PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH:
STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FEDERAL COLLABORATION

Prepared by the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY....3
INTRODUCTION....5
- Background....5
- *Pathways for Youth* Development....7

A VISION FOR YOUTH....11
LOGIC MODEL TO RELATE FEDERAL COLLABORATION TO YOUTH OUTCOMES....12
STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES....13
- Goal 1....15
  - Objective 1....16
  - Objective 2....17
  - Objective 3....18
- Goal 2....19
  - Objective 1....20
  - Objective 2....22
- Goal 3....24
  - Objective 1....25
  - Objective 2....26

WORKING GROUP CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES....27
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS....28

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (Working Group) is comprised of twelve federal departments and seven federal agencies that support activities that focus on youth. This report, *Pathways for Youth*, is a first step to help the partners address their common goals for youth, elevate strong models of youth programs, policies, and other supports, and articulate areas for future collaborative work with and for youth.

The Working Group solicited input from a wide range of stakeholders, including young people, families, schools, nonprofit organizations, State Children's Cabinet directors, government organizations at the federal, state, and local levels, and others. Several themes emerged from the input, which are crafted into a *vision for youth*. This vision acknowledges the importance of pathways to opportunity for youth that include meaningful connections and safe, healthy, and stable places to live, learn, and work.

Pathways for Youth considers all youth, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable youth, particularly those who are disconnected from school, work, or family. The consequences are serious for both individuals and society as a whole, as young people who are disconnected cost the nation billions of dollars every year in lost earnings, welfare and medical costs, and unmet personal potential.[1] Youth who are at risk for disconnection or are already disconnected experience an interrelated set of issues best addressed through a coordinated approach. For example, youth at risk for disconnection are more likely to graduate from high school or receive a Certificate of General Educational Development (GED) if they have transportation to classes; keep a job if they address mental health or substance abuse concerns; and transition out of a homeless shelter if they have connections to supportive adults and resources to secure a permanent home and employment. Federal coordination is critical to the support of vulnerable youth across these issue areas. The best use of federal resources will maximize existing flexibilities and explore strategies for bringing work together across agencies.

[1] Belfield, C.R., Levin, H. M., Rosen, R. (2012). The economic value of opportunity youth. Available on the Corporation for National and Community Service's website at http://www.serve.gov/new-images/council/pdf/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf (PDF, 49 pages).

Pathways for Youth builds on the progress and accomplishments of the Working Group that are highlighted in the supporting documents. The plan is distinct from agency plans in that it has a specific focus on federal collaboration related to youth programs. The Working Group collaborated with its partner agencies and related key federal coordination groups to develop *Pathways for Youth* and ensure its alignment with federal strategic plans.

Pathways for Youth is founded on three overarching and interrelated strategic goals; each is supported by a number of objectives and strategies. The strategic goals address the Working Group's primary purposes, as well as the input generated by the stakeholders at federal, state, and local levels. This plan represents an initial step in identifying strategies for federal collaboration and provides a basis for future actions related to positive outcomes for youth. Through the work of individual agencies and in collaboration across departments, the Working Group will pursue the three strategic goals outlined in this plan to improve outcomes for youth. As the Working Group pursues the goals and objectives outlined in this plan, it will be able to set targets for collaborative results and identify areas for strategic recommendations and initiatives to address common goals for youth. These activities will be undertaken together within existing authorities and areas of administrative flexibility for departments and agencies to do their work. The Working Group will explore federal barriers and solutions for improving coordination and leveraging better outcomes for youth.

GOAL {01

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

Promote coordinated strategies to improve youth outcomes.

Objective 1: Align and simplify federal guidance for youth programs.
Objective 2: Coordinate youth programming and funding support at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels.
Objective 3: Coordinate technical assistance efforts to leverage resources.

GOAL {02

EVIDENCE-BASED AND INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

Promote the use of evidence-based and innovative strategies at federal, state, local, and tribal levels.

Objective 1: Encourage the adoption of evidence-based strategies, and support their implementation.
Objective 2: Support innovation and deepen the evidence base to fill gaps in knowledge.

GOAL {03

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Promote youth engagement and partnership to strengthen programs and benefit youth.

Objective 1: Promote youth-adult partnerships to support sustained youth engagement efforts and strengthen programs.
Objective 2: Provide and encourage federal, state, local, and tribal provision of multiple opportunities for youth to develop, master, and apply critical skills, including life and leadership skills.

The plan also outlines four cross-cutting initiatives developed by the Working Group:

1. Develop shared language on cross-cutting youth topics for federal grant applications and other federal documents and publications.
2. Develop new or assess and disseminate existing models of collaboration that provide a pathway to opportunity for youth and yield positive results.
3. Centralize and disseminate information on promising and evidence-based strategies for youth, including promising youth engagement and partnership strategies.
4. Promote data collection and long-term evaluation of youth programs.

Pathways for Youth concludes with supporting documents, including Executive Order 13459, Omnibus Appropriations Act language, the Working Group federal participant list, the executive summary of the Draft Public Input Summary Report, and the *Pathways for Youth* at-a-glance overview.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The primary function of the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (Working Group) is to support coordinated federal activities focused on improving outcomes for youth. The Working Group is comprised of staff from twelve federal departments and seven federal agencies that support activities that focus on youth (see Figure 1).

The Working Group's responsibilities relative to youth programs were defined in Executive Order 13459, issued in 2008, as well as the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 Committee Print of the House Committee on Appropriations on H.R. 1105/Public Law 111-8, Division F.

Who are youth?

The Working Group primarily focuses on youth ages 10-24. However, it is never too early or too late to provide supports for young people, and many of the partner agencies target different ages of youth in alignment with their program goals. Through this plan, the Working Group encourages close collaboration with systems along a continuum, from early childhood through adulthood.

As a result of these directives, the Working Group engages in the following activities:

- Promotes innovative collaborations at federal, state, local, and tribal levels;
- Identifies and disseminates evidence-based strategies;
- Produces a federal interagency website on youth.

Youth programs and research activities are spread across the nineteen partner federal departments and agencies, which makes the Working Group's efforts to exchange knowledge, coordinate activities, reduce duplication, maximize resources, and share effective strategies to best support youth critical. The Working Group benefits greatly from our federal representatives' broad, diverse, and substantial expertise in youth research, programming, and policy.

In 2009, the Omnibus Appropriations Act (2009 Committee Print of the House Committee on Appropriations on H.R. 1105/Public Law 111-8, Division F) directed the Working Group to perform additional activities, to

- Solicit input from young people, State Children's Cabinet directors, and nonprofit organizations on youth programs and policies; develop an overarching strategic plan for federal youth policy, and prepare recommendations to improve the coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency of programs affecting youth.

The Working Group welcomes this opportunity to undertake these activities and identify strategies for federal collaboration. Federal partner departments and agencies provide support to youth, their families, schools, and communities through a variety of mechanisms, despite addressing the strengths and needs of different populations of youth and using different

frameworks to describe what places youth "at risk." However, the Working Group agrees that the plan helps the partners address their common goals for youth, elevate strong models of youth programs, policies, and other supports, and articulate areas for future collaborative work with and for youth.

The program of work described in this plan is designed to maximize what agencies are able to accomplish by working collaboratively. Examples of successful collaborations are highlighted throughout the plan.

The Working Group's cross-agency website, youth.gov, will be used on an ongoing basis to engage stakeholders in implementation activities and to disseminate results. In 2015, the Working Group renamed and relaunched the website as youth.gov (formerly FindYouthInfo.gov) to more easily and clearly communicate its focus on youth and the cross-cutting nature of its content. Given that the Working Group has no dedicated funding, the scope of work that the Working Group will be able to undertake will depend on the funds and other resources agencies are able to provide as leaders or partners in these efforts.

FIGURE 1

Federal departments and agencies represented on the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (2016).

