strategically partnering with other major institutions to pool existing resources and leverage more resources from other funding streams. They felt the lack of strategic vision and ongoing collaboration was something larger than OFCY. Some suggested an ongoing group be formed to create a more stable and integrated infrastructure of services as well as to increase links between existing service providers. Many felt neighborhood level coordination involving parents, community and youth themselves was of paramount importance.

3. Education (17%)

Many stakeholders viewed changes in the academic environment as essential to changing the situation of youth in Oakland. For some this meant retooling the school system as a whole, by making classes smaller, ensuring a safe environment for students and adding administrators and teachers who were culturally sensitive to students of all backgrounds. Others thought that by focusing on academics and ensuring a comprehensive curriculum in every school, Oakland could ensure a quality education, and therefore future jobs, for youth in Oakland.

4. Change for Multiple Institutions (15%)

Comments also included those who envisioned multiple points of change in multiple institutions, including OUSD, the juvenile justice system, the foster care system, among others.

5. Other (14%)

These comments were wide ranging and included the following:

- Strong youth advocacy in the style of Margaret Brodtkin who founded San Francisco’s Coleman Advocates
- Noting that the criminal justice system and the educational system need to reach beyond the “restrictive” model of child development
- A more flexible system of funding



6. Youth Leadership and Empowerment (5%)

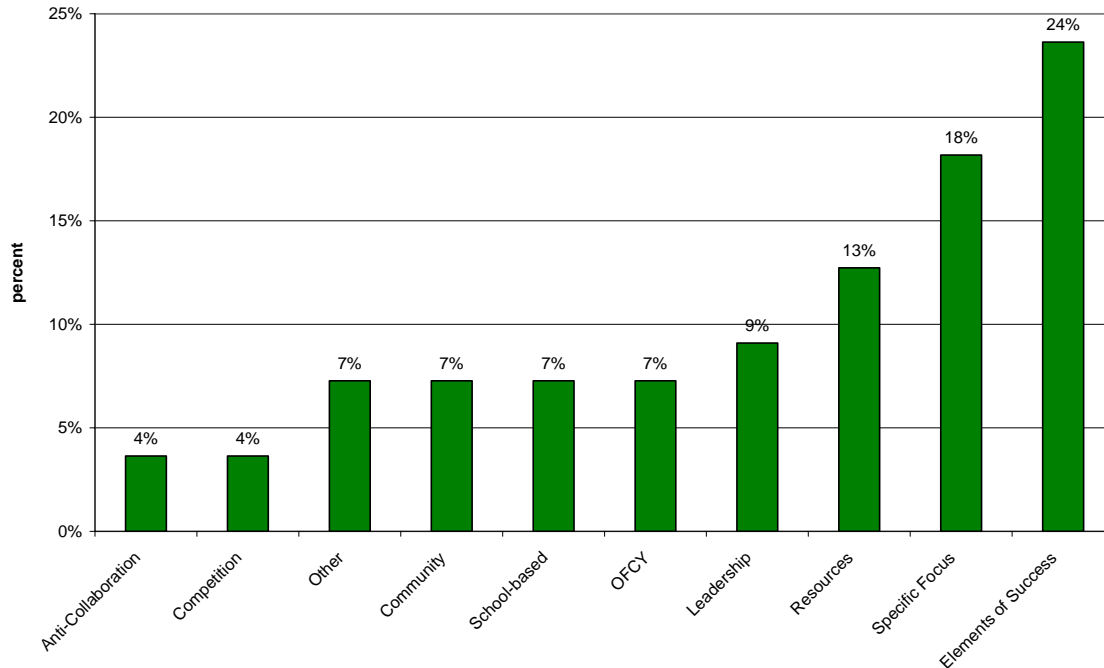
A few believed that organizing youth was of paramount importance, since without that, Oakland would not be able to design a system which would interest and engage youth. One stakeholder pointed out how effective the youth were in organizing around Proposition 21.

7. Disconnected Youth (3%)

A few focused disconnected youth, such as the developmentally disabled, in particular the need for services and accessibility; LGBTQQ services; and services for families in financial need.

Stakeholders' Thoughts on Collaboration

Collaboration



1. Elements of Success (24%)

Most stakeholders discussed the successful aspects of collaborations they had participated in. Many of these observations had to do with how collaborative partners were chosen. Having partners with similar goals and objectives yet who represented very different areas of expertise was seen as positive. One summed up the thinking on partners saying that one had to “set the table carefully,” neither too broadly nor too narrowly.

Planning and resources were also seen as important to keep the collaboration vital and moving forward. Stakeholders cautioned that in order to be effective, collaborations had to originate organically, with the agencies involved defining the need to collaborate versus a “top down” approach mandated by funders. Those partnerships that “look good on paper” or are forced may end up failing if they do not have these elements. In addition, collaborations need to be reevaluated as the needs of those served can change as the years go by. Many noted model collaborations within Oakland, San Diego and Berkeley.

2. Specific Focus (18%)

- City agencies could avoid duplication via specialization as follows:
 - ◆ OFCY should focus on prevention and after school;
 - ◆ Measure Y monies should be spent on “at risk” youth; and
 - ◆ CDBG monies should be spent on community building.



- More LGBTQQ/CBO collaborations with schools
- More collaboration between the faith community and schools and CBOs
- Mental Health-Social Services partnerships
- After school agencies partnering with Housing Authorities

3. Resources (13%)

Comments on resources offered a complex analysis of the interrelationships between funding and collaborations – not just “we need more money.” People discussed how collaboration often leads to more funding for the collaboration and the individual agencies involved – something to be considered as an incentive for grantors and grantees. Some said the Fund should look at other cities, such as Baltimore, which were able to raise multi-millions via extensive city wide based collaboration and strategic planning. Others defined resources as a directory of collaborations; making available research on best practices about collaborations; offering technical assistance on collaboration; and hiring an OFCY coordinator specifically to carry out these tasks. One funder made the comment that taxpayer dollars and private foundation dollars don’t easily mix. Multi-year grants were identified as important to successful collaborations.

4. Leadership (9%)

Leadership and vision were identified as important both at the city wide and OFCY level as well as leadership on the ground in individual organizations. Quarterly round tables focused on specific areas, where executive directors could share with one another on a more in depth level was seen as a potential precursor to collaboration. Finding out about private foundation initiatives was also recommended.

5. OFCY (7%)

Comments included OFCY using funding as an incentive for partners to come to the table; OFCY changing its application deadlines so that it’s easier for agencies to form partnerships in a meaningful way; OFCY partnering with other funders; and OFCY easing restrictions on how partnerships are created.

6. School-based (7%)

A number of comments pertained directly to collaborations involving OUSD. These included OUSD and OFCY cooperating more effectively, with, for instance, OFCY not requiring signatures from every level of school personnel including Randal Ward; with OUSD having school-site liaisons available to work with collaborators; and with public agencies working more directly with school-based sites.



7. Community (7%)

Comments also focused on the importance of a strong community presence in collaborations, and suggested different methodologies for doing this, including neighborhood centers, teams of service providers and community boards. Collaborations were described as more successful in neighborhoods that already have vital, effective neighborhood organizations that are recognized leaders to partner with, as is the case in San Antonio and Fruitvale.

8. Other (7%)

These were general comments such as “we do more collaboration now.”

9. Competition (4%) and Anti-Collaboration (4%)

These covered similar ground with stakeholders saying that structuring funding so competitively between organizations does not encourage collaboration and that some view collaboration negatively because they feel that it takes a lot of energy and time. Others believe that the Fund should not bother with funding collaborations and should focus on individual agencies.



Conclusion

Stakeholders envisioned ways to improve the current situation of children and youth by building on existing Oakland assets, which include a network of vibrant youth serving organizations and a citywide infrastructure of public agencies. Many said that through multi-level collaboration, and specifically, through coordinated, city wide efforts, Oakland could effectively leverage resources and transform the City's current deficits in education, after school, recreation and employment programs, while increasing safety and creating community-building opportunities for youth.