

POWER AND POTENTIAL

Youth Organizing in Southeast Michigan



Prepared for The Skillman Foundation
by the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing
Published June 2023

FCYO



Photo courtesy of 482Forward

Dear Colleagues,

We are very proud to have supported youth development enrichment opportunities and access throughout our 62-year history. One important outcome: Young people in Detroit are using their voices and platforms to influence change in their schools, their neighborhoods, and their world. They are clear and bold about the future they want to create.

While youth organizing and activism is not new or unique to our city, young Detroiters are counted among the leaders of movements that have changed America for the betterment of all, from civil rights to the labor movement to climate justice and beyond. Generation Z, born 1997-2012, has taken the torch on mightily, taking on racial justice, education reform, economic inequality, and more.

So we ask ourselves, how can we best support youth as they lead us all into a stronger, more equitable future? As the fractures in our nation's systems deepen, how can we follow—and help inspire others to follow—the optimistic outlook and savvy future-forward solutions being put forth by young people?

The Skillman Foundation set out to learn more about youth organizing in the Detroit area from leaders in the field. As our first step, we engaged the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing to lead a scan of Southeast Michigan youth organizing groups and funders. A trusted local leader was hired to support the project and conduct the research, and an advisory of local leaders of all ages was assembled to review the findings. This report is a result of their efforts. It provides an overview of the state of youth organizing in the Detroit area and offers recommendations of how it could be further strengthened from those who are deeply involved in this work.

We at The Skillman Foundation are grateful for the partnership we are building with the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing. They have been a values-driven leader, connector, and convener of philanthropic efforts across the nation for more than 20 years. We're also immensely grateful to the local youth organizing leaders who were willing to invest their time and insights to help The Skillman Foundation and others learn from them through this report.

The bottom line is that a robust youth organizing ecosystem will allow the changemakers our society needs to get farther, faster. Young people are rich with positive ideas and energy. Investment in their advocacy will help them put it into action.

Onward,

Angelique Power, President & CEO
and the full Skillman Foundation Team

FCYO

Photo courtesy of Congress of Communities

Dear Reader,

Twenty-three years ago, a group of 75 funders gathered together at a day-long retreat to hear directly from youth organizers about their powerful work to leverage youth leadership for social change. Organizers candidly shared transformative experiences in leadership and at the frontlines, testifying to the multi-layered impact of youth organizing on youth, communities, and systems. They also underscored the extraordinary challenges posed by a lack of resources, including philanthropic support and capacity-building opportunities. From the recommendations generated at the retreat, the [Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing](#) (FCYO) launched as an intermediary organization that would bring funders and youth organizers together to ensure young people have the resources, capacities, and infrastructure they need to fight for a more just and democratic society.

The U.S. youth organizing field has grown in leaps and bounds in the years since, now encompassing over 300 known organizations doing critical work that spans issue, geography, and constituency [for details, see our [2020 National Youth Organizing Field Scan](#)]. However, while the field has made remarkable advancements and achieved many wins, structural inequity persists. In many places, it has worsened.

Yet young people are not quietly receiving these conditions as fated. Instead, recent crises have only served to galvanize sweeping numbers of youth across the country who are hungry for transformation and committed fully to its realization. And so, we at FCYO continue to work with urgency and commitment, as there's still so much more to be done. And we know it's going to take us all.

That's why there's little that's more meaningful than when a funder comes to us and says "We're ready."

We were thrilled by the opportunity to partner with The Skillman Foundation as they build into a bold new vision for what is possible in and through their long-standing commitment to young people. Detroit holds a powerful history of transformative organizing - *and it's more than clear the young people are ready to go*. Whether in our interviews, surveys, or conversations with long-time local youth organizing leaders, we were time and again stricken by the level of energy, commitment, and collaboration occurring across youth organizing stakeholders in Southeast Michigan. The region's youth organizing field is truly poised to level up - and there are clear ways funders can step up to strategically resource and support the strengthening of this potent ecosystem.

We don't offer this report as a final text, but as a beginning. We hope it offers useful information and context to support the bridging of funders and youth organizers. And, more than anything, we hope this report generates the same energy and resolve in its readers as the process of its creation did for us.

We're interested, here, and eager to see the possibility of what could happen in Southeast Michigan and across the state. So much is possible and we are grateful to be partners who are ready to move forward, together.

With gratitude and in solidarity,

Mónica Córdoba, Executive Director

Kel Kroehle, Learning & Development Director

Report Overview

Southeast Michigan is a region steeped in a rich organizing history, ranging from its prominence as a labor organizing stronghold to more recent leadership in innovative social change strategies such as those spearheaded by the Boggs Center, Detroit Freedom Schools, and Allied Media Projects. However, information about the size, scope, and nature of Southeast Michigan's current youth organizing field remains relatively scant and/or unavailable. To help position The Skillman Foundation to put forward its most bold and impactful strategy, the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing conducted a grounded assessment of Southeast Michigan's youth organizing landscape and, from this assessment, drew up potential pathways for meaningfully resourcing the strength, power, and sustainability of Southeast Michigan's youth organizing field.

This report details the findings from this scan. Our approach to collecting input was varied and grounded in a commitment to engaging and amplifying local voices and perspectives. The establishment of a local Advisory Council convened by a Detroit-embedded project consultant, a series of focus groups, and survey data from both youth organizers and local and statewide funders establish the fact base for the scan and recommendations. The report begins by providing an overview of the national youth organizing landscape, detailing both youth organizing's place along a broader youth engagement continuum as well as emerging trends in a continually expanding field of organizations. We then train our focus on Southeast Michigan specifically, weaving 15 interviews and 14 surveys with youth organizing groups to outline the local and regional landscape, including organizational demographics as well as organizers' insights on the strengths, growth edges, and opportunities faced by the field. Finally, we reflect on the local philanthropic context and lay out a series of potential pathways forward for The Skillman Foundation and other interested funders, complemented by three case studies.

As the youth organizing field is ever-evolving, this report is neither comprehensive nor final. Instead, we hope it is received as an invitation to witness the groundwork already laid - to hear from organizers about their points of pride, their challenges, and their visions - and to begin to imagine what could be.

Photo courtesy of DAYUM

Acknowledgements

On behalf of The Skillman Foundation and FCYO, we would like to acknowledge and extend gratitude to Project Consultant Akua Hill, Assistant Coordinator Imani Harris, and members of the youth organizing Advisory Council for their time, efforts, truths, and continued partnership in this project.

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Photo courtesy of Detroit Heals Detroit

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SECTION 1

Understanding A Growing National Field

Photo courtesy of Detroit Phoenix Center

Defining Youth Organizing

“Grounded in racial, gender, and economic justice, youth organizing is the process of engaging young people in building power for systemic change while supporting their individual and collective development.”

– *The Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing*

Youth Organizing as a Distinct Field of Practice

Most organizers and movement scholars trace the contemporary youth organizing field’s beginnings to the 1990s. Amid growing economic inequality, a booming carceral system, and a disappearing social safety net, the era featured a barrage of anti-youth policies that explicitly suppressed the rights of young people - and especially young people of color. It is in this context - the decade in which youth became an explicitly politicized identity - that youth-led movements began to really mount. Across the country, young people began to claim leadership in the public sphere and enlist their neighborhoods, schools, and communities to develop alternative policies toward progressive change. Over time, these groups of young people who gathered for specific campaigns began to form organizations that could expand their reach and impact and support their work toward systemic change over the long-haul. Similarly, community organizing groups that counted young people among their members began to build out leadership development structures to sustain young people’s engagement. It was also at this time that the positive youth development framework began to take root, first within academia and then quickly across youth-serving nonprofits. It is this marriage of community organizing and youth development - and its entry onto the radars of philanthropy - that marks the development of the youth organizing field as we commonly understand it today.

Youth Organizing as Youth Development + Systemic Change

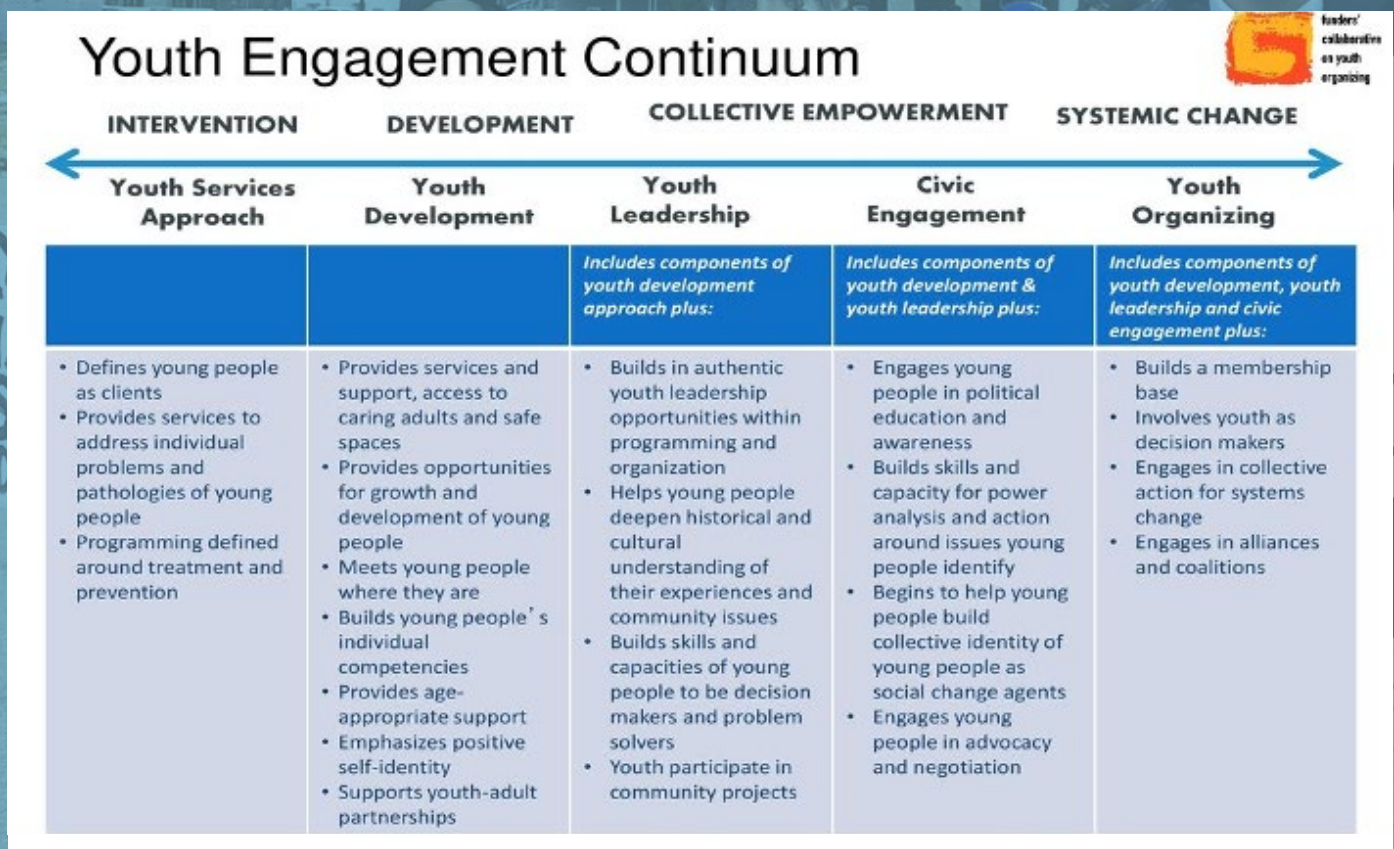
A defining characteristic of youth organizing is its dual function to create systemic change in communities while supporting the development of lifelong leaders with the skills to bring about a more just society. Youth organizing is thus both proactive and responsive, acting as a training ground for future leaders while building the power of young people in social justice movements now. This multidirectional focus is grounded in the understanding that transformative change requires an interplay between systems change and personal transformation.

Compared to labor and community organizing, a focus on individual development has long been a key component of youth organizing, in part owing to the field’s recognition that supporting young people experiencing trauma and oppression to become leaders also requires supporting their physical and emotional needs. Indeed, [a growing body of research](#) confirms that engaging young people in organizing is one of the best ways to support their holistic development and that it is especially relevant for young people of color, low-income young people, and others experiencing the impact of oppression. Youth organizing groups take a variety of approaches to supporting young people’s holistic development, including offering political education, healing and wellness, and holistic supports and services, as well as through building a leadership pipeline. A [2018 report](#) found engagement in youth organizing to have a significant positive impact on young people’s healthy social-emotional development, positive academic and educational outcomes, and deep and sustained community and civic engagement. [Yet another study](#) found that youth organizers have more high-quality research-based experiences than their peers in traditional youth development programs.

The Youth Engagement Continuum

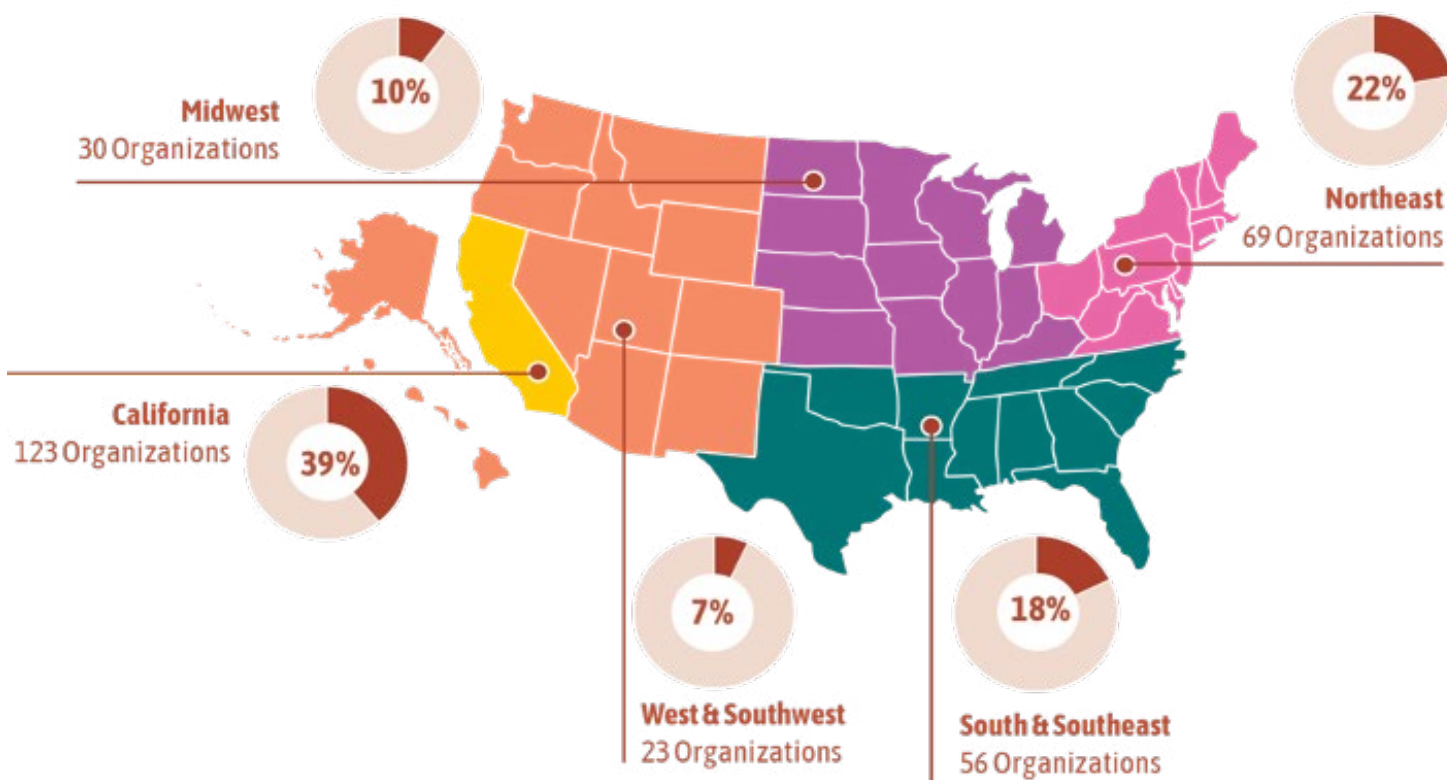
Countless nonprofit organizations operate with the primary goal to support the holistic development of young people. Despite a common interest, however, there is significant variability in the youth engagement models utilized by these organizations. First developed by FCYO in 2000, the Youth Engagement Continuum remains a useful tool for distinguishing between youth organizing and other youth engagement approaches. By detailing the different aims and activities characteristic of each approach, it helps highlight how youth organizing differs from, incorporates, and expands upon elements of youth services, youth development, youth leadership, and youth civic engagement. Specifically, the Youth Engagement Continuum offers a useful framework to understand the different organizations in Southeast Michigan and to ensure funders truly understand youth organizing, including how it relates to and differs from the other approaches. While a healthy youth engagement ecosystem will contain each of these models, youth organizing is routinely the least funded.

Photo courtesy of DAYUM



Youth Organizing Today: A Field Poised to Lead

Since its articulation in the 1990s, the United States youth organizing field has grown significantly: from 104 groups identified in FCYO's 2004 National Youth Organizing Field Scan to 312 in 2020. On the heels of the undocumented youth movement, the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, COVID-19, and ongoing climate and gun violence crises, the last few years have seen a substantial swell of youth mobilizations that have further increased the growth of the field. Below we offer a few highlights from FCYO's 2020 National Youth Organizing Field Scan, describing the field's exciting growth in the areas of organizational strength, leadership development, and power building.



- Youth organizing groups are strongly concentrated on the coasts; however, there is growing representation within traditionally under-resourced regions.
- FCYO's 2020 Field Scan noted 30 youth organizing groups across the Midwest. While we know this is a definitive under-representation, the takeaway is that the Midwest holds approximately 10% of the US youth organizing groups.






Photo courtesy of YVAC

In the last 20 years, the youth organizing field witnessed an expansion in the breadth and depth of its impact, as groups grew in size, number, and reach. Yet this growth does not necessarily signify field-wide organizational sustainability. Rather, youth organizing groups must contend with ongoing threats, including economic volatility, shifting political conditions, limited opportunities for staff and leadership development, and pressures to institutionalize, professionalize, or otherwise shift their work away from the grassroots. As the strength and sustainability of its organizations play a crucial role in determining the future of the field, the infrastructure of youth organizing remains a key area of inquiry and investment.

Average Budget : \$546,653*

Funding Sources Received:

-  94% foundation funding
-  71% individual donors
-  34% government funding

Average number of youth organizing staff in organizations:

- 7 part time staff
- 3 full time staff
- 35% of groups do not have full time organizer on staff.

→ Overall, youth organizing groups are heavily reliant on foundation funding, which is also concentrated on the coasts (just 11% of U.S. foundations are in the Midwest).

→ The average youth organizing groups' annual budget hovers around \$500,000, with approximately 3 full-time staff.

Importantly, as youth organizers prioritize building leadership among young people of color, low-income young people, girls, and queer and trans young people, the members of their organizations often face the brunt of the very systemic inequities they are working to change.

Core Leaders in Youth Organizing

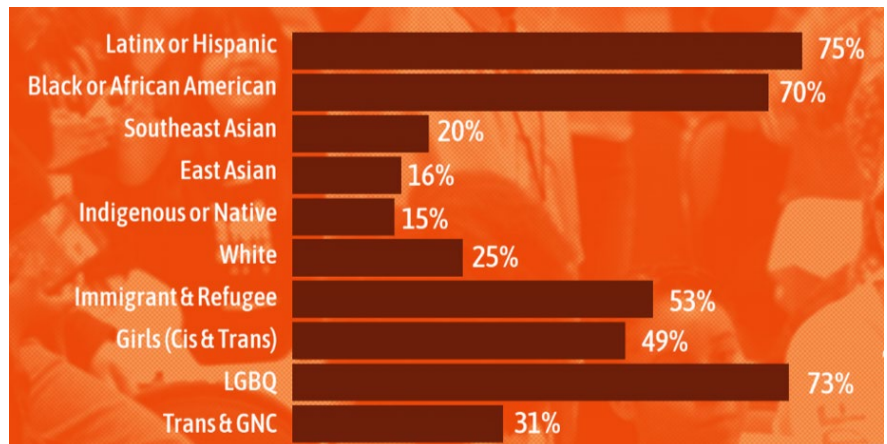
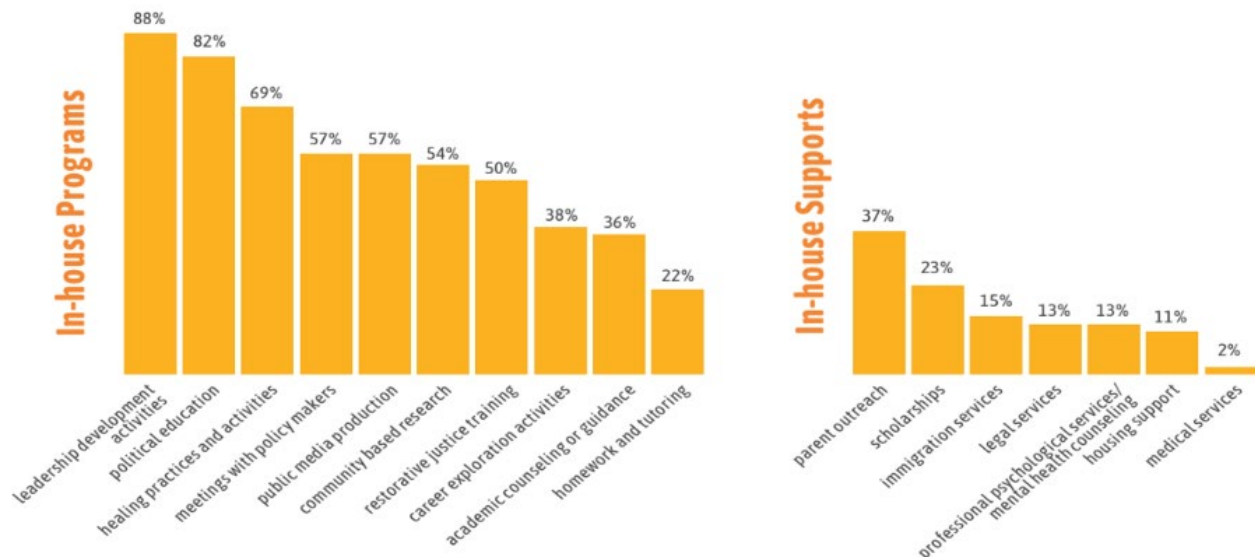


Photo courtesy of DAYUM

In-House Programs and Support Services



Because of this, youth organizing groups support young people’s material and emotional needs in many different ways. This includes providing direct services to youth such as parent outreach, scholarships, immigration services, legal services/representation, and housing support. Beyond direct services, youth organizing groups also offer a wide range of activities to support young people’s holistic development, ranging from leadership development and political education to community based research and counseling. The overarching result is a holistic, politicized approach to meeting young people’s needs that takes into account the systems of oppression at play.

In addition to building strong organizations and developing leaders, continued priorities for the youth organizing field include increasing alignment and developing shared strategy toward building the power to address the challenges of this moment. Key trends driving greater power building capacities include:

- A majority of groups are intergenerational, reflecting a shift in understanding of young people as members of whole communities, versus a distinct demographic to be engaged independently. This can range from a youth-led organization that engages parents, teachers, or other adults, to an adult-led organization that has a youth-led program, to an organization that engages in intergenerational networks and alliances. Further, the past few years have seen a significant growth among young adult organizing [18-25 years old].
- Groups are increasingly connected, with 98% engaging in networks and alliances.
- There is continuity across the years in terms of issue focus, with education, health justice, voting, and immigration justice remaining leading priorities for youth organizers. That said, groups are increasingly working from an understanding of issues as deeply connected and thus taking a multi-issue approach to their visions for their communities.
- Finally, there are more and more sophisticated voter engagement programs that are mobilizing whole communities, with 40% of youth organizing groups conducting voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns.

Photo courtesy of 482Forward

“Overall, the work of youth organizers is growing in size and power. Youth organizers are developing innovative strategies for building power across intersecting communities and issues. They are leading public movements for racial justice, immigrant rights, climate justice, gun control, and economic reform, among many others. The youth organizing field is maturing by engaging in the long-term work of building an active and engaged base of young people in low-income and working-class communities of color, developing a new generation of civic and political leaders, advancing the development and well-being of themselves and their communities, and working to expand their capacity and resources.”

- FYCO 2020 National Youth Organizing Field Scan

A photograph showing two young women, likely high school students, engaged in a community activity. They are kneeling in a garden bed, carefully planting small green seedlings into the soil. The background shows a brick building with a steeple, possibly a school or church, under a clear sky. The image has a soft, reddish-pink tint.

SECTION 2

Southeast Michigan Youth Organizing Landscape Scan

Photo courtesy of Congress of Communities

"A group of Detroit-area high school students, organized in the 482Forward Youth Organizing Collective, staged a "die-in" at Martin Luther King High School on Saturday, April 16. The protest and accompanying press conference called attention to the lack of school counselors amid an unprecedented mental health crisis among children and teenagers. The students chanted, "Mental health is a human right; Fund our counselors, do what's right," holding signs including, "This is life or death for us." They then lay on the concrete for 11 minutes in silence to underscore the appalling lack of counselors.

When last tallied in 2019, Michigan's ratio of mental health professionals-to-students was second-worst in the US, with one counselor for every 691 students."

– *Detroit Youth Stage "Die-In", Nancy Hanover, April 2022*

Background

Across Southeast Michigan, BIPOC young people continue to experience longstanding inequities that existed generations ago, including housing discrimination, police brutality, predatory lending, and education injustices. Yet from the League of Revolutionary Black Workers to Detroit Summer, they also draw on rich inheritances of resistance, unapologetically elevating their voices and demanding change to destructive and outdated systems. Youth organizing really grew in Detroit in the 1990s and early 2000s, both building on the region's labor organizing history while calling on frameworks unique to the region.

As BIPOC young people in Southeast Michigan build upon the region's legacy of organizing, however, it is also important to recognize that the landscape - from the local to the global - has significantly changed. Today's youth organizers operate in a more digital and technologically shaped world, providing access to tools and platforms that can reach large numbers of people with a call to action. As resistance builds to the systemic inequities that have long been the law of the land, young people are increasingly connecting their experiences, building solidarities across identities, issues, and geography, sharpening their strategies, and relentlessly showing up at the frontlines. In doing so, they are also expanding the organizing efforts of their predecessors to focus on systemic inequality, build intersectional movements, attend to the need for healing, and call out harmful power dynamics - including those that exist within social justice movements.

As resistance builds to the systemic inequities that have long been the law of the land, young people are increasingly connecting their experiences, building solidarities across identities, issues, and geography, sharpening their strategies, and relentlessly showing up at the frontlines.

Methods

While there is strong anecdotal evidence for the presence of youth organizing within Southeast Michigan, information about the size, scope, and nature of Southeast Michigan's youth organizing field remains relatively scant and/or unavailable. To develop a greater understanding of the landscape, we conducted 15 interviews with youth organizing stakeholders in the region, including youth organizing groups, adult-led youth groups, youth-led groups, and intergenerational organizations. The interviews covered a range of topics, including youth organizing models and frameworks, priority issues, the role of coalitions and alliances, opportunities, barriers, and resource gaps, and visions for meaningful engagement with philanthropy. To capture the perspectives of a larger sample, we distributed a survey and received responses from representatives of 14 different youth-serving organizations. Below we detail field trends and emerging themes based on the information gathered through those conversations and surveys. The data paints a picture of the strengths, barriers, opportunities, and visions stakeholders expressed when asked what it would take to strengthen the youth organizing ecosystem in Southeast Michigan.

Photo courtesy of DAYUM



Participating Organizations

482FORWARD	Eastside Community Network
Arab Community Center for Economical & Social Services	Force Detroit
Afrofutur Youth	Michigan Center for Youth Justice
Cody Rouge Action Alliance	Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health
Congress of Communities	MI Students Dream
Detroit Area Youth Uniting Michigan	Michigan Student Power Alliance
Detroit Action	Student Advocacy Center of Michigan
Detroit Heals Detroit	Urban Neighborhood Initiatives
Detroit Justice Center	We the People MI
Detroit Phoenix Center	Youth Development Resource Center

This includes organizations that participated in interviews and/or surveys, but not necessarily both.

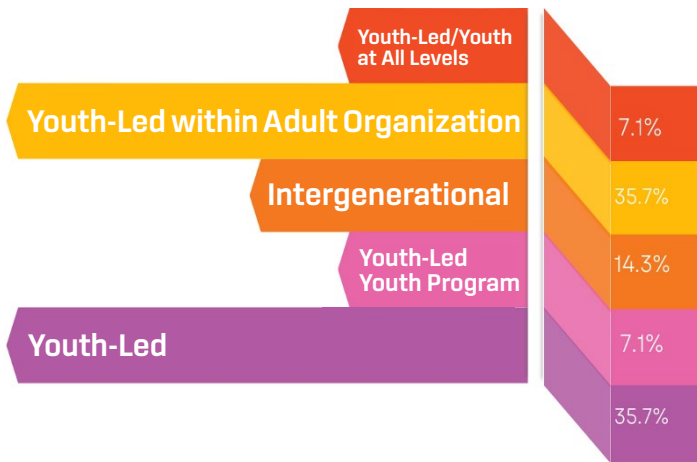
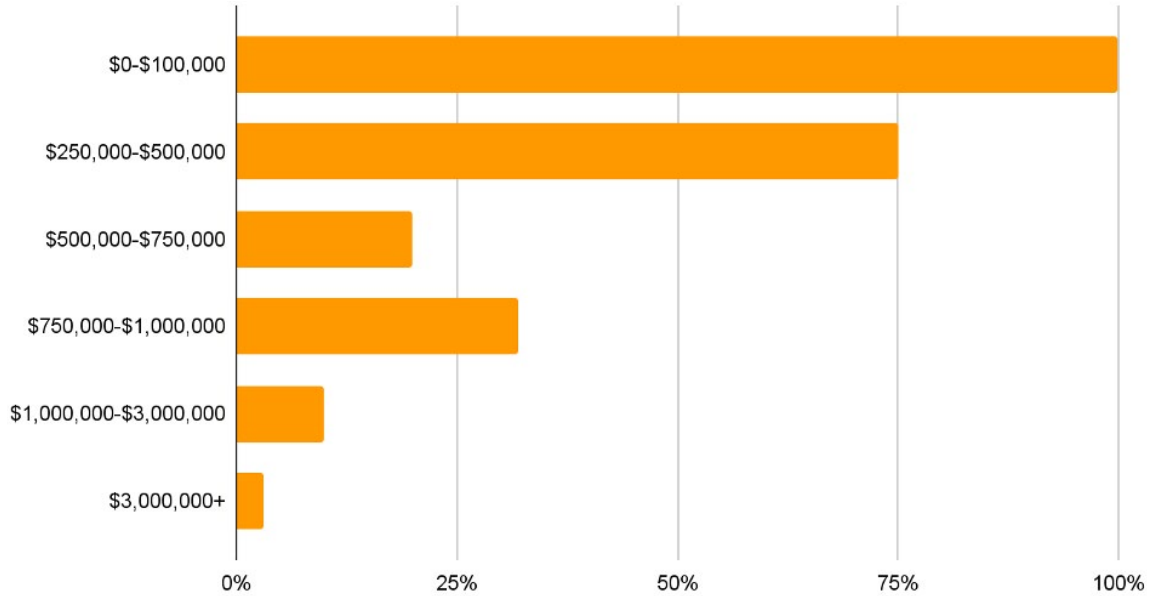
Youth Organizing in Southeast Michigan: Landscape Overview

While each organization has a role in the region's youth organizing ecosystem, not all exclusively or even primarily engage in youth organizing. Instead, the youth-serving organizations who participated in our survey and/or interviews use a range of youth engagement approaches. Using indicators from the youth engagement spectrum, we identified 11 youth organizing groups, 4 youth leadership groups, 3 civic engagement groups, and 2 youth services groups among the 20 organizations we heard from.

Youth organizing groups in the region tend to be significantly younger than their youth serving counterparts, with a large majority of the youth organizing groups we engaged founded after 2015. It is worth noting that this is unique relative to other cities [and particularly coastal areas], where there remain long-standing anchor groups from the early 2000s. To some extent, the recent emergence of youth organizing groups in Southeast Michigan testifies to the impact of movement moments. As youth organizing groups continue to develop in response to the growing unrest and resistance toward harmful systems, it becomes increasingly important to support those young people to both connect with their legacies as well as to develop the analyses, strategy, and skills to see through their visions for change.

Generally, the youth organizing groups we surveyed are not only young in tenure but under-resourced. Half of the surveyed groups operate with an overall organizational budget under \$500,000 (two under \$100,000). In addition, groups that exclusively engage in youth organizing tend to have smaller overall budgets than their peers whose budgets include other activities.

Percent Spent on Youth Organizing by Organizational Budget

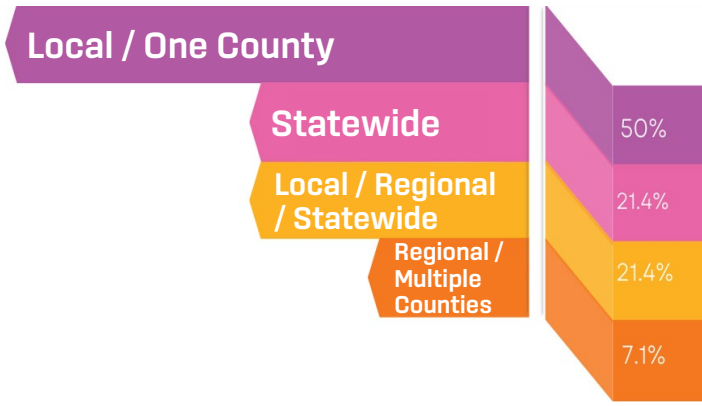


Groups in the region utilize a variety of youth leadership structures within their organizations.

Across youth organizing groups, youth-led and youth-led within adult organizations were the most common leadership structures. Given the region's rich history of intergenerational organizing, this raises the question of whether an increase in youth-led organizing has occurred alongside the emergence of new groups in recent years - and, if so, the intergenerational partnership opportunities that are available for these organizations.



Photo courtesy of 482Forward



A great majority of the organizations are working locally in Detroit and/or the surrounding cities; however, there was also representation from organizations that work statewide. While this is encouraging as it relates to the scope of youth organizing in Michigan, different scales of work may pose challenges to alignment. In interviews, many groups spoke to the disconnect between groups focused on statewide issues, with heavy presence in Lansing and the groups who organize on the neighborhood and city level.

Youth organizing groups in Southeast Michigan grapple with limited staff capacity. Two surveyed youth organizing groups operate fully on a volunteer basis. Smaller staff means smaller fundraising capacity, less coalitional capacity, and limited outreach capacity.

Staff Numbers by Organizational Budget

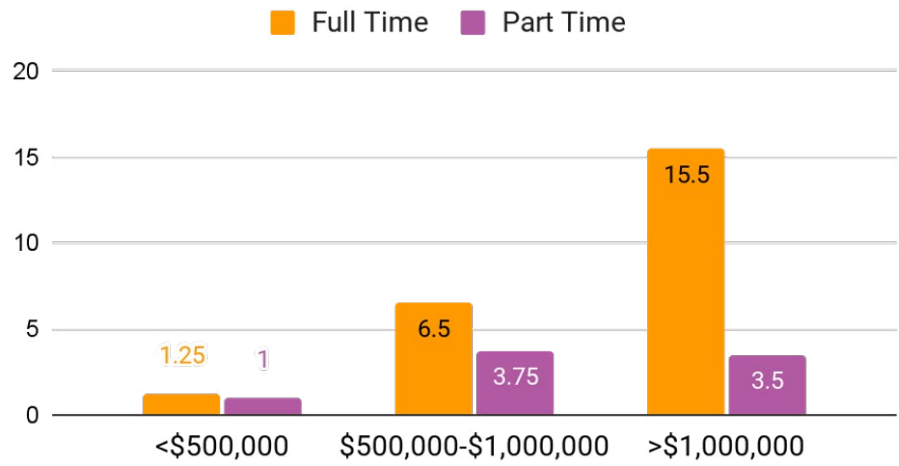


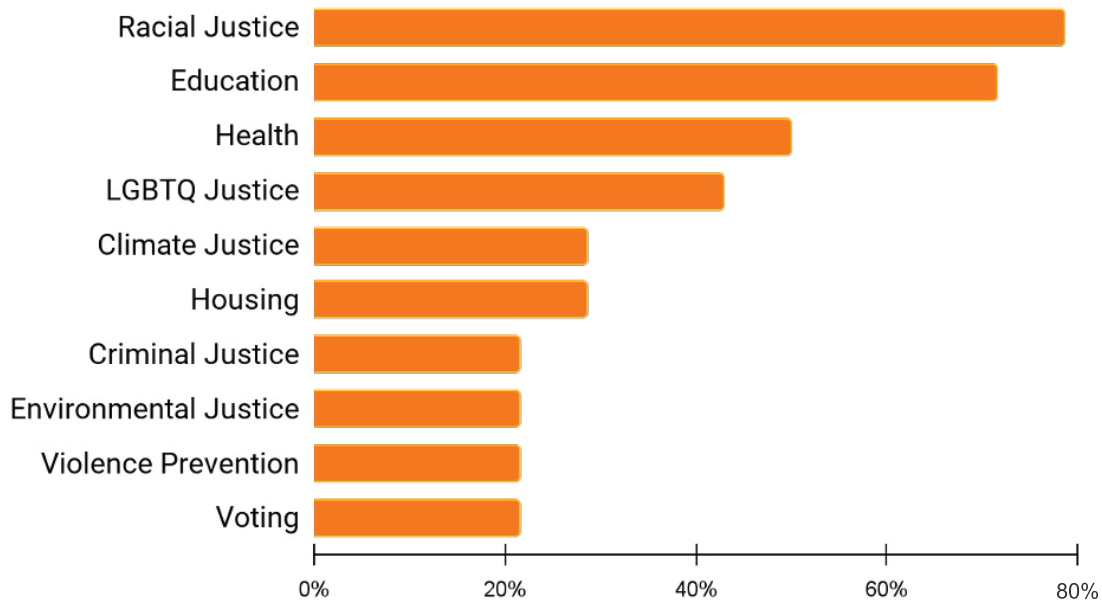
Photo courtesy of DAYUM



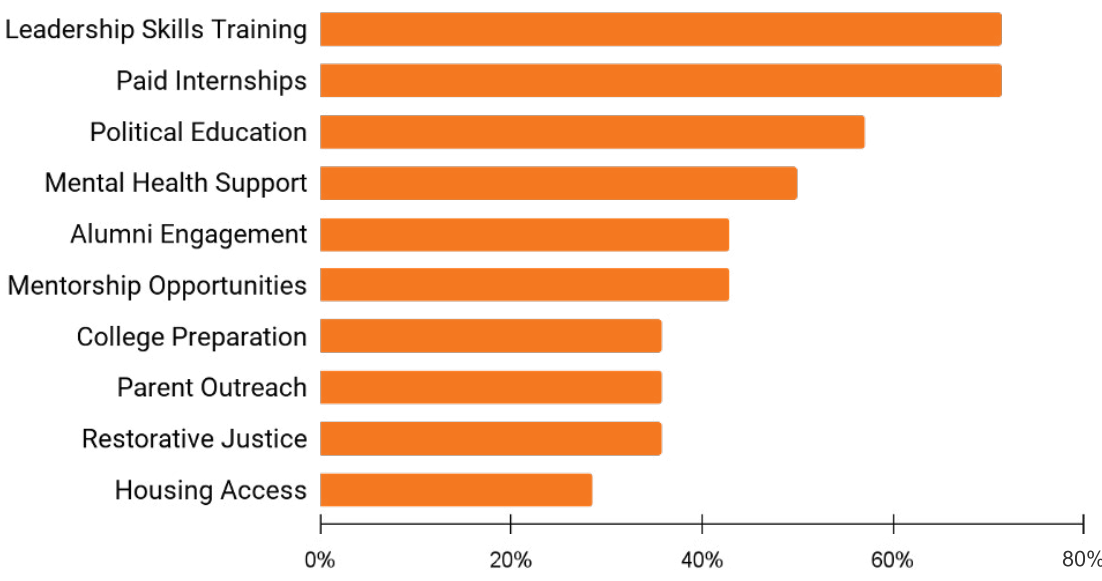


Photo courtesy of Detroit Heals Detroit

Organizations focus their work on a variety of issue areas. However, the top three issues cited by surveyed groups were racial justice, education, and health.



Asked about the services they offer participating youth, leadership development was cited as a common programmatic priority across groups. Many also expressed that mental health had grown tremendously as a focus area in the past few years.



Youth Organizing in Southeast Michigan: Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

A Note on Methods: In this section, we layer what we heard within our interviews with youth organizers over a broader landscape assessment, taking into account trends among organizational sizes, ages, budgets, priority issues, etc. while asking youth organizers what they are facing on the ground, what they care about, and what they need (a list of interview questions is included as an Appendix). We first present an assessment of strengths and challenges followed by our sense of the most emergent opportunities at this moment. Much of the insights shared are direct reflections from interviews; others reflect our noticings when considering the landscape as whole.


Strengths of Southeast Michigan's Youth Organizing Field

While emergent, the field is demonstrating impact. In part fueled by the mass mobilizations of recent years, the region's current youth organizing landscape is composed of a good amount of relatively young youth organizing groups. Even within many established organizations, a designated youth organizing focus or program only emerged within the past five or so years. Given the relative newness of this landscape, the impact of the region's groups is notable, with campaign wins across a variety of issues ranging from education justice to housing.

The field is informed and largely led by impacted youth. Related to groups' capacity for driving change is their commitment to the leadership of those youth most impacted by the inequities they are seeking to resolve in their organizing. In particular, those organizations that have developed strong youth organizing practices are utilizing youth-led models which cultivate youth voice and leadership in a meaningful way. A significant number of groups clearly distinguished their approach from that of acting on *behalf* of youth, instead highlighting the mandate to center and make space for them in their decision-making processes.

There is a prioritization on intersectionality and collaboration. Many groups lifted up the importance of integrating intersectional frameworks into their organizing strategies and power building approaches. Recognizing the interwovenness of various systems of oppression in harming different marginalized peoples, youth in Southeast Michigan are intentionally organizing across issue areas. They are building more inclusive movements and highlighting the ways in which broader systems of injustice and discriminatory policies/practices are at the root of many shared struggles. As a result, there appear to be elements of connectivity and collaboration between some of the organizations even when their organizing priorities vary. Furthermore, many of the groups we spoke to demonstrated alignment in their assessment of the resources and growth opportunities needed to strengthen the region's youth organizing ecosystem.

Photo courtesy of DAYUM



Given the relative newness of this landscape, the impact of the region's groups is notable, with campaign wins across a variety of issues ranging from education justice to housing.

Youth organizing groups are calling on numerous organizing inheritances. Across Southeast Michigan, there is a long history of people coming together locally to take action and create change, particularly a strong legacy of youth and intergenerational organizing coming out of groups like Detroit Summer, the Boggs Center, Detroit Future Youth, and Allied Media Projects. There also seems to be a growing adult organizing scene made of newer organizations that has taken shape in the last few years. These legacies and momentum offer an incredible local resource for emergent youth organizing groups to cultivate more intergenerational organizing strategies and also to develop an intentional pipeline for youth organizers' sustained engagement in local organizing over the course of their lives.

Among those organizations currently engaged in youth organizing, there are various organizing traditions at play. Some groups utilize institutional organizing approaches reflective of labor organizing and Alinskyite organizing models; other organizations born out of movement moments are exploring non-hierarchical structures of organizing. Even groups that are not currently doing youth organizing have expressed interest in developing the capacity to do so in a meaningful way. It appears that there may be many groups on the tipping point of expanding their youth development initiatives to include youth organizing as a key component.

Challenges Facing Youth Organizing Groups

Limited material resources pose significant barriers. Many participants shared that they simply do not have adequate resources to build and sustain a youth organizing program within their organizations. Frequently named challenges included:

- Funders change their funding priorities, making it challenging for organizations to build on bodies of work over the long-term if they want to continue to be funded
- Lack of multi-year support / sustained long term investment
- Funder requirements that small grassroots organizations cannot meet
- Youth grants are usually smaller in amount than "adult-centered" work
- Some grants do not allow money to go toward compensating youth
- Inadequate funding to hire a youth organizer on staff, or to pay enough to be competitive
- Lack of resources and education around self care - people are burned out

While securing funding, and particularly multi-year grants was lifted up as a primary challenge, a majority of participants also named significant barriers like not having physical space for convenings and inaccessible transportation conditions. Individuals also reflected on a sense of unhealthy competition among youth groups as many are applying for the same limited funds. This scarcity mindset is not only a serious barrier to building cohesion among youth organizing entities, it has also led to them to become less willing to share resources, opportunities, and expertise with one another.

Lastly, resources to support the personal needs of youth organizers beyond their organizing role was something that was shared as a missing piece to being able to engage youth organizers as whole humans first.

There is persistent adultism and bias toward young people. The volume of responses regarding adultism and ageism in youth work reinforce that there is still much work to be done in creating a youth-led and youth-centered ecosystem. Many of the cited practices centered around a lack of opportunities and adult support for authentic youth leadership and decision making. Examples include:

- Systems and policies that impact youth are created without their input
- Ageist mindsets and bias prevent adults from truly listening to and respecting youth voice
- The adult vision usually takes the forefront, even if it does not resonate with youth
- Youth are not afforded the agency to make important decisions

Questionable displays of authenticity and integrity were also named regarding the ways adult intentions and expectations play out in young organizing spaces, including opportunities falsely promoted as youth-driven, and youth engagement undertaken to fulfill grant requirements. Despite the breadth of examples offered, it is encouraging to witness respondents' awareness regarding the changes needed to cultivate true youth-driven organizing in the region.

There are a variety of barriers to meaningful collaboration. The theme of collaboration is critical to imagining a strong youth organizing ecosystem in the region. While some organizations have collaborated on select issues or campaigns, it remains to be seen what larger-scale, intentional, and sustained coordination could look like in the local landscape. One thing that is clear is that it will require great intention to address the following barriers:

Barriers to Collaboration Among Youth and Adults:

- Lack of trust between youth and adults
- Youth/adult "partnerships" are often performative and not mutually equitable
- Adults not listening to youth or centering their voices in movement work
- Not a lot of youth-led coalitions exist in the area

Barriers to Collaboration Among Youth Groups:

- Many organizations are working in silos
- Lack of shared understanding of youth organizing
- Lack of shared vision and root cause analysis as foundation for working together
- Tension and competitiveness for youth and resources - can feel adversarial because all pulling from the same, limited pools. Scarcity mindset prohibits groups from sharing opportunities, resources and expertise

Barriers to Collaboration Among Local, Regional, and Statewide Entities:

- Patterns like white flight make it difficult to draw connections between a disinvested urban hub like Detroit and rest of state
- Challenging to build needed statewide coalitions and mobility because policies are different from county to county
- Not as many youth organizing entities or opportunities in rural areas to connect with and establish substantial geographic coverage
- Finding balance between building a coalition that honors how distinct Detroit's needs are while acknowledging the need for statewide coordination to move legislation

Photo courtesy of 482Forward



Organizations have limited capacity. Participants named a variety of capacity restraints, from lack of trained in-house staff to youth leaders burning out from being asked to overextend themselves. Not having a dedicated staff organizer is a common reality for many groups who shared they did not have enough capacity within their teams to sustain meaningful youth organizing work. Others shared stories of limited capacity due to youth work being one of many hats a staff member was responsible for. Additionally, even when youth organizers are trained, oftentimes once they “age out” they move on to something else, which creates fluctuations in base building and capacity overall. It warrants the question of how we keep youth engaged beyond their “youth term” and make organizing a lifelong journey.

Many spoke of the need to develop capacity in rural areas where there are not as many opportunities for youth to get engaged or plugged into organizing. This was described as critical to building organizing power statewide, which many felt was needed in order to actually move the needle on important legislation. Other participants highlighted the importance of reaching more youth in neighborhoods and towns that do not yet have an organizing entity, as many organizations are engaging the same pool of youth, so there is not much mobilization of new youth. Further, participants stated that it tends to be the same high performing youth that are always tapped for engagement and leadership opportunities, meaning there are many young people that are not being engaged that could add significant capacity to organizing efforts. It also means that those that are continuously getting called on are likely to burn out sooner.

Even when youth organizers are trained, oftentimes once they “age out” they move on to something else, which creates fluctuations in base building and capacity overall. It warrants the question of how we keep youth engaged beyond their “youth term” and make organizing a lifelong journey.

Youth organizing groups - and youth organizers - face systemic inequities. Any true organizing effort designed to create substantial change cannot be absent of an equity lens and cannot ignore the ways in which deeply rooted systemic racism continue to show up in very tangible ways. Many of the systems that marginalized communities are navigating and issues that community organizations are trying to combat are rooted in white supremacy. Racial and socioeconomic disparities make the consequences of inaction more grave for BIPOC families and youth, which creates further tension between the need for urgent change and doing quality work that will yield sustainable outcomes. Cited inequities faced by youth organizers include:

- Disinvestment in Detroit communities - BIPOC youth do not have access to the same quality of life, housing, education, resources, and opportunities that their white peers do
- Black-led organizations often must fight to prove their work is worthy of resources and respect
- Some organizations do not feel their values align with funders and thus do not feel comfortable accepting resources from those institutions
- Funding disparities between radical, grassroots, and BIPOC-led groups versus “safer,” grassroots, and non-BIPOC led groups
- A conscious or unconscious concentration of high-performing students to participate in programs and initiatives
- A self-perpetuating emphasis on more recognized and supported youth organizing groups versus newer groups



Photo courtesy of 482Forward

There is significant variation among groups’ organizing experience and practices. Of all the challenges listed above, some are simply rooted in varying levels of experience and familiarity with organizing. There is a strong history of youth organizing from the 1990s and 2000s that was influenced by the Boggs Center, Freedom Summer, and others, but many of these organizations do not exist anymore. While some of the alumni from these groups are now in other organizations, or played formative roles in the creation of new organizations, there is not an identifiable set of youth organizing groups with a ten year track record. As such, many of the organizations solely doing youth organizing are fairly new, with small staff, small budgets, and relatively limited experience running campaigns or building a sustained base.

A key challenge that will require thoughtful attention is the significant variation in groups’ root cause analyses, organizing strategies, and long-term visions.

In her 2019 review of youth organizing in Detroit, Nijmie Dzurinko made the following observations, which we assess remain largely true of the region’s youth engagement landscape:

Overall, there appear to be two types of groups in the region:

- Those with some youth organizing practice and a basic understanding that could be improved/go deeper
- Those with no youth organizing practice who believe in youth voice but don’t yet practice basic organizing concepts and principles

In general, groups tend to engage different frameworks relative to their position across the youth engagement spectrum, including:

- Locus of change: individual [youth development] vs. system [youth organizing]
- Relationship to power: “seat at the table”/ assimilation [youth development] vs. shifting power relationships [youth organizing]
- Youth voice: individual opinion [youth development] vs. collective analysis [youth organizing]

Such variation can be traced to a number of reasons, including the organization’s origins, the traditions they’re drawing on, the age of the organization, the number of staff and rate of turnover [impacting institutional memory], the resources available, and the influence of funders’ priorities. The visible and perhaps sometimes invisible organizational stakeholders as well as the representation of the demographics/communities those organizations serve also have a significant impact on their respective organizing practices.

Opportunities for a Strengthened Field

The following section outlines various strategic approaches to strengthening youth organizing across Southeast Michigan. These opportunities are informed by the experiences of those interviewed and reflect their ideas for building a more powerful youth organizing ecosystem, from sharpening groups' organizing practices, to strengthening strategic alliances and intergenerational work, to meaningfully partnering with philanthropy. While each element is important in its own right, it is really an integrative and coordinated process that is needed - an approach that is inclusive of the region's most impacted youth organizing stakeholders, rooted in their lived experiences, and adequately resourced to realize their vision for a more powerful youth organizing field.

Promote Unity, Collaboration, and Coordination:

- Convene a core group [Advisory Council] to develop shared values/vision/strategy
- Identify a physical space [hub] to be shared by youth organizing groups
- Establish a Southeast Michigan Youth Organizing coalition/network grounded in shared values and understanding of youth organizing:
 - » Learning community
 - » Trust and relationship building
 - » Increased coordination of groups
 - » Shared communications
 - » Coordinated action planning
 - » Peer to peer learning and support
- Proactive collaboration amongst groups - leverage each other's strengths and expertise
- Alleviate sense of competition [for resources and youth] amongst groups
- More statewide coordination - hubs in different regions

Increase Resources and Sharpen Giving Strategies:

- Increased funding: hiring youth organizers and equalizing pay
- Multi-year grants so groups can engage in long-term strategies
- Dedicated in-house staff and training/capacity building for staff
- Paid staff person(s) to lead regional YO coalition
- Wrap around supports/resources for youth beyond organizing
 - » Resources to support basic needs of the youth
 - » Mental health and wellness resources
 - » Mentorship opportunities for youth organizers
- Focused support on those youth development groups most committed to adopting youth organizing

Center Equity and Humanness:

- Fair compensation and dignity for young people
- Support groups where youth most impacted by oppressive systems are working together to dismantle them
- Utilize trauma-informed, equity-minded educational materials and practices



Photo courtesy of Detroit Phoenix Center

Support the Cultivation of Authentic Intergenerational Relationships:

- Foreground youth agenda/vision
- Interrogate outdated best practices when it comes to youth engagement
- Form true intergenerational spaces: build relationships and trust
- Adults listening to the youth
- Address ageism, adultism, and tokenism
- Acknowledge power dynamics
- Support youth-led trainings and coalitions
- Support youth leadership and decision making in adult-led organizations
- Investment time and energy into youth - focus on building caring relationships versus reaching as many people as possible, but not necessarily in a meaningful way

Conduct Intentional Recruitment and Retention Strategies:

- Concrete recruitment and retention strategies across the region
 - » Clear and accessible entry point for interested youth
 - » Develop a step-by-step guide for people that want to get into youth organizing
- Make youth organizing a viable and sustainable career path - financial sustainability
- Peer to peer support and mentorship opportunities
- Alternative strategies to reach unengaged youth
- Meet youth where they are at - opportunities to engage in short term and long term organizing efforts
- Alumni engagement

Develop and Implement Education and Training Opportunities:

- Strengthen the organizing skills of those groups with an existing commitment to youth organizing
- Political education curriculum and training programs for organizers
 - » Make sure youth understand policy, legislation, and how systems change occurs
 - » Quality programming - evidence-based
 - » Understand organizing cycles - short term and long term
- Regional youth organizing training network: learning community, fellowships, coaching, mentorship
 - » Ask youth what topics they want to learn more about
 - » Incorporate lessons learned from history of local youth organizing efforts
 - » Include trauma informed organizing practices
- Learn what's working well in other places
 - » Utilize trainings that already exist and add local context
 - » Cross-city site visits and learning exchanges
 - » Identify trainers
- School partnerships
- Education and resources around self care and rest to prevent burnout
- Capacity building and leadership development

Create Healthier Relationships with Philanthropy:

- Reassess grantmaking practices: expectations, metrics, and cycles
 - » Consider more unrestricted multi-year grants
 - » Offer multiple ways to report on progress
- Engage youth in grantmaking processes - listen to the ideas they come up with
- Assess funder intentions, engagement, and proximity to the work
- Build authentic relationships and trust with grantees: engage beyond requirements
 - » Acknowledge power dynamics at play
- Assess disparities in grant sizes for youth work - more equity in youth grants
- Facilitate and support connections with organizations in other cities
- Build healthy relationships amongst groups while also investing in their individual capacity
- Consider how to support collaboration without forcing it - walking the right balance
- Consider how long the foundation is willing to support the building of this body of work

Ensure Transportation Availability:

- Consistently raised as a major barrier and challenge in youth work
- Need for coordinated transportation solutions



FCYO convened a group of local Detroit youth

organizing groups to dive deeper into these recommendations.

See the Youth Organizing Advisory Council's full recommendations in Appendix II.

Photo courtesy of YVAC





SECTION 3

Southeast Michigan Philanthropic Landscape Scan

Photo courtesy of Detroit Phoenix Center

Just as the youth organizing field has grown and strengthened over time, so too has the community of philanthropic supporters expanded in both number of funders and total dollar amount. FCYO's [2020 Funder Scan](#) identified 734 unique youth organizing funders who, between the years of 2016-2019, together granted an annual average between \$169 million to \$211 million.¹ This growth from a small table of funders to a veritable philanthropic arena can be attributed to a number of factors, including years of funder organizing efforts on behalf of youth organizers, researchers, and aligned funders, as well as broader shifts in national political consciousness prompted by significant moments in the 2010s and 2020s. Today, youth organizing funders are demonstrating increased investments in supporting leadership development and organizational capacity building as well as building field infrastructure, including supporting national and regional collaboratives and increasing research. However, while more and more funders are recognizing and valuing the connectivity of youth organizing to youth development, civic engagement, the arts, and other issue areas, youth organizing is still prone to siloing from both youth development and intergenerational or adult-led community organizing.

To date, there is not a publicly available report on funding for youth organizing in Southeast Michigan. In 2020, Allied Media Projects and Detroit People's Platform co-authored "Changing the Conversation: Philanthropic Funding and Community Organizing in Detroit," a detailed report on the challenges and opportunities around more meaningful partnership between Detroit's funders and community organizers. While this report includes critical insights and guidance for any funding institution in the region, it does not address youth organizing as a distinct arena of philanthropic investment.

¹ This range is based on total funding captured by a dataset provided by Candid (which only captures foundation funding) as well as a budget survey distributed to the 312 youth organizing groups who participated in FCYO's 2020 Field Scan.

Changing the Conversation: Philanthropic Funding and Community Organizing in Detroit

From 2015-2017, Allied Media Projects and Detroit People's Platform conducted an in-depth exploration of community organizing and philanthropy in Detroit. Calling on dozens of interviews and listening sessions, the resulting report aimed to foster greater philanthropic understanding of Detroit's organizing landscape and, importantly, to identify opportunities for deeper, more meaningful, and more effective collaboration. While the report does not address youth organizing at length, we assess that the analysis and recommendations included within the report have substantial overlap with some of the philanthropic growth edges around youth organizing. Below is a brief excerpt from the Executive Summary.

A just revitalization of Detroit requires holistic solutions that address these manifestations of racial and economic inequality at their roots. Such solutions address structural inequality head-on, foster wider access to resources and opportunity, and empower individuals and communities. Unfortunately, the philanthropic sector in Detroit has largely not embraced this approach. An analysis by Detroit Ledger, an independent database of philanthropic spending, showed few dollars were spent on projects addressing community organizing, race, equity, and justice, and only 1.63 percent of funding went to organizations with budgets of \$100,000 or less between 2010 and 2015. At the same time, philanthropy has supported initiatives that perpetuate systems and structures of inequality...

To function effectively, Detroit's community organizing ecosystem and philanthropists must work together to address structural racism and inequality, pursue holistic solutions that get at root causes, and trust the knowledge of the community to identify solutions. The organizing community must address its shared challenges—characterized by burnout and resource scarcity—collectively, while funders should be aware of these challenges and actively address them if they wish to truly make a difference in these communities.

The 12 Recommendations for Detroit Funders can be found [here](#).

Photo courtesy of DAYUM

About the Survey

To establish an introductory understanding of the resources and opportunities present in Southeast Michigan's funder community, we surveyed 7 regional and 3 national funders to assess past and/or existing investments in youth organizing as well as interest in potential collaborative grantmaking and capacity building opportunities. While survey fatigue led to a smaller number of responses than we desired, the significant diversity between and among respondents supports us to believe this is a fairly representative sample. Initial responses point to meaningful opportunities and challenges in building and strengthening a community of funders committed to supporting youth organizing in Southeast Michigan. Below we offer emergent trends gleaned from the survey.



Photo courtesy of Detroit Heals Detroit

Giving Strategies, Priorities, and Issue Areas

As with youth organizing groups, the region's philanthropic ecosystem is relatively young. FCYO's 2020 National Youth Organizing Funder Scan demonstrates exponential growth in funding for youth organizing in the past several years. Our survey results confirm this is true for Southeast Michigan as well, as funders report their institutions have funded youth organizing for an average of 3-5 years. National funders reported longer histories of funding youth organizing - this coincides with the heavy coastal concentration of early youth organizing funders.

While 50% of survey respondents report funding youth organizing, no one is funding youth organizing as a standalone area of giving. Instead, youth organizing is interwoven with other strategies - survey results demonstrate that many funders support youth organizing as part of a larger issue area. This aligns with the broader shift among the youth organizing field of groups taking a more intersectional, multi-issue approach to their work.

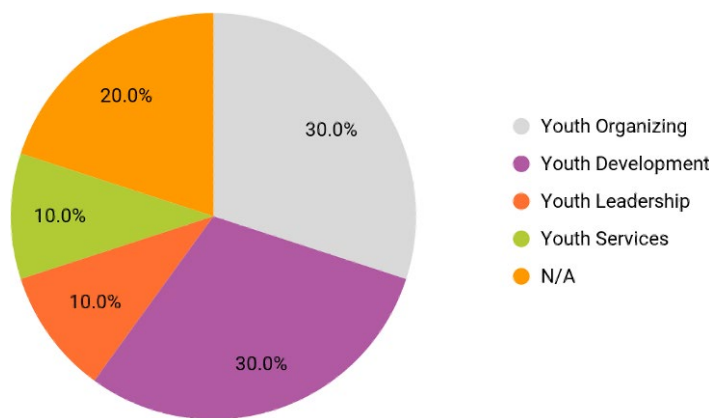
Funding for youth organizing, while increasing, continues to represent just a fraction of the resources going toward youth engagement. Even within a survey targeted toward known allied funders, just 30% identified youth organizing as a primary giving strategy.

Youth organizing's natural intersections with other issues and youth engagement approaches is most certainly an asset in arguing its relevance across many different funder priorities. However, the significant number of institutions funding youth organizing "by another name" may also belie a hesitation among funders to publicly align with a more politicized approach to social change. There may also be disagreement at different levels of the organization. Within our survey, several respondents gestured at an interest in youth organizing but indicated that it required creativity on their end to get their institution to fund it.

"The Detroit-based team is reluctant to name youth organizing as an explicit strategy because of budget limitations with existing priorities. But if there was a pooled fund, then we could engage as a good philanthropic partner."

"We don't call it youth organizing, but for the past four years, we have focused on funding efforts that structurally center youth in their work, including decision-making and governance within an organization and for systems change."

GIVING STRATEGIES



Funding for youth organizing, while increasing, continues to represent just a fraction of the resources going toward youth engagement. Even within a survey targeted toward known allied funders, just 30% identified youth organizing as a primary giving strategy.

Yet, there is interest, curiosity, and lots of potential overlap. Organizations are interested in collaboration but want to learn more about how to incorporate youth organizing into their existing work. Gauging by the surveys, and their parallels with broader youth funder communities, there will need to be work done to generate alignment - to assess a foundation's capacity for this work.

"I am highly interested in supporting youth organizing, but am not a decision maker at my organization. There might be an opportunity to learn more of how to translate youth organizing to positive impacts for the youngest children and/or youth organizing as it relates to equitable arts and culture access."

"We primarily fund outside of the youth space....As our strategy grows, we plan to implement more youth organizing work into some of our other strategies like our "bridging the digital divide" work, where we can incorporate both youth and adult leadership opportunities."

"We are opportunistic in our funding model - if it benefits Detroit as a whole, we can grant."

"Youth organizing can be a component of all of our work. As mentioned previously, the primary focus of our work is to achieve specific outcomes around housing stability, entrepreneurship, employment, arts and culture, and public space. We would be open to learning more about how youth organizing could support these outcomes."

Overall, there is definitely interest in growing and figuring out a collaborative means to support youth organizing in Southeast Michigan. 40% of survey participants indicated active interest in a collaborative funding effort with another 50% indicating they were interested but would like more information. Just one funder stated they were not interested.

Funders also pointed to further engagement opportunities:

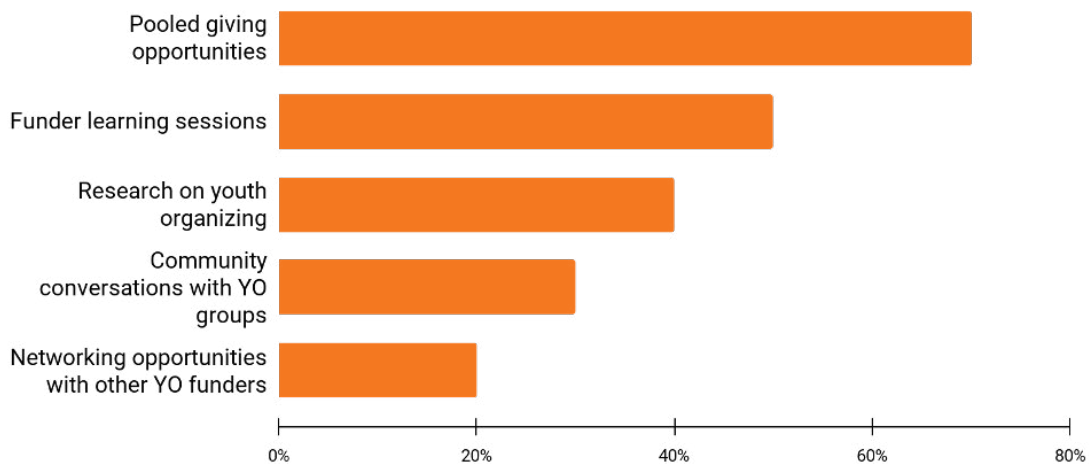


Photo courtesy of DAYUM



Finally, youth funders in the region are well connected, reporting participation in the following philanthropic and community-based collaborative efforts:

- Council of Michigan Foundations
- The Funders Network (Inclusive Economies)
- Detroit Residents First Fund
- CDO Fun / Elevating CDO Fund
- New Economy Initiative
- Detroit Journalism Engagement Fund
- Building the Engine
- Strategic Neighborhoods Fund Working Group
- Detroit Workforce Funders Collaborative
- Regional Workforce Funders Collaborative
- Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project
- YDRC Steering Committee
- Launch MI
- Generator Z
- CDAD/BECDD Funders Collaborative
- Detroit Neighborhood Forum
- Detroit Home Repair Fund
- Neighborhood Funders Group (Midwest Infrastructure Funders, Democratizing Development Program, Integrated Rural Strategies Group, Amplify Fund)
- House US Fund
- Neighbor to Neighbor Direct Outreach, Detroit Tax Relief Fund
- Connect 313 Fund
- Arts and Culture Collaborative
- Public Space Funders Collaborative
- MI Justice Fund
- Early Childhood Education Collab
- Black Movement Fund
- Four Freedoms Fund
- Hope Starts Here
- Detroit 4Youth
- Kindergarten Readiness strategy Group
- ECE Workforce Development



Photo courtesy of Congress of Communities



SECTION 4

Looking Forward: Potential Pathways

Photo courtesy of 482Forward

General Recommendations

Based on our conversations with funders and youth organizing practitioners in Southeast Michigan, we generated the following list of recommendations for the consideration of The Skillman Foundation and any other funder interested in developing a grounded strategy for building a strong and healthy youth organizing ecosystem:

Build knowledge about youth organizing. Funders who want to support young people as a meaningful drivers of systemic change should build knowledge about youth organizing, its key components, and how it builds on and differs from other youth engagement approaches. Engaging young people in building power requires a different orientation and set of capacities than youth development and leadership work. Funders need to be able to recognize these different approaches, value their various roles in a strong youth engagement ecosystem, and keep an eye on the unique capacities needed to build meaningful power. FCYO's [Occasional Paper Series](#) can be a valuable resource here.

Understand local context and support groups at different stages of development. Place-based funders need to understand the context of youth organizing groups in their region and the stages of development of various groups. This scan identified no long-standing youth organizing groups, a handful of young established groups, and a number of emerging efforts. This indicates the need for an approach that supports established groups to deepen organizing practice while simultaneously helping emerging groups build basic understanding of organizing. Efforts to support new and emerging groups should be highly attentive to which groups truly have the orientation and capacity to develop full fledged organizing and what needs will have to be met to make that possible.

Value youth leadership and intergenerational collaboration. Both meaningful youth leadership and intergenerational collaboration are essential to a healthy youth organizing ecosystem. Youth organizing groups must have real opportunities for young people to participate in decision making and lead campaigns. A lack of practices that meaningfully engage youth leadership was repeatedly referenced in our interviews. This does not mean, however, tokenizing young people by putting them in decision making positions they have not been developed for or avoiding partnerships with adults. Young people have a key role to play in building a strong social justice sector and meaningful power requires intergenerational partnership. Developing powerful youth leaders requires a ladder of engagement where leaders take on greater roles and decision making based on demonstrated skills and experience. This means creating meaningful decision making roles for young people while also supporting their ongoing development. It also means supporting youth organizing groups' relationships with adult and intergenerational organizations.

Young people have a key role to play in building a strong social justice sector and meaningful power requires intergenerational partnership. Developing powerful youth leaders requires a ladder of engagement where leaders take on greater roles and decision making based on demonstrated skills and experience.

Commit to building power. Truly addressing inequity and injustice requires building the power of communities to demand and create transformative change. Funders who wish to support transformative change should focus less on policy change and other short-term outcomes and more on building power as both a means and end to itself. Many youth organizing groups are in a building stage. While wins are important for continued motivation, they need support to do the diligent work of building out their base and organizing their communities to develop long-term power - lessening their emphasis on short-term policy wins and supporting power building.

Seed meaningful partnership between funders and youth organizers. The most effective way to build an ecosystem to support youth organizing is through meaningful partnership between funders and youth organizers. Funders and organizers can grapple with the inherent power imbalances to build shared vision and strategy for advancing the work. Youth organizers should have meaningful input in program design and evaluation. A shared learning agenda between funders and youth organizers can be a great way to build relationships. The principles of Trust Based Philanthropy provide a useful guide in building funder/practitioner partnership. A precedent for this kind of partnership has already been established through the Skillman Foundation's Youth Council. Continuing to build on these practices will create a climate of trust and mutual accountability.

Build capacity beyond the grant. A strong youth organizing ecosystem requires supporting grassroots youth organizing groups in building a range of capacities from organizing strategy and leadership development to financial management and staff supervision. In interviews, youth organizers spoke of overburdened staff, limited grant writing capacities, and the need for support beyond organizing skills. Funders can play a crucial role in developing capacity building opportunities that truly meet the unique needs of youth organizers and help them build sustainable organizations.

Truly addressing inequity and injustice requires building the power of communities to demand and create transformative change. Funders who wish to support transformative change should focus less on policy change and other short-term outcomes and more on building power as both a means and end to itself.



Photo courtesy of YVAC

Support a healthy ecosystem. A strong youth organizing ecosystem has multiple organizations in relationship to each other, adult organizing groups, and legal, advocacy, and other support organizations. Funders can play a key role in supporting space for but not forcing collaboration and creating relationships with support organizations where organizers remain in the driver's seat. Youth organizers repeatedly spoke of the need for spaces to build relationships and learn together. They identified scarcity and withholding resources as a challenge within the youth organizing field primarily driven by funders. Funders will need to play a role in alleviating this pressure and opening supported space for collaboration.

Organize funders. Youth organizing has been historically underfunded and no single funder can build a healthy youth organizing ecosystem. Currently there are a range of funders in Southeast Michigan with potential interest in supporting youth organizing from a variety of perspectives including social and racial justice, youth development, and issue based orientations. In our surveys, many funders expressed both interest and 28 internal challenges in explicitly funding organizing. These funders are primed to be engaged. Together, funders and youth organizers can organize funders to learn about and support this work.

Take a long-term approach. Youth organizing is a powerful approach for developing young leaders and driving transformative community change, but it won't happen overnight. Building strong organizations takes time and there will be ebbs and flows in their growth. Funders should approach this as a long-term investment and be willing to make long-term grants that support groups through their inevitable highs and lows.

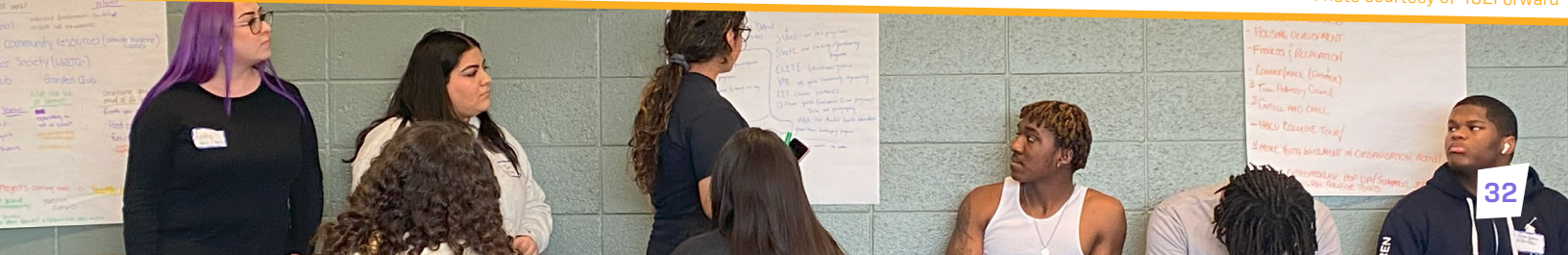
Potential Pathways for Funding a Stronger Field

Overall, the youth organizing ecosystem in Southeast Michigan is primed for growth. There are a handful of established youth organizing groups with a track record for effective campaigns and collaboration and a large number of emerging groups committed to expanding their youth organizing work. In addition, building on recent trending interest in racial justice among funders, a few key regional funders are ready to invest in this work. Based on all of our research, we see several possible opportunities for funders to support youth organizing in the region. The options presented below are not mutually exclusive and can be mixed and matched to create a coordinated approach. Conversations between funders and practitioners are needed to determine the right mix.

Capacity Building Cohort

One of the best options to strengthen the capacity of youth organizing groups in Southeast Michigan is to create a cohort-based grantmaking and capacity building program. Such a program would provide participant organizations with funding, ongoing capacity building, and membership in a peer learning community that supports relationships between groups. Participating organizations could be involved in the design of the program and creation of a meaningful learning and evaluation agenda. Critical to the success of the program is input from groups on the kind of capacity building needed and identification of the right providers. Three years is generally a good length for such a program in order to allow groups to learn and implement their learnings. Similar efforts have been highly effective at strengthening organizations and creating lasting relationships. [Examples: Perrin Family Foundation's BLOC Cohort, FCYO's Pipelines to Power initiative](#)

Photo courtesy of 482Forward



Participatory Pooled Fund

Another option that has been highly successful is to create a pooled fund to support local youth organizers with multiple funders contributing. The primary advantage of this is that it offers a way to bring new funders into this work. Such a fund could also develop a structure to engage youth organizers as advisors and/or decision makers, allowing them to inform the program and strengthen relationships between funders and organizers. In addition, a pooled fund could offer capacity building as described above. One key question to consider is how decisions will be made. Do contributing funders get a say in grantmaking decisions? If so does each funder get one vote or is it based on the size of their contribution? Are youth organizers involved in grantmaking decisions? Such questions have created challenges for similar funds and good models do exist. [Examples: Visionary Freedom Fund, Northern CA Youth Power Fund](#)

Invest in Intermediaries and Infrastructure

In addition to strong individual organizations, a healthy youth organizing ecosystem needs networks and intermediaries that connect organizations to each other and support their growth and development. This includes formal and informal networks, space for both staff and youth leaders to connect, training and capacity building space, and space to connect with adult organizing and support organizations. In our interviews, youth organizers repeatedly talked about the need for a hub to connect organizations. There are a few potential avenues for funding here. Funders could provide resources to one or more intermediary organizations to offer support to local youth organizing groups as The California Endowment did with Movement Strategy Center in the early stages of their support for youth organizing in California. Another possibility is to support local organizations in forming a network or hub that brings local organizations together like the [Urban Youth Collaborative](#) in New York or [YO! Cali](#) in California or to create spaces that bring groups together like the camps and lobby days The California Endowment supported in California.

Flexible Individualized Capacity Grants

Another option, rather than offering cohort-based capacity building, is to make grants to groups and then offer them additional funding for individualized capacity building. This option is preferable if the needs of various organizations are significantly different from each other, as it allows groups to identify their specific needs and a provider that can best support them. [Examples: Cricket Island, Borealis Philanthropy, Black Led Movement Fund](#)



photo courtesy of Detroit Heals Detroit

Differentiate Support for Emerging and Established Groups

Youth organizing groups in Detroit are in various stages of development that may require different forms of support. Another option is to offer one set of supports for more established groups that could include coaching on campaign development, revision of leadership development ladders, or training for organizers. At the same time, there may be organizations that are new to youth organizing that need a more basic introduction and support in differentiating organizing from other forms of youth engagement.



SECTION 5

Resourcing a Stronger Youth Organizing Field: Mini Case Studies

Photo courtesy of DAYUM

Over the last few years, philanthropic infrastructure for youth organizing has grown significantly across the country. Included here are three mini case studies of regional or statewide efforts to support youth organizing that may have particular resonance in Southeast Michigan.

The California Endowment

Over the last decade, The California Endowment (TCE) has invested heavily in youth organizing as a key component in their strategy to advance health equity across the state. The growth of youth organizing in California demonstrates what is possible when this work is funded adequately. TCE's work is also instructive for funders interested in not just supporting organizations, but in building infrastructure and a healthy ecosystem for youth leadership and organizing.

California has a long history of strong youth organizing. As youth organizing grew in the 1990s, the Bay Area and Los Angeles in particular were home to important early youth organizing efforts. These organizations were often mentored by leaders from the Black and Brown power movements of the 1970s and 1980s and statewide ballot initiative campaigns for immigrant rights and against criminalization of young people which together helped build a generation of young leaders and connections between organizations.

In 2010, TCE launched Building Healthy Communities (BHC), a ten-year \$1.75 billion investment in health equity in fourteen communities across the state. Following the 2008 recession, [this was a time of decreased funding for youth organizing](#) and many organizations established in the late 1990s and early 2000s were closing. While youth organizing was not initially a key component of the BHC strategy, established youth organizing groups in California saw the opportunity presented by BHC and helped TCE staff better understand the potential and value of their work. TCE's leadership took note of the powerful work young people were leading around harmful school discipline policies, demanding clean air and water, and juvenile justice reform. In 2012, TCE created a statewide position housed in their learning and evaluation department to better understand youth leadership and organizing.



Photo courtesy of Congress of Communities

As TCE began convening youth organizing leaders across the state, they recognized the need for simultaneous investment in individual organizations, training and capacity building, and networks to connect organizations. This multi-pronged approach coupled with commitment to continuous learning alongside their partners has been the hallmark of a successful approach to building statewide infrastructure. Key components of this work included:

- **Long-term investment in organizations:** While support for infrastructure is critical, TCE staff recognized that organizations need resources to do the work on the ground and they made long-term commitments to key partners as a top priority.
- **Training and capacity building:** From the beginning, TCE invested heavily in intermediaries to support local organizing groups. Early on, the Movement Strategy Center had a team of veteran youth organizers providing deep dives, on the ground training, and coaching for organizations.
- **Networking spaces for youth and adults:** Creating space for young people and adult staff to connect, learn from each other, and build relationships was another priority. TCE's annual youth leadership camps became a critical space for leaders to come together and create the connective tissue necessary for a stronger field. In the earlier years, TCE created most of these spaces themselves. More recently, as capacity in the field grew, they have supported the creation of statewide networks that lead the work themselves. YO! Cali and Power California are two strong statewide networks of youth organizing groups that now coordinate much of the infrastructure and capacity building.
- **Media Hubs:** While base building is central to TCE's strategy for building power, they also recognize the need to shift public narratives. To this end, they supported youth media hubs across the state that partnered with organizers and supported young people to create their own media.
- **Statewide campaigns:** TCE recognized that while policy wins were not the sole measure of progress, supporting young people to engage in campaigns to improve conditions in their communities was critical to grounding the work. They created opportunities for groups to come together to advance statewide policy, including "Sacramento Days" where young people from across the state would go to the state capital and talk directly to legislators.
- **Support for emerging groups:** TCE was clear that in order to drive statewide change, they needed strong organizations not just in the major urban areas but also in rural areas and small towns that had so often been ignored by philanthropy. This was sometimes slow work that required steadfast commitment. The capacity and relationship building opportunities on top of commitment to supporting organic leadership from those regions were critical in supporting the growth of powerful organizations in underfunded regions.

Throughout their work, TCE maintained a commitment to learning and evaluation developed in partnership with grantees. Dr. Veronica Terriquez, who has a background in youth organizing herself, has helped TCE learn about this work while working with youth organizing groups to capture data that is meaningful to them. Her work has focused on documenting the [impact of youth organizing on multiple levels](#). [At the individual level, she has tracked how youth organizing supports the health, wellbeing, and academic success of young people](#). At the community level, she has documented the impact of campaigns in advancing equity and justice. At the societal level, she has tracked how youth organizing supports continued civic engagement and active citizenship. She has done both real time tracking of the work of youth organizing groups as well as a [longitudinal study](#) on the long term impact of youth organizing on educational civic engagement outcomes.

In an [evaluation on the impact of the BHC initiative](#), The Center for the Study of Social Policy identified five key contributions of youth organizing to TCE’s approach to power building and the health equity landscape in California:

- Youth helped BHC recognize how trauma and healing are integral to youth organizing.
- Youth helped make social media essential to effective organizing.
- Youth organizing identified the need for supportive infrastructure and spurred early discussions on a power-building ecosystem.
- BHC helped grow the youth organizing field in California.
- BHC’s youth organizing efforts stimulated the creation of a new generation of social justice leaders of color.

TCE has embraced a hands-on approach to philanthropy and field building. Their deep partnership with youth organizing groups, belief in supporting young people as key drivers of change, and ability to support local organizations while building statewide infrastructure has produced tremendous results and offers indications of what a healthy youth leadership ecosystem looks like.



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The Perrin Family Foundation

In 2012, the Perrin Family Foundation (PFF) began shifting its mission from a focus on youth development to an explicit commitment to youth-led social change. Their 2013 report [A New Role for Connecticut Youth: Leaders of Social Change](#) laid out their rationale and presented findings from a scan of the statewide youth leadership landscape. They concluded that the youth organizing field in Connecticut was nascent and that attempts to build the field would require significant capacity building in addition to grantmaking. In 2013, PFF launched Building Leadership and Organizing Capacity (BLOC), a multiyear grantmaking and capacity building initiative to strengthen the capacity of core youth organizing partners.

This effort, explained in detail in the report [Strengthening a Nascent Field: Lessons from The Building Leadership and Organizing Capacity Initiative](#), represented both a first foray into capacity building and the largest financial commitment the foundation had made to date. PFF was clear from the outset that this was not just a grantmaking program, but an effort to build organizational capacity and help develop a healthy youth organizing field in the state.

BLOC was Designed With Five Core Components:

- 1. Cohort Meetings and Retreats:** BLOC teams participated in monthly cohort workshops. During the first half of the initiative, the cohort meetings were training focused, but later shifted to focus on coaching, troubleshooting, and strategizing. BLOC teams also participated in annual retreats.
- 2. Organizational Self-Assessment:** All BLOC partners engaged in an organizational self-assessment process. The assessments helped shape cohort-wide trainings and served as the basis for annual workplans completed by BLOC partners. They also helped ensure that organizational development needs—beyond organizing and leadership development—were identified and addressed.
- 3. Individualized Support and Follow Up:** BLOC teams received technical assistance and coaching support between cohort meetings provided by the BLOC Facilitation Team.
- 4. Study Visits and Access to National Trainings:** Each year of the initiative, BLOC teams conducted a study visit with an established youth organizing group on the East Coast and were supported to participate in national youth organizing trainings and conferences
- 5. Reflection and Evaluation:** Each year, BLOC partners reflected on progress towards their work plan objectives. BLOC partners were also asked to provide ongoing feedback to improve and strengthen the initiative as a whole.

A third party evaluation of BLOC found that the initiative had a significant impact on both individual organizations and the overall ecosystem for youth-led social change in Connecticut.

Specific impacts for participating organizations included:

- A shared framework and language for understanding for youth organizing
- Enhanced organizational capacity and stability in areas including staffing, finance, and fundraising
- Shifts in program model and structure to engage in more effective organizing
- Heightened youth decision making roles within organizations
- Core competencies for youth organizing including growing a membership base, identifying issues, applying a power analysis, and developing organizing campaigns
- Increased capacity for effective campaigns
- A movement building orientation that supported collaboration
- Support for emerging coalitions

Strengthening a Nascent Field articulates a number of design choices and key lessons that are relevant for regional funders looking to support youth-led social change. Of particular value is the way that they engaged the field in design while holding true to their organizational mission. The attention paid to both building core youth organizing capacities and strengthening overall organizational capacity was critical for emerging organizations as was their approach to creating space for relationship building rather than forcing collaboration. BLOC demonstrated how cohort-based grantmaking can have an impact where the sum is greater than the parts.

→ BLOC Design Choices

- » Field informed design
- » Multi-year support
- » Responsible exits
- » Spanning organizational life stages
- » Holding intergenerational space
- » Create a learning and accountability community

→ BLOC Lessons

- » Take the long view
- » Rather than focusing on proving efficacy, ask organizations to commit to learning and evolving over time
- » Start by asking organizations to “be” together, rather than “do” together.
- » Directly engage the constituents of the organizations you are supporting, including young people
- » Interrogate your role and how you hold power

Northern California Youth Organizing Funder Collaborative

Launched in 2019, the [Northern California Youth Organizing Funder Collaborative](#) is a network of funders committed to supporting youth organizing as a strategy to advance equity and justice in California's Bay Area. The collaborative is convened by two key partners. [Youth Organize! California \[YO! Cali\]](#) is a network of 34 California youth organizing groups and serves as a convener, capacity builder, and strategist for engaging leaders in youth organizing. [Northern California Grantmakers](#) is the philanthropic membership association for Northern California and serves as the pooled fund manager, grants administrator, and funder convener.

Over the last three years, the collaborative has engaged in a number of activities:

- **Relationship Building:** Conducting regular funder-to-funder and funder-to-organizer activities that cultivate knowledge, understanding, and trust so that on-the-ground work can be sustained and strengthened over time.
- **Shared Learning:** Creating a learning agenda to enhance our working knowledge by drawing on the expertise of participating funder and organizing partners, research from field and academic leaders, and insights from national colleagues like those in the Funder's Collaborative on Youth Organizing
- **Collective Investment:** Managing a pooled fund in a manner that adds value for all our funding partners. Outcomes include creating a table where long-standing youth organizing funders can attract additional funding for their grantees; national funders can find local partners to attain regional impact; and funders who do not have a youth organizing strategy can harness youth power working on their issues.
- **Participatory Strategy and Grantmaking:** Bringing youth leaders to the decision-making table to engage in the activities and strategy of the Collaborative, including their insights in reviewing applications and in the design of the grant and shared learning processes.
- **Aligned Funding and Support:** Engaging with like-minded funders so that their strategically aligned grantmaking efforts will complement and amplify the impact of the pooled fund.

The collaborative has established the following goals:

- Support increased capacity of, and relationships among, youth organizing groups to grow power to advance justice and equity and to transform lives and communities.
- Advance a regional ecosystem of youth organizers, program leaders, funders, and key partners that sustains a pathway of prepared and connected/engaged youth leaders.
- Center youth as active leaders in grantmaking, with decision making power in design and funding.
- Coordinate with other collaborative efforts to amplify impact at the regional and state levels.
- Inspire funders to prioritize youth organizing and direct a larger share of resources to support the growth of this ecosystem.

In September 2020 the Collaborative made its first round of grants to 25 youth organizing groups through a participatory youth grantmaking process to support youth-led, grassroots campaign work that advances racial equity and economic inclusion in the Bay Area. In 2021 the Collaborative began a process of engaging its grantees in designing a second phase of funding with larger, longer-term grants with a goal of raising \$2 million for collaborative grantmaking and shared learning. The Collaborative also offers regular capacity building opportunities including retreats for organizing staff and youth leaders, staff peer coaching sessions, and funds for peer exchanges.

APPENDIX I

Youth Organizing Interview Questions

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- How would you describe the youth organizing work you/your organization does?
- How long have you been active in the youth organizing space, and how has it developed and/or changed over time?
- What key issues have you centered in your youth organizing work? Have there been any key victories or setbacks you can share?
- What would you say has been working well or what have been some of the strengths of your youth organizing work?
- What do you see as the priority issues facing this region and how can you envision youth organizing addressing those issues?
- What models or frameworks do you primarily use in your youth organizing work? Have they been effective? Are there other models/frameworks you would be interested in utilizing?
- What are some other key players in the youth organizing space locally?
- Are there any examples of intergenerational organizing happening in this region that you can lift up?
- What do you see as some of the biggest opportunities for youth organizing work in this region?
- What do you see as some of the top barriers to building a robust youth organizing ecosystem in this region?
- What would it take to strengthen the youth organizing culture and activities in this region?
- Are there any effective coalitions or alliances that exist or could be developed to support a youth organizing infrastructure in this region? If they don't yet exist, what could they look like?
- What does the pipeline of youth organizers in this region look like? What do you see as some specific opportunities to develop leadership in this area?
- What does capacity at the organizational level look like to further develop your youth organizing work? What supports would add meaningful capacity to be able to do this work even better?
- What do you see as the biggest resource gaps when it comes to supporting youth organizing in this region?
- What resources have supported your youth organizing work? Philanthropy or otherwise?
- What has your relationship with philanthropy looked like when it comes to carrying out your youth organizing work?
- How would you like to see philanthropy play a role in supporting youth organizing in this region? What could their role look like? What would meaningful engagement with philanthropy look like?



Photo courtesy of Congress of Communities

APPENDIX II

Recommendations from the Youth Organizing Advisory Council

Photo courtesy of 482Forward

The youth organizing advisory council is an intergenerational, multicultural group from across Southeast Michigan's youth organizing ecosystem that met monthly from October 2022 to March 2023 to build cohesion and shared values among the region's youth organizing groups and engage in strategy development toward building a more powerful youth organizing community. The final product is a set of recommendations for regional and national funders and other allies co-created by the council.

Members of the advisory council include both youth and adults representing the following Michigan-based organizations:

- 482 Forward
- Congress of Communities
- Detroit Area Youth Uniting Michigan
- Detroit Future Youth Network
- Detroit Heals Detroit
- Detroit Phoenix Center
- Detroit Summer
- Michigan Center for Youth Justice
- MI Student Dream
- Urban Neighborhood Initiatives
- Youth Voices Action Collective

The council presents the following recommendations for building and sustaining a strong youth organizing community in Southeast Michigan to The Skillman Foundation and the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing. All recommendations should be anchored in the following expressions of equity and humanness:

- Basic needs youth have as a result of the systematic barriers they face are addressed, before asking them to commit to organizing
- Fair compensation and dignity as a rule
- Equitable and inclusive granting practices - leading by example
- Support for groups where youth most impacted by oppressive