U.S. Department of Agriculture
- *National Institute of Food and Agriculture*

U.S. Department of Commerce
- *Census Bureau*

U.S. Department of Defense
- *Military Community and Family Policy, Office of Children and Youth*
- *Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs*

U.S. Department of Education
- *Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education*
- *Office of Communications*
- *Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students and Office of School Turnaround*
- *Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs*

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Chair)
- *Administration for Children and Families*
- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*
- *Health Resources and Services Administration*
- *Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health*
- *Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation*
- *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- *Federal Emergency Management Agency*

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- *Public and Indian Housing*

U.S. Department of the Interior
- *Office of Youth in the Great Outdoors*
- *Bureau of Indian Affairs*

U.S. Department of Justice (Vice-Chair)
- *National Institute of Justice*
- *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*
- *Office of Violence Against Women*

U.S. Department of Labor
- *Employment and Training Administration*
- *Office of Disability Employment Policy*

U.S. Department of State
- *Office of Global Youth Issues*
- *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*

U.S. Department of Transportation
- *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
- *Office of Financial Education*

Corporation for National and Community Service
- *AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps*

National Science Foundation
- *Division of Research on Learning in Formal and Informal Settings*

Office of National Drug Control Policy
- *Office of Demand Reduction*

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- *Office of Environmental Education*

U.S. Small Business Administration
- *Office of Entrepreneurship Education*

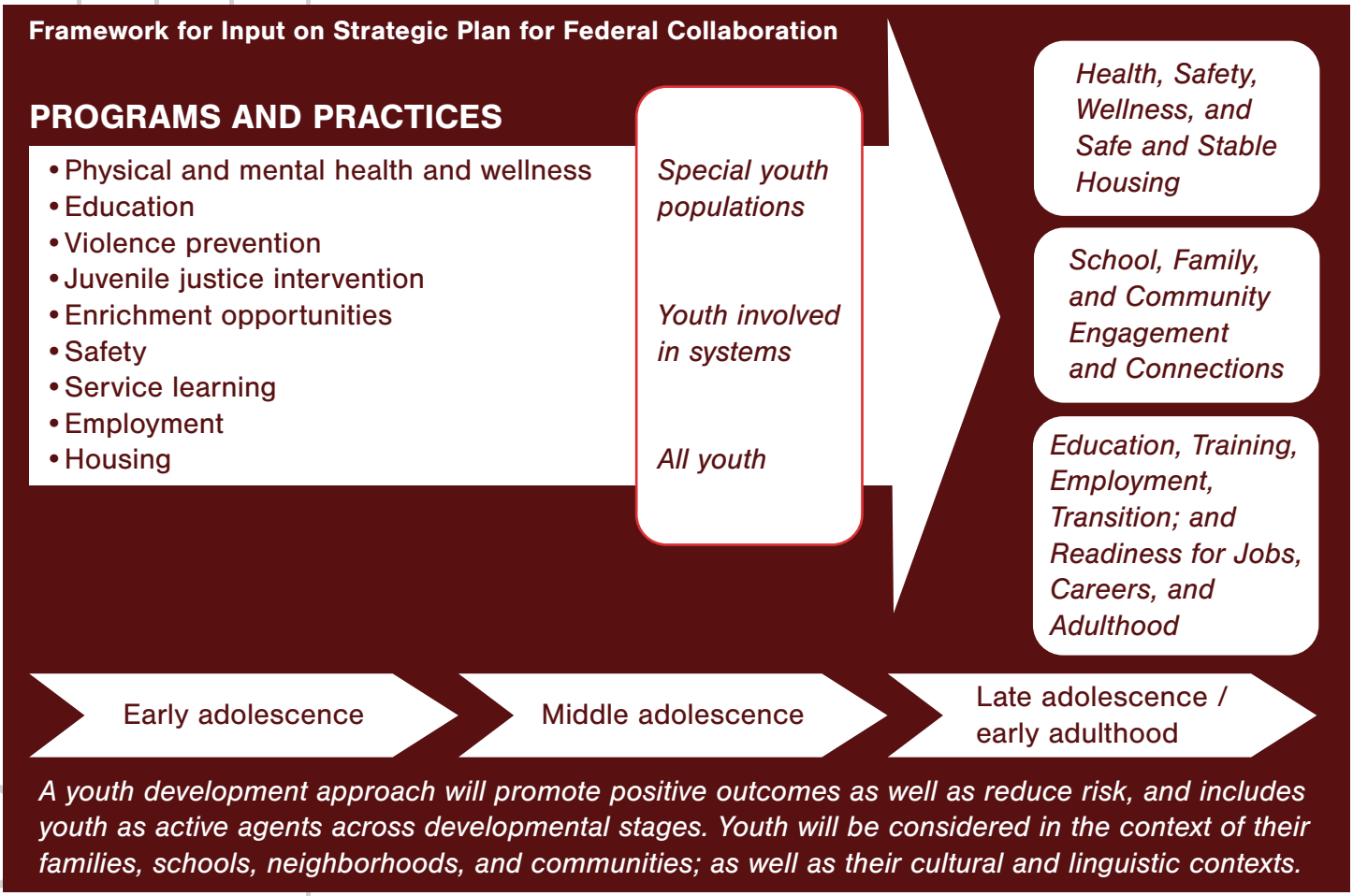
U.S. Social Security Administration
- *Office of Retirement, Disability, and Employment Supports*
- *Office of Retirement and Disability Policy*

Pathways for Youth Development

The Working Group pursued a multistep strategy in developing the plan.

Develop a framework for input. Together, the Working Group developed a framework for input (see Figure 2) that encompassed key priorities for the process. This framework guided the input process by providing the rationale for the topics discussed at all listening sessions and webinars. Underlying the framework, and also integrated in the input process, was a consideration of the cultural factors influencing youth. The values and beliefs of their ethnic backgrounds, social environments, or class positions influence their development and growth as individuals, and shape their contributions to society. The framework depicts the range of programs and practices federal partners support (summarized on the left side of the framework) and the different populations of youth (system-involved youth, special youth populations, all youth) that the federal partners serve through their programs. The Working Group focused on three overarching outcomes for youth through this framework: (1) health, safety, wellness, and safe and stable housing; (2) school, family, and community engagement and connections; and (3) education, training, employment, transitions, and readiness for jobs, careers, and adulthood. The framework illustrates the need to consider youth across several developmental stages, including early adolescence (ages under 14); middle adolescence (ages 15-17); and late adolescence/early adulthood (ages 18-24). Finally, the framework incorporates a youth development approach, which includes youth as active agents in this process.

FIGURE 2



Solicit public input. The Working Group solicited input from young people, State Children's Cabinet directors, and nonprofit organizations on youth programs and policies. In addition, the Working Group solicited input from family members; government organizations at the federal, state and local levels; policymakers; researchers; service providers; faith-based organizations; community-based organizations; state, and local affiliates of youth-serving organizations; and schools. A summary of public input was prepared by the American Institutes for Research.[1] The executive summary for that report is presented as a supporting document to this plan.

The Working Group solicited public input through a number of mechanisms, including four-hour public listening sessions held in ten locations across the country, shorter listening sessions held in conjunction with conferences focused on youth topics, listening sessions with youth, a roundtable with State Children's Cabinet representatives, webinars with researchers and youth-serving programs, feedback through the youth.gov website, and a *Federal Register* notice.[2]

Public listening sessions often started with a focus on a specific youth topic (see Figure 3) but in the course of these sessions many other youth topics were introduced and addressed by participants; this observed pattern reinforces the need for an integrated, coordinated and comprehensive approach to youth issues, one that is not "siloed." Risk and protective factors may be a more useful basis for assessing and distinguishing young people's service needs than their involvement with particular service areas (e.g., juvenile justice, positive youth development). Examples of questions posed in these sessions are presented in Figure 4.

FIGURE 3

Public listening sessions on specific youth topics:

- Education
- Employment and Transitions
- Housing
- Improving Outcomes for All Youth
- Juvenile Justice
- Mentoring
- Physical and Mental Health and Wellness
- Positive Youth Development
- Safety
- Service Learning
- Youth Engagement
- Youth Enrichment Opportunities

Listening sessions were held with youth at the National 4-H Youth Leader Conference, the Systems of Care Conference, the Special Olympics National Games, the Bullying Prevention Summit, the Transportation Safety Conference, and the California Foster Care Education Summit. Youth at these sessions were racially and ethnically diverse, and ranged between

[1] Through interagency agreements with partner agencies, the Working Group supported a contract with American Institutes for Research (AIR), a firm based in Washington, DC. AIR worked with the Working Group to solicit, gather, and summarize input for the strategic plan from stakeholders, including youth. AIR also supports the Working Group's website, youth.gov, and contributes significant expertise in youth content.

[2] 370 total participants attended the public listening sessions; 45 youth attended the 6 youth listening sessions; 8 sessions were held in youth-focused conferences; 270 comments were submitted through the website (227 on the listening sessions and 43 on the draft plan); and 25 submissions were received in response to the *Federal Register* notice.

FIGURE 4

Examples of questions posed at public listening sessions (2010)

- What is the single most important thing we could do to make a difference in the lives of youth?
- What are the needs of youth (up to the age of 24)?
- What are effective programs and strategies?
- What are the program or policy gaps?
- Do specific populations of youth have disproportionately poorer outcomes?
- What are some ways to best serve these populations?
- What programs really make a difference in the lives of youth? How do you know this?
- What are the barriers to collaborating on youth outcomes?
- How can these barriers be removed to improve collaboration?
- What types of initiatives could promote collaboration and improve outcomes for youth?
- What can be done for all youth (not just those directly benefiting from programs) in order to use resources effectively?
- What are your ideas for federal policy to improve the coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency of programs affecting youth?

Questions posed at youth listening sessions (2010)

- What programs really make a difference in the lives of youth? How do you know?
- How do you recommend we go about ensuring that we get input in a way that works really well for youth (i.e., doesn't waste their time)?
- Think about other young people you know. What makes them happy? What are they worried about?
- What program has benefited you most personally, and how?
- What is the best way for us to get input and feedback from youth across the country who are involved in programs such as the ones you've mentioned?
- How should we go about getting input and feedback from youth across the country who are not involved in these programs?

the ages of 12 and 24. Youth attending the sessions provided a variety of perspectives. Some had disabilities, or had recently emancipated from foster care, or were in leadership positions. Many youth advocated for continued youth engagement and involvement in programs and activities at the federal, state, local and tribal levels. In addition, many advocated for issues related to such important areas as mental health; foster care; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning issues; grief and loss; suicide prevention; and substance use.

What was most striking about the listening sessions is that even though the questions began with a single topic on which to focus — e.g., housing, employment, or mentoring — the discussions that followed revealed that every topic is connected to a number of other topics, and that it was impossible to focus on a single topic without also touching upon those other topics as well. The interconnectedness of youth issues is clear.

Review key strategic documents on youth topics, including federal strategic plans. Twenty-three federal strategic plans were reviewed, in addition to 123 key strategic documents covering topics such as physical and mental health and wellness, education, juvenile justice, enrichment opportunities, safety, service learning, employment, and housing.

Summarize and post input and request public feedback. The Working Group summarized and posted on youth.gov the public input generated from the 10 public listening sessions, the smaller listening sessions held at conferences, the youth listening sessions, and the State Children's Cabinet network listening session. Listening session participants and other interested individuals received monthly electronic newsletters that included a prompt to visit youth.gov, read the summaries, and provide feedback on the input.

Engage federal partners. The Working Group identified key initiatives that their departments and agencies were pursuing, either as individual agencies or in partnership with other agencies, which the plan should reflect or complement. These included broad public awareness initiatives, such as *Let's Move!*, place-based[3] efforts, such as Choice Neighborhoods and the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, issue-focused efforts, such as the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, and agency-identified priorities like efforts to serve military families.

The Working Group held a series of brainstorming sessions with our members and participants to gather ideas for the plan, consider versions of an outline for the plan itself, and develop goals, objectives, and strategies.

Develop draft document and request public feedback. The Working Group prepared a draft document based on input received through the listening sessions and other mechanisms described above. This draft plan was posted on youth.gov for public comment, as is commonly done for federal strategic plans.

Finalize *Pathways for Youth*. The Working Group received 43 comments on the draft plan through youth.gov from 2013 to 2015. These comments generally supported *Pathways for Youth* and reiterated a need to continue collaboration at the federal level to support youth and young adults. *Pathways for Youth* was finalized in summer 2016.

[3] "Place-based" policymaking refers to making decisions that account for the variations of specific places — recognizing that different places face vastly different challenges that require very different tools.

A VISION FOR YOUTH

When the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs solicited input on the plan from federal agencies and the broader public, including youth themselves, several themes emerged that responded to these questions. Together, these themes comprise our *vision for youth* (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5

A Vision for Youth

- Youth and their families have safe, healthy, and stable places to live, learn, and work.
- Youth have opportunities to access high quality, affordable healthcare.
- Youth have multiple opportunities to acquire education, training, life skills development, and to succeed in jobs, careers, self-sufficiency, and adulthood.
- Youth have strong, positive, stable connections to family, peers, school, supportive adults, and community.
- Youth-serving organizations and partnerships are staffed by individuals who are well-trained, knowledgeable in the field, competent, compassionate, and culturally responsive.
- Youth are recognized by their community for their strengths and provided multiple opportunities for civic engagement, service, and leadership.
- Youth thrive throughout all phases of their development, including early and middle childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood.

To be realized, this vision will take the efforts of many partners. This plan focuses on the role of the federal government and the Working Group, but achieving this vision will also require strong partnerships from state and local government, the private sector, families, and youth.

The Strategic Goals and Objectives in the next section articulate strategies the Working Group can undertake, in the work of individual agencies and in collaboration across departments, to support youth and youth programs and help realize this vision.

LOGIC MODEL TO RELATE FEDERAL COLLABORATION TO YOUTH OUTCOMES

The Working Group developed a logic model to relate federal collaboration to youth outcomes. This model represents how the activities undertaken by the Working Group may lead to outputs, outcomes, and impacts that fulfill the *vision for youth* described above.

Resources

- Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs
- Other federal departments, agencies, & collaborations
- Youth-serving organizations & partnerships at all levels
- Youth & families
- Other resources
  - Funding & in-kind resources to support activities
  - Executive Orders & Memoranda

Activities

- Promote innovative collaboration at the federal, state, & local levels
- Identify & disseminate information about designing, selecting, implementing, & evaluating evidence-based strategies
- Engage youth & other stakeholders
- Implement initiatives
- Produce & expand the federal interagency website on youth

Outputs

- Number of federal youth programs that promote the use of evidence-based or innovative strategies (increase)
- Number of federal youth programs that promote coordinated effort across domains (increase)
- Number of federal youth engagement & partnership efforts (increase)
- Number of visits to the youth.gov website (increase)

Short- & Medium-Term Outcomes
(anticipated changes in 1-6 years)

- Short
  - Coordinated strategies that improve youth outcomes
  - Youth engagement & youth-adult partnerships that strengthen programs & benefit youth
  - The use of evidence-based & innovative strategies at the federal, state, & local levels
- Medium
  - Align & leverage resources (technical assistance, programs, & research)
  - Stronger, more effective programs for youth

Outcomes & Impacts
(anticipated changes in 7-10 years)

- Improved youth outcomes across domains:
  - Health, safety, housing, & wellness
  - School, family, & community engagement & connections
  - Education, training, employment, transitions, & readiness for jobs, careers, & adulthood

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Pathways for Youth outlines strategic goals that the Working Group will pursue, in the work of individual agencies and in collaboration across departments, to improve outcomes for youth. These three overarching and interrelated strategic goals are each supported by a number of objectives and strategies. The strategic goals echo the Working Group's primary functions, as well as the input generated by the stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels to support this effort.

Goal 1: Collaboration and Coordination

Promote coordinated strategies to improve youth outcomes. Youth-serving programs and initiatives at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels work to support youth in a number of ways. The range of support involves prevention and intervention strategies around health, mental health, substance abuse, and wellness; safe and stable housing; educational and training opportunities; preparation for employment; and meaningful connections to family, peers, and their communities.

Goal 2: Evidence-based and Innovative Strategies

Disseminate and encourage the use of evidence-based and innovative strategies at federal, state, local, and tribal levels. Evidence-based programs are those that have been studied with rigorous evaluation designs and shown positive effects on intended outcomes, though the level of evaluation and duration of effects required may vary across definitions of evidence-based practice. In areas without a strong evidence base, innovation can be informed by empirical evidence and theory.

Goal 3: Youth Engagement and Partnerships

Promote youth engagement and partnerships to strengthen programs and benefit youth and their families along a continuum — from simple information sharing, to targeted engagement opportunities, to decision-making — for the benefit of youth, adults, and programs. Understanding the different types of youth engagement strategies, and determining which strategies are successful for specific youth in specific contexts is the first step towards successful youth-adult partnerships.

Each of these goals, along with related objectives and strategies, will be described in turn in the following section.

Interrelated Efforts

Successful achievement of these goals will involve understanding the goals and objectives as interrelated concepts. Federal agencies can promote evidence-based strategies (Goal 2) in collaboration (Goal 1). Similarly, ideas for engaging and partnering with youth (Goal 3) can be shared across agencies and departments (Goal 1) and efforts in this area do not have to be pursued by agencies individually. In addition, the evidence base (Goal 2) on youth engagement and partnership is developing, and should be drawn upon when developing strategies to engage youth (Goal 3).

Working Group Cross-Cutting Initiatives

In developing this plan, the Working Group stressed that our strategic goals are the foundational piece for further action, which will be accompanied by concrete, realistic, actionable, and measurable activities. Within this document the Working Group has highlighted four cross-cutting initiatives that will advance the strategic goals and objectives. These initiatives are elements of a larger program of work pursued by the Working Group to promote collaboration, evidence and innovation, and youth engagement and partnership. These activities will be undertaken together within existing authorities and areas of administrative flexibility for departments and agencies to do their work. The Working Group will explore federal barriers and solutions for improving coordination and leveraging better outcomes for youth.

Examples of Promising Work

Also within this section, the Working Group will highlight examples of work related to these goals and objectives that we have undertaken together as a Working Group, or within our agencies. These examples can inform future efforts, providing direction for implementation.

Goal 1: Collaboration and Coordination:

Promote coordinated strategies to improve youth outcomes.

Youth-serving programs and initiatives at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels work to support youth in a number of ways. The range of support involves prevention and intervention strategies around health, mental health, substance abuse, and wellness; safe and stable housing; educational and training opportunities; preparation for employment; and meaningful connections to family, peers, and their communities. These issues are interrelated, and evidence-based programs are needed that address and integrate multiple areas at once. For example, youth at risk for disconnection are more likely to complete high school or receive a Certificate of General Educational Development (GED) if they have transportation to classes, keep a job if they address mental health and substance abuse concerns, and transition out of a homeless shelter if they have connections to family or supportive adults and skills and resources to secure a permanent home and employment. In addition to addressing multiple areas, these programs need to address contextual issues, such as culture and stages of development that would affect program delivery and possible impacts.

The most vulnerable youth face multiple challenges that do not fit into traditional categorical ("siloed") programs. A youth with disabilities may also need assistance in securing health services and employment. A youth at risk of school dropout may need additional educational support, as well as help with a substance abuse problem or parenting responsibilities. Rural youth may need assistance in building work skills through service learning opportunities, as well as transportation support. An incarcerated youth may need foster family support and employment training as they re-enter their community upon release. Because of their age and complexities of the challenges they present, vulnerable youth require multiple systems to interact and collaborate to effectively address their needs. Risk and protective factors are important in informing appropriate service decisions and as short-term outcomes for targeting by youth-serving programs.

An optimal network of support is complex and crosses a wide array of issue areas that may be contributing to youth outcomes through interconnected and cross-system means. The necessary array of programs may be disconnected, with each program having unique definitions, eligibility requirements, data collection efforts, reporting requirements, funding streams and funding restrictions, required partnerships (including with youth), technical assistance supports, service approaches, and performance measures. Inconsistencies across programs can be the consequence of federal or state legislative requirements, regulations, or administrative decisions and interpretations. The inconsistencies may also be due to interpretations of policy, prioritization based on identified needs or available funding, or lack of research knowledge on how to appropriately blend evidence-based approaches.

In Goal 1, the Working Group seeks to encourage improved coordination and collaboration among these supports for youth — within and among the federal, state, local, and tribal levels, between and within public and private entities, and across youth topic areas and domains.

Goal 1 Objectives

Objective 1: Align and simplify federal guidance for youth programs.

Objective 2: Coordinate youth programming and funding support at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels.

Objective 3: Coordinate technical assistance efforts to leverage resources.

Objective 1: Align and simplify federal guidance for youth programs.
Youth organizations and partnerships seeking to improve youth outcomes often seek to address more than one issue at a time. However, no one federal agency provides comprehensive funding to address every youth issue, and federal agencies have encouraged federal funding applicants to integrate activities to best serve youth.

Frequently, though, federal application and administrative requirements differ across and even within departments. Federal grantees navigate differing definitions of key terms, eligibility requirements, implementation requirements, reporting requirements, and goals for youth. This maze places a burden on grantees, requiring an extra investment of time and resources.

"Some level of fragmentation is inevitable. Even so, there are sensible steps policymakers can take to make it easier for people on the ground to align the myriad funding streams, programs, and regulations into a comprehensive solution for children and youth."

— *Federal Register* Comment

The Working Group will identify which requirements can be aligned across federal agencies, acknowledging that legislative requirements will sometimes prevent meaningful alignment. This effort will be done in collaboration with state and local groups; the Working Group will offer guidance to non-federal stakeholders to help identify and prioritize areas of needed alignment across program areas.

Below are some of the activities that the Working Group will pursue to align and simplify federal requirements for youth programs.

- Align activities with other federal plans and strategies that have key intersections on related youth issues. (Examples include: Interagency Forum on Disconnected Youth, Healthy People 2020, Opening Doors, National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, and the National Prevention Strategy)
- Identify opportunities to develop shared definitions across programs.
- Identify opportunities for alignment of program eligibility.
- Identify areas for common grant language, requirements, and evidence-based approaches (see Example: Positive Youth Development Definition).
- Identify opportunities to develop shared metrics, assessment strategies, and shared accountability for outcomes.
- Streamline administrative and other reporting requirements for grantees.
- Use youth.gov to engage stakeholders to help identify opportunities for alignment.

Example: Positive Youth Development Definition

The Working Group reviewed definitions of positive youth development included in federal grant announcements. Supported by a review of the literature, the Working Group drafted a common definition of positive youth development and encouraged its inclusion in a number of grant announcements. Positive youth development was defined by the Working Group as an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths. Further information about the definition and how to integrate positive youth development into programs can be found at **http://youth.gov/pyd**.

Objective 2: Coordinate youth programming and funding support at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels.

Not all youth programming is fragmented. We have significant examples of successful and innovative efforts that align evidence-based programming for youth and their families – place-based efforts, programs co-funded by multiple departments, wraparound services, comprehensive community initiatives, and other collaborations supported by funders have advanced our knowledge of how we can work together to improve outcomes. Knowledge about how best to structure and support these collaborations is growing.

The Working Group is committed to promoting meaningful collaboration at and among the federal, state, local, and tribal levels. The strategies the Working Group will employ to pursue this objective are listed below.

"Share funding to support programs in agencies in which significant youth service programs already exist, or in which they can be easily expanded to engage more youth."

– *Federal Register* Comment

- Identify opportunities for federal funding programs to better complement each other without augmenting each other (see Example: Elements of Successful Collaborations), as well as opportunities for public-private partnerships to support evidence-based youth programs.
- Identify opportunities to structure funding announcements to enable sufficient time for collaborations to develop and mature, including a planning, pre-implementation period, and a multi-year funding period.
- Leverage and coordinate agency investments (e.g., in technical assistance, research, or programming). (See Example: Collaboration to Address Youth Substance Abuse)
- Incentivize state- and local-level collaboration and the implementation of comprehensive, cross-system, and place-based approaches through funding announcements and other strategies.
- Encourage the development of comprehensive community strategic plans and other documents supporting collaboration to improve youth outcomes across various domains.
- Facilitate cross-system data sharing, while protecting privacy, to help partners answer critical questions and to develop responsive solutions.
- Use youth.gov to disseminate evidence-based and promising practices and lessons learned from collaborative efforts to encourage broader implementation of these strategies.

Example: Collaboration to Address Youth Substance Abuse

Identifying and addressing alcohol and drug use among students is one of the biggest challenges of the U.S. Department of Labor's YouthBuild employment and training program. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) collaborated with the YouthBuild program on a pilot project to train staff on how to identify youth who are at risk for substance abuse problems and provide referrals to those youth who need further assessment or treatment. The "SBIRT" (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) tool, originally designed for health-related settings, was adapted for use with the young adults ages 16-24 being served within the YouthBuild program. These collaborative strategies are low cost, given SAMHSA's training and intervention tools and YouthBuild's system for delivery, and can extend the reach of each agency's investments. This partnership grew out of the Working Group and information is disseminated through youth.gov. Learn more at **http://youth.gov/SBIRT-YouthBuild**.

Objective 3: Coordinate technical assistance efforts to leverage resources. Federal departments and agencies seek to strengthen their grantees' efforts by providing targeted technical assistance. Technical assistance providers have developed a number of mechanisms to inform, assist, and train grantees – through webinars and electronic correspondence, through communication with experts or peers, and other strategies. Technical assistance can help a grantee develop an action plan in partnership with other groups, engage youth and families, and understand and implement federal requirements. Technical assistance providers often support grantees in implementing evidence-based strategies, as well as determining how best to evaluate their efforts and impact on youth outcomes.

" Federal agencies can provide technical support, by hosting webinars, trainings, and other forums to allow easy access to information sharing and networking."

– *Federal Register* Comment

The federal department that funds an effort determines whether technical assistance providers offer support on cross-cutting youth topics, or provide support to youth-serving organizations and partnerships beyond the agency's grantees. The Working Group is committed to supporting federal grantees with the technical assistance and support they need to be successful. By creating more training and technical assistance opportunities, a community's ability to improve outcomes for youth may be enhanced and federal resources used more efficiently.

Through this support, the Working Group will:

- Identify opportunities to provide technical assistance to grantees across programs to support quality and sustainability and improve youth outcomes (see Example: Coordinating Technical Assistance to Prevent Youth Violence).
- Translate cross-system research and evaluation information for programs to encourage adoption of comprehensive solutions that address interconnected issues impacting youth.
- Encourage the inclusion of youth engagement strategies to be incorporated into any technical assistance effort to support programs for youth.
- Use grantee conferences, agency-sponsored webinars, guidance, grantee correspondence, and other strategies, including youth.gov, to provide technical assistance on cross-cutting youth topics.
- Identify opportunities to coordinate the delivery of technical assistance to a common grantee or community, and enable technical assistance providers to support non-grantees as appropriate.
- Examine the effectiveness of technical assistance, particularly with regard to implementing evidence-based programs.

Example: Coordinating Technical Assistance to Prevent Youth Violence

The National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention (Forum) is a White House initiative that was established to build a national conversation concerning youth and gang violence that would increase awareness, drive action, and build local capacity to more effectively address youth violence through comprehensive planning. To do this, the Forum models a new kind of federal and local collaboration, encouraging its members to change the way they do business by sharing common challenges and promising strategies, and through coordinated action.

Participating federal agencies include the Departments of Justice, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Labor and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Participating cities include Baltimore, Boston, Camden, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Long Beach, Louisville, Memphis, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Salinas, San Jose, and Seattle.
Other participants include faith- and community-based organizations, youth and family groups, as well as business and philanthropic leaders. The Forum leveraged resources and fostered coordination by developing their website as a microsite of youth.gov. Learn more at **http://www.youth.gov/NationalForum**.

Goal 2: Evidence-based and Innovative Strategies:

Promote the use of evidence-based and innovative strategies at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels.

Across the country, youth-serving programs and initiatives are working to improve youth outcomes by promoting positive strategies such as helping youth finish their education, build skills and competencies, secure stable housing, find employment, and develop mentoring relationships with competent adults. Community partners are implementing evidence-based and innovative strategies that are overcoming the effects of traumatic experiences and preventing or reducing youth engagement in risky behaviors such as substance use, early sexual activity, and acts of violence and delinquency.

In a context of shrinking resources and complex challenges in the youth being served, it is important to support staff in choosing approaches that are grounded in evidence. Fortunately, we know more now about evidence-based programs for youth than we did even 25 years ago.

Evidence-based programs are those that have been studied with rigorous evaluation designs and shown positive effects on intended outcomes, though the level of evaluation and duration of effects may vary across definitions of evidence-based practice. Both the public and private sectors have produced an array of directories, technical assistance centers, guidebooks, and websites in recent years to help youth-serving groups select and implement evidence-based programs for youth. Increasingly, funders are requesting or requiring that applicants demonstrate that they are using evidence-based strategies to serve youth and show that their efforts have contributed to positive outcomes.

Many challenges persist, however. The evidence is uneven across systems. The depth and breadth of knowledge about what works for youth in different settings (for example, in high schools or in juvenile justice facilities) or with different issues (for example, youth who need to secure stable employment, or youth who abuse substances) differs widely. We often have limited information on what works with subpopulations of youth, particularly across age groups, gender, culture, race, disability status, and sexual orientation. The criteria identified for calling a program "evidence-based" can vary across departments and directories. The standards for research are slowly growing in the public sector in order to establish credibility and parameters for newly developed programs and to provide a path for them to become "evidence-based."

Selection of an evidence-based program model that is poorly matched to a community, poor implementation of the evidence-based model, unexpected costs, and inadequate staff training and organization support can all undermine the effort to implement evidence-based programs, and lead to increased skepticism of and resistance to evidence-based practices.

In Goal 2, the Working Group seeks to encourage the continued development of evidence-based strategies for youth programs, dissemination of knowledge about selection, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based strategies, and support for innovation to address current gaps in the knowledge base, as well as new and emerging challenges.

Goal 2 Objectives

Objective 1: Encourage the adoption of evidence-based strategies, and support their implementation.

Objective 2: Support innovation and deepen the evidence base to fill gaps in knowledge.

Objective 1: Encourage the adoption of evidence-based strategies, and support their implementation.

While there is limited information available on strategies that work on subpopulations of youth, our knowledge base has expanded so we now know more about the circumstances and populations for which certain strategies may be effective. Significant advancements have been made in recent years in understanding evidence-based strategies to improve education and prevent violence, juvenile delinquency, and teen pregnancy, for example. Policies and programs are being evaluated in multiple contexts to better understand the conditions for their success. Program developers increasingly understand that in addition to developing the elements of a successful program, they need to develop the tools for implementation of that program. The knowledge base about "nuggets" and "essential elements" of evidence-based programs is growing. And decision makers are working to implement a variety of evidence-based strategies, including policies such as graduated driver licensing, as well as formal program models that have been shown to have positive impacts on youth outcomes.

"The federal government has an extremely important leadership role to play in ensuring that youth benefit from programs that are effective, efficient, and coordinated. The federal government can promote good policies and practices by its funding decisions, the incentives it provides, the creativity it offers to communities and states, the protections it offers youth, the promising approaches it highlights, and the assistance it gives states and communities in sharing promising approaches."

– *Federal Register* Comment

Federal departments support the development of the evidence base across the continuum – from funding basic research; to supporting research to evaluate a program model's effectiveness; to requiring that federal grantees choose an evidence-based program to implement as a condition of funding; to developing evidence-based program directories to support the selection of appropriate interventions; to funding technical assistance providers to help grantees select and implement programs, and evaluate them using randomized controlled experiments and other strong study designs.

The Working Group is committed to supporting the adoption and implementation of evidence-based strategies to help improve youth outcomes at the state and local levels, and disseminating information to stakeholders that helps them make sense of various federal efforts. To minimize confusion and facilitate adoption of these strategies, the Working Group also seeks to promote coordinated dissemination of these efforts to the public. The Working Group is dedicated to supporting coordinated federal effort in this arena by facilitating cross-system discussions about standards of evidence and implementation, criteria for successful replication, and emerging issues.

Outlined below are some of the activities the Working Group will use to encourage the adoption of evidence-based strategies and support their implementation.

- Identify models of federal funding that offer sufficient funding and time to facilitate the complete and successful implementation of evidence-based strategies.
- Promote the adoption of evidence-based strategies through funding announcements, technical assistance efforts, and other communication with the public, including youth.gov (see Example: youth.gov section on Evidence and Innovation)
- Encourage the development of logic models and theories of change in funding announcements, and shift program reporting from simply reporting on outputs to reporting on valid and reliable immediate and longer-term outcome measures for youth and families.
- Engage youth-serving organizations and partnerships in discussions about barriers to adoption and implementation of evidence-based approaches with fidelity, and develop strategies to overcome these barriers.
- Improve service provider access to information regarding available evidence-based resources to facilitate the selection of program models.
- Improve competencies of youth-serving professionals in identifying and appraising evidence for decision-making that considers selection, implementation, and adaptation of evidence-based practices in the service context.
- Provide service providers with access to information from implementation science to guide replication, including working across agencies to develop implementation standards.
- Assemble and disseminate current information about evidence-based strategies through youth.gov.
- Identify opportunities to provide technical assistance to help organizations adapt and adopt evidence-based programs and implement them with adequate fidelity.
- Coordinate federal efforts around evidence-based practices, including maximizing and leveraging dissemination through conferences, websites, and webinars.
- Convene federal and nonfederal stakeholders to explore the alignment of standards of evidence and criteria for implementation readiness and fidelity.

Example: youth.gov Section on Evidence and Innovation

The Working Group developed a section on youth.gov focused on Evidence and Innovation. The section offers the latest information on federal work related to evidence-based strategies and provide guidance on selecting programs and program implementation. The site includes real-world examples from the field and opportunities to listen to expert opinions. Learn more at **http://www.youth.gov/Evidence**.

Objective 2: Support innovation and deepen the evidence base to fill gaps in knowledge.
Despite these advancements in our knowledge of successful youth programs, there are still significant gaps in the evidence. Finding the right prevention, intervention, or combination thereof, for specific populations of youth, in specific contexts, at various points across their developmental trajectory, is still a challenge for many youth-serving organizations and partnerships.

A program that works for a primarily Latino population in an urban setting in the northeast may have different impacts for a group of tribal youth in the rural southwest. A program for high school youth may be inappropriate if implemented with middle school youth. A program may not have the same impact if modules are eliminated to meet a program's time restrictions. Federal agencies understand the challenges of implementing evidence-based programs in various contexts, and need to work closely with youth-serving organizations and partnerships to determine whether and how best to adapt evidence-based programs for different populations and settings, and how to evaluate the impact of these adaptations.

"Initiate the development of a national database containing evidence-based research on cross-systems collaboration and evaluation. This can serve as a technical assistance tool for state, public school districts, and other youth serving entities that require direction in creating partnerships in order to better meet the needs of children and youth."

– *Federal Register* Comment

The federal government has invested resources in recent years in innovative strategies — asking researchers and program developers to identify gaps and explore the effectiveness of innovative strategies to address these gaps, rather than requiring the selection of a model from a list of previously evaluated programs. Basic research in such areas as brain development, addiction, learning and cognition, group formation and peer ties, family disorganization, nutrition and health, along with a host of other issues, can be the knowledge base from which innovation arises, programs are developed, and strategies are tested. These innovative efforts are intentional processes, guided by evidence and supported by evaluations to examine their impact.

The Working Group is committed to supporting innovation – including adaptation of existing program models, development of new program models, and responsiveness to emerging issues. The Working Group seeks to collaborate with program developers, researchers, youth-serving organizations and partnerships, federal departments and agencies, and other stakeholders, to deepen the evidence base and expand what we know about how to improve youth outcomes.

Outlined below are some of the activities the Working Group will use to support innovation and deepen the knowledge base to fill gaps in knowledge.

- Provide guidance to youth-serving organizations and partnerships about which evidence-based programs are appropriate and effective for specific populations.
- Identify opportunities to provide technical assistance to help organizations innovate and adapt evidence-based programs appropriately (see Example: Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center), and evaluate the impact of the program and the adaptation.
- Develop the knowledge base on the implementation of evidence-based strategies.
- Disseminate information about innovative and promising strategies through resources like youth.gov.
- Deepen the evidence base on the impact of collaboration and cross-systems approaches to improve youth outcomes, as well as youth engagement strategies and their impact.
- Explore efforts to reduce the time lag between the development of an effective program model, to its implementation and further testing among different populations, to its widespread use.
- Identify opportunities to leverage federal funding to support rigorous evaluation of existing and innovative program models to improve the evidence-base where gaps exist.

Example: Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center

The Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center is funded by a contract from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students. The Center is operated by the American Institutes for Research. Its mission is to improve the conditions for learning in schools so that all students have the opportunity to realize academic success in safe and supportive school environments. The Center also provides support on the development and management of school climate surveys and the use of data in the selection and implementation of appropriate strategies, interventions, and/or programs identified by data. Through dissemination of the latest research findings, products, measurement tools, and resources, the Center helps to advance knowledge about evidence-based practice, measurement systems and data use to improve conditions for learning. The Center works with a team of specialists and/or experts in the field to serve state grantees, as well as other state administrators, district and school administrators, teachers, school support staff, families/communities, and students. The Center's goal is to assist in creating safe and respectful school environments and to provide information and resources to increase academic success for all students.

For more information on the Safe and Supportive Schools TA Center, visit **https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/**. Information about the Center, including notification of upcoming webinars, is available on **http://www.youth.gov**.

Goal 3: Youth Engagement and Partnerships:

Promote youth engagement and partnerships to strengthen programs and benefit youth.

At the federal, state, local, and tribal levels, youth-serving organizations and partnerships are working to engage youth as partners in decision-making. Across the country, youth are partnering with adults to strengthen programs, as well as to build their own skills and abilities. Youth are not just speaking at conferences, they are helping to plan them; they are not just being served by staff, they are helping to hire them; they are not just statistics in a dataset, they are helping agencies improve data collection and interpret results. Youth are helping organizations develop messages that resonate with their peers about health, public health, and human services issues. And with the rise of social media, youth are now active agents in disseminating information and messages to the broader public.

Yet our knowledge about what makes a successful youth-adult partnership, and what the benefits to youth, adults, and programs are, is still developing. Additionally, our ability to measure the quality and extent of youth engagement in various program settings is limited. Understanding the different types of youth engagement strategies, and determining which strategies are successful for specific youth in specific contexts, is still a work in progress. The Working Group, through its ongoing collaborative efforts and youth.gov, shares information about various youth engagement strategies to better understand options and opportunities.

In Goal 3, the Working Group promotes strategies that engage youth and their families along a continuum — from simple information sharing, to targeted engagement opportunities, to decision-making — for the benefit of youth, adults, and programs. And as described in Goal 2, the Working Group is dedicated to building the evidence base on youth engagement strategies by supporting rigorous evaluation of youth engagement interventions.

Goal 3 Objectives

Objective 1: Promote youth-adult partnerships to support sustained youth engagement efforts and strengthen programs.

Objective 2: Provide and encourage federal, state, local and tribal provision of multiple opportunities for youth to develop, master, and apply critical skills, including life skills and leadership skills.

Objective 1: Promote youth-adult partnerships to support sustained youth engagement efforts and strengthen programs.

No matter what you call these efforts — positive youth development, youth development, youth participation, youth engagement, youth-adult partnerships — emerging literature suggests benefits for both programs and youth.[4] Youth engagement can increase youth confidence and competence, improve the chances of academic success, protect against aggressive and violent behaviors, and promote feelings of safety, belonging, efficacy, and empowerment. Organizations can benefit from greater organizational sustainability and effectiveness, including a staff with increased commitment to an organization's mission and youth needs. Public policy makers can make better public investments and create policies and priorities that are more relevant to the lives of young people.

"Youth are uniquely qualified to address many challenges if they have support and mentoring from adults who value youth input and perspectives on the root causes of the challenge areas for the program outcomes, as well as ideas for practical solutions. Please adopt the viewpoint that youth have skills and talents to be developed, rather than weaknesses and deficits to be remediated."

— Web Comment

To be successful, however, youth engagement strategies require commitment from both adults and youth. Youth and adults may need additional training on how to work together effectively. Designing opportunities to engage youth and adults together may require setting different meeting times, venues, formats, and agenda items. Organizations may have to include incentives to engage community partners and/or youth and sustain their involvement.

The Working Group is dedicated to promoting youth-adult partnerships at all levels — federal, state, local, and tribal — through the following strategies.

- Use youth.gov, social media, and other strategies to increase public awareness about youth perspectives, issues that resonate for youth, and the value of youth contributions.
- Assemble and disseminate information about options for youth engagement strategies.
- Identify opportunities to provide technical assistance to both youth and adults to support sustained youth engagement efforts.
- Encourage opportunities to involve youth from a variety of backgrounds and with differing perspectives, including those youth who are especially vulnerable and least likely to be engaged in decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.
- Assist states and localities in identifying models that will promote multiple meaningful and successful paths for youth civic engagement and leadership.

[4] Zeldin, S., Petrokubi, J. & Camino, L. (2008). Y*outh-adult partnerships in public action: Principles, organizational culture, and outcomes.* Takoma Park, MD: Forum for Youth Investment.

Rose-Krasnor, L. (2009). Future directions in youth engagement and social development. *Social Development, 18,* 497-509.

Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organizational governance. *Applied Developmental Science, 8,* 75-90.

Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A. K., Topitzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). *Youth in decision-making: A study of the impacts of youth on adults and organizations.* Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council.

Objective 2: Provide and encourage federal, state, local, and tribal provision of multiple opportunities for youth to develop, master, and apply critical skills, including life and leadership skills.

Youth-serving programs must be intentional about reaching out to youth — all youth — but the youth population is not monolithic. Engaging special populations of youth, youth at different ages or developmental stages, or youth from different regions or environments may require different strategies and incentives. The level of rigorous evaluation of youth engagement programs is still weak,[5] and youth engagement activities may need to vary in terms of their content, frequency, format, and intensity to reach young people at the level at which they are prepared to engage, and may need to adjust and deepen as a youth's skills are developed.

Youth may need extra supports to sustain their involvement — other youth being involved with them, transportation, activities held after school hours, skill development opportunities, or other incentives and motivators. Organizations should also recognize youth aging out of their programs as valuable resources for encouraging engagement amongst younger peers.

As articulated in its definition of positive youth development (see Goal 1), the Working Group recognizes that all youth have assets and should be given opportunities to participate and develop their skills to become active and contributing members of society. Youth can be involved as active agents in programs — becoming more than just the recipients of services. The Working Group is committed to promoting opportunities for youth to engage and develop their skills. Outlined below are some of the activities the Working Group will use to support efforts that provide multiple opportunities for youth.

"Youth can be engaged in these efforts when they have opportunities to develop their leadership skills through comprehensive training, which can include communication skills, respect for diversity, life skills, goal setting, learning about finances, team building, and having opportunities to write and speak to the public and to policymakers."

— Web Comment

- Explore and identify the use of funding applications and other incentives to encourage youth-serving organizations and partnerships to engage youth in grantee program design, hiring, implementation, evaluation, and other efforts.
- Support federal agencies that wish to engage youth in meetings, planning, grant reviews, or other activities (see Example: National Youth in Transition Database, Technical Assistance Conference)
- Engage youth in a dialogue through youth.gov and social media to understand youth perspectives.
- Support approaches that enable youth engagement to grow and expand, such as enabling youth to contribute at the local, state, regional, tribal, national, and international levels.
- Encourage local and state governments and schools to involve youth in a variety of activities, including opportunities to learn and exhibit leadership skills.
- Engage youth in skill and asset development opportunities, including exploring career and workforce options and providing occasions for goal setting.

[5] Morton, M. & Montgomery, P. (2011). Youth empowerment programs for improving self-efficacy and self-esteem of adolescents. *Campbell Systematic Reviews.* http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/lib/download/1402/

Example: National Youth in Transition Database, Technical Assistance Conference

The Children's Bureau, which is in the Administration for Children and Families within HHS, required state representatives to bring youth to this conference to discuss the first wave of data from the National Youth in Transition Database (which collects information on outcomes for youth transitioning out of foster care). In youth-only sessions, youth commented on the preliminary results and made suggestions for improvements to the data and the way they were communicated. Youth also participated in sessions with adults, such as plenary sessions and other workshops. Through this effort, states were made aware of youth who were both consumers of foster care services and leaders in their communities. Youth developed leadership and critical thinking skills. A collaboration profile on the National Youth in Transition Database Technical Assistance meeting is available on youth.gov at: **http://youth.gov/nytd**.

WORKING GROUP CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

This plan presents an initial step in identifying strategies for federal collaboration and provides a basis for future actions related to positive outcomes for youth. As the Working Group pursues the goals and objectives outlined in this plan, it will be able to set targets for collaborative results and identify areas for strategic recommendations and initiatives to address common goals for youth. To begin addressing the goals, objectives, and strategies in this plan, the Working Group identified four areas of work. These four cross-cutting initiatives are described below. Given that the Working Group has no dedicated funding, the scope of work that the Working Group will be able to undertake will depend on the funds and other resources agencies are able to provide as leaders or partners in these efforts.

1. Develop shared language on cross-cutting youth topics for federal grant applications and other federal documents and publications.
The Working Group will identify realistic and reasonable opportunities to develop shared language that can be incorporated into federal documents, including grant applications and technical assistance resources. Examples include common terminology (e.g., positive youth development, youth engagement strategies, evidence-based), options for performance indicators and metrics, opportunities for administrative flexibility or cost savings, and guidance on collaboration (e.g., suggested partners and planning coordination efforts).

2. Assess and disseminate models of collaboration that provide a pathway to opportunity for youth and yield positive results.
The Working Group will identify realistic and reasonable opportunities to develop shared language that can be incorporated into federal documents, including grant applications and technical assistance resources. Examples include common terminology (e.g., positive youth development, youth engagement strategies, evidence-based), options for performance indicators and metrics, opportunities for administrative flexibility or cost savings, and guidance on collaboration (e.g., suggested partners and planning coordination efforts).

3. Centralize and disseminate information on promising and evidence-based strategies for youth, including promising youth engagement and partnership strategies.
The Working Group will develop a central comprehensive federal resource for information on evidence-based practices and innovation that draws from multiple sources already in existence, to provide the public with better information about federal efforts, reduce duplication, and promote better collaboration among federal departments and agencies. As part of this effort, the Working Group will identify and disseminate promising and evidence-based youth engagement strategies to assist federal, state, local, and tribal groups in devising strategies to develop and maximize the strengths of youth, and to strengthen youth programs.

4. Promote data collection and long-term evaluation of policies and programs that impact youth.
The Working Group will facilitate cross-system data collection and sharing, while protecting privacy, to help programs answer critical questions to develop responsive solutions and determine evidence-based practices for youth programs. The Working Group will assess criteria currently in use by federal departments and agencies, including data systems. The Working Group will also consider opportunities to examine best practices and disseminate those to the public.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A: Executive Order 13459.....29

B: Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 Committee Print of the House Committee on Appropriations on H.R. 1105/Public Law 111-8, Division F Language.....32

C: Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs Federal Participant List.....33

D: Input Summary Report Executive Summary.....37

F: *Pathways for Youth* At-A-Glance Overview.....38

Supporting Document A:

Executive Order 13459: Improving the Coordination and Effectiveness of Youth Programs.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in recognition of the successful interagency collaboration resulting from the *Helping America's Youth initiative*, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy.

It is the policy of the Federal Government to promote achievement of positive results for at-risk youth through:

a. enhanced collaboration among government organizations at the Federal, State, and local level, including with faith-based and other community organizations, as well as among families, schools, and communities, in order to leverage existing resources and improve outcomes;
b. identification and dissemination of promising strategies and practices that have been proven effective through rigorous evaluation; and
c. online publication of essential information to assist interested citizens and decision-makers, particularly at the community level, to plan, implement, and participate in effective programs for at-risk youth.

Sec. 2. Establishment of the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services (Secretary) shall establish within the Department of Health and Human Services for administrative purposes only, an Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (Working Group), consistent with this order and reflecting the ongoing interagency collaboration under the *Helping America's Youth* initiative.

Sec. 3. Membership and Operation of the Working Group.

a. The Working Group shall consist exclusively of the following members or their designees, who shall be full-time Federal officers or employees:
   i. the Secretary;
   ii. the Attorney General;
   iii. the Secretaries of Defense, the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Education;
   iv. the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy;
   v. the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service; and
   vi. other officers or full-time or permanent part-time employees of the United States, as determined by the Secretary, with the concurrence of the head of the department or agency concerned.
b. The Secretary (or the Secretary's designee) shall serve as Chair, and the Attorney General (or the Attorney General's designee) shall serve as Vice Chair, for a period of 2 years from the date of this order. Subsequent Chairs and Vice Chairs shall be designated by the Secretary on a biennial basis.
c. In implementing this section, the Chair, and in the Chair's absence the Vice Chair, shall convene and preside at meetings of the Working Group, determine its agenda, direct its work, and establish and direct subgroups of the Working Group, as appropriate, to deal with particular subject matters, that shall consist exclusively of members of the Working Group or their designees. The

Chair, after consultation with the Vice Chair, shall designate an officer or employee of one of the member departments or agencies to serve as the Executive Secretary of the Working Group. The Executive Secretary shall head any staff assigned to the Working Group and any subgroups thereof, and such staff shall consist exclusively of full-time or permanent part-time Federal employees.

Sec. 4. Functions of the Working Group.

Consistent with the policy set forth in section 1 of this order, the Working Group shall:

a. identify and engage key government and private or nonprofit organizations that can play a role in improving the coordination and effectiveness of programs serving and engaging youth, such as faith-based and other community organizations, businesses, volunteers, and other key constituencies;
b. develop a new Federal website on youth, built upon the *Community Guide to Helping America's Youth*, with the first phase of this website to be launched within 10 months of the date of this order, by:
   i. identifying and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of existing Federal websites focusing on youth-serving entities in order to improve access to the most useful content;
   ii. providing for training to youth-serving entities to enable effective use of the Federal website;
   iii. developing additional strategies and tools and resources accessible through the Federal website that will help promote effective community-based efforts to reduce the factors that put youth at-risk and the provision of high-quality services to at-risk youth across the country; and
   iv. developing strategies to ensure that the Federal website is routinely updated, improved, and publicized;
c. encourage all youth-serving Federal and State agencies, communities, grantees, and organizations to adopt high standards for assessing program results, including through the use of rigorous impact evaluations, as appropriate, so that the most effective practices can be identified and replicated, and ineffective or duplicative programs can be eliminated or reformed;
d. ...
   i. identify and promote initiatives and activities that merit strong interagency collaboration because of their potential to offer cost-effective solutions to achieve better results for at-risk youth, including volunteer service in concert with the USA Freedom Corps and mentoring in concert with the Federal Mentoring Council; and,
   ii. encourage rigorous evaluations, as appropriate, of such initiatives and activities to ascertain their effectiveness in improving academic, employment, social, and other individual outcomes, and make these findings publicly available, and
e. annually report to the President, through the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, on its work and on the implementation of any recommendations arising from its work, with the first such report to be submitted no later than 6 months after the date of this order.

Sec. 5. Administration of the Working Group.

a. The Secretary shall, to the extent permitted by law, provide administrative support and funding for the Working Group.

   With the consent of the Secretary, other member departments or agencies may provide administrative support to the Working Group, to the extent permitted by law and consistent with their statutory authority.

b. The heads of executive departments and agencies shall provide, as appropriate, such assistance and information as the Secretary may request to implement this order.
c. The website referred to in section 4(b) of this order shall be funded by contributions from executive departments and agencies to the extent permitted by law and consistent with their statutory authority.

Sec. 6. General Provisions.

a. Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:
   i. authority granted by law to a department, agency, or the head thereof; or
   ii. functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, or legislative proposals.
b. This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.
c. This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

George W. Bush
The White House
February 7, 2008.

Supporting Document B:

Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 Committee Print of the House Committee on Appropriations on H.R. 1105/Public Law 111-8, Division F Language

The bill includes $1,000,000 for the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, chaired by HHS. These funds shall be used to solicit input from young people, State children's cabinet directors, and non-profit organizations on youth programs and policies; develop an overarching strategic plan for Federal youth policy; and prepare recommendations to improve the coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency of programs affecting youth.

Supporting Document C:
Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs Federal Participant List

Agency	Title	Name
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Chair)	Division of Children and Youth Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation	Cheri Hoffman
U.S. Department of Justice (Vice-Chair)	Coordinating Council for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	Jeff Slowikowski
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Institute of Youth, Family, and Community, National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Lisa Lauxman
	Institute of Youth, Family, and Community, National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Toija Riggins
	Institute of Youth, Family, and Community, National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Bonita Williams
U.S. Department of Commerce	Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, Census Bureau	TBD
U.S. Department of Defense	Youth Outreach Programs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs	Ernie Gonzales*
	Office of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Military Community and Family Policy, Office of Children and Youth	TBD
U.S. Department of Education	Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education	TBD
	Office of Communications and Outreach	Samuel Ryan
	Office of Safe and Healthy Students, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education	Sharon Burton
	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs	Sarah Allen
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families	Catherine Heath
	Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families	Liliana Hernandez
	Commissioner's Office, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families	Jenny Wood
	Division of Adolescent and School Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Pete Hunt
	Division of Children and Youth Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation	Sarah Oberlander

Agency	Title	Name
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (continued)	Division of Children and Youth Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation	Michelle Boyd
	Division of Children and Youth Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation	Lisa Trivits
	Division of Reproductive Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Anna Brittain
	Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Alana Vivolo-Kantor
	Family and Youth Services Bureau, Administration for Children and Families	Sarah Axelson
	Family and Youth Services Bureau, Administration for Children and Families	Telisa Burt
	Family and Youth Services Bureau, Administration for Children and Families	Jewellynne Tinsley
	Family and Youth Services Bureau, Administration for Children and Families	Jenny Weiser
	Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration	Trina Anglin
	National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health	Jacqueline Lloyd
	National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Rebecca Guerin
	Office of Adolescent Health, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health	Evelyn Kappeler
	Office of Adolescent Health, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health	Jamie Kim
	Office of Adolescent Health, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health	Emily Novick
	Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families	Caryn Blitz
	Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families	Seth Chamberlain
	Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families	Tyler Hatch
	Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families	Aleta Meyer

Agency	Title	Name
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (continued)	Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families	Erica Zielewski
	Office on Women's Health	Jill Wasserman
	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	Karen Gentile
	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	Larke Huang
	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	Stacey Lee
	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	Emily Lichvar
	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	Rebecca Zornick
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Division	Marcus Coleman
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	Office of Public and Indian Housing	Maria-Lana Queen*
U.S. Department of the Interior	Bureau of Indian Affairs	TBD
	Bureau of Land Management	Scott Richardson
	Office of Youth, Partnerships, and Service	TBD
	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Maria Parisi Arnold
U.S. Department of Justice	National Institute of Justice	Amy Griffin
	National Institute of Justice	Marina Mendoza
	National Institute of Justice	Carrie Mulford
	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	Robin Delany-Shabazz*
	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	Brecht Donoghue
	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	Dennis Mondoro
	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	Cynthia Pappas
U.S. Department of Labor	Division of Youth Services, Employment and Training Administration	Sara Hastings
	Division of Youth Services, Employment and Training Administration	Jennifer Kemp
	Division of Youth Services, Employment and Training Administration	Brian Lyght
	Division of Youth Policy, Employment and Training Administration	Maisha Meminger
	Office of Disability Employment Policy	Day Al-Mohamed
U.S. Department of State	Office of Global Youth Issues	TBD
U.S. Department of Transportation	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration	Kathleen Ballard
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	Office of Financial Education	Meina Banh
	Office of Financial Education	Sunaena Lehil
	Office of Financial Education	Leslie Jones
	Office of Financial Education	Cassandra McConnell-Tatum

Agency	Title	Name
Corporation for National and Community Service	AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps	Katrina Mathis*
National Science Foundation	Directorate for Education and Human Resources, Division of Research on Learning in Formal and Informal Settings	Julie Johnson
Office of National Drug Control Policy	Office of Demand Reduction, Addiction Recovery Branch	TBD
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Office of Environmental Education	TBD
	Office of Public Engagement	TBD
U.S. Small Business Association	Office of Entrepreneurship Education	TBD
	Office of Entrepreneurship Education	TBD
U.S. Social Security Administration	Office of Research, Demonstrations, and Employment Supports, Office of Retirement and Disability Policy	Leola Brooks
	Office of Retirement Disability and Employment Supports	Joyanne Cobb

** indicates a formal designee to the Working Group*

This list is current as of 2016. The Working Group received valuable participation from other individuals formally serving with federal agencies during the drafting and review of the plan.

Supporting Document D:

Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs Public Input Summary Report Executive Summary

The first step of developing a plan involved gathering input from stakeholders, including youth, state Children's Cabinet members, representatives from nonprofit organizations, policymakers, researchers, service providers, and families and educators on how to improve the coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency of youth programs and policies. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) supported the Working Group throughout this process, including the organization and facilitation of listening sessions.

The Working Group developed a conceptual framework to guide strategic-planning input. The framework focuses on three overarching outcomes for youth, all within the context of cultural and linguistic competency: health, safety, wellness, and safe and stable housing; school, family, and community engagement and connections; and education, training, employment, transitions, and readiness for careers and adulthood.

The Working Group used several mechanisms for gathering public input, including regional listening sessions, mini-listening sessions, youth sessions, a roundtable with state Children's Cabinet representatives, a website (FindYouthInfo.gov, now youth.gov), a *Federal Register* notice, targeted webinars (for example, with the Society for Research on Child Development), and a federal strategic plan review. The Working Group also conducted extensive outreach to stakeholders through IWGYP agency and federally funded technical assistance center electronic newsletters and e-mail blasts, the newsletter and website, and targeted outreach.

The Working Group conducted the public listening sessions in ten regions of the country in a variety of locations, including federal buildings and community settings with connections to the IWGYP partners. Each session was a facilitated discussion, with focused questions that drilled down to ensure that the discussion was both inclusive and deep. Different sessions focused on specific topics, such as education, safety, enrichment, juvenile justice, employment, housing, physical and mental health and wellness, service learning, and positive youth development. However, the sessions were facilitated in a manner that enabled participants to provide input on any of these areas.

Several key themes and topics emerged during the input-gathering process. These themes reflect conditions that stakeholders feel are necessary to achieve positive youth outcomes, best approaches to intervention across service areas, approaches to collaboration, and the strategies that will best help improve outcomes and collaboration. The themes include relationships; high expectations; safe, supportive, and engaging environments; multiple chances and multiple pathways for successful development; promotion, prevention, and early intervention; flexible, strengths-based, and needs-driven strategies and approaches; consumer-driven and consumer-friendly strategies; and support for transition.

The substantial input gathered in the course of this outreach process provides the Working Group with a wealth of ideas and suggestions. Stakeholders identified multiple actionable opportunities for the Working Group to consider in areas such as communications; service delivery; funding; decision-making; collaboration and coordination among federal, state, local, and tribal agencies and departments; accountability systems and data; and engagement of youth in efforts to improve their lives.

Supporting Document E:
***Pathways for Youth* At-A-Glance Overview**

INTRODUCTION		
Background and overview of the Working Group and its charges; Description of the process for creating the plan, including the initial framework, public input process, and federal drafting effort		
A VISION FOR YOUTH		
The strengths-based *vision for youth* acknowledges the importance of pathways to opportunity for youth that include meaningful connections and safe, healthy, and stable places to live, learn, and work.		
GOALS TO IMPROVE YOUTH OUTCOMES		
Goal 1: **Promote coordinated strategies to improve youth outcomes** Objective 1: Align and simplify federal guidance for youth programs. Objective 2: Coordinate youth programming and funding support at the federal, state, local, and tribal level. Objective 3: Coordinate technical assistance efforts to leverage resources.	**Goal 2:** **Promote the use of evidence-based and innovative strategies at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels** Objective 1: Encourage the adoption of evidence-based strategies, and support their implementation. Objective 2: Support innovation and deepen the evidence base to fill gaps in knowledge.	**Goal 3:** **Promote youth engagement and partnerships to strengthen programs and benefit youth** Objective 1: Promote youth-adult partnerships to support sustained youth engagement efforts and strengthen programs. Objective 2: Provide and encourage federal, state, local and tribal provision of multiple opportunities for youth to develop, master, and apply critical skills, including life and leadership skills.
CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES		
1. Develop shared language on cross-cutting youth topics for federal grant applications and other federal documents and publications. 2. Assess and disseminate models of collaboration that provide a pathway to opportunity for youth, and yield other positive results. 3. Centralize and disseminate information on promising and evidence-based strategies for youth, including promising youth engagement and partnership strategies. 4. Promote data collection and long-term evaluation of youth programs.		
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS		
Executive Order 13459, Omnibus Appropriations Act language, Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs Participant List, Executive Summary of the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs Public Input Summary Report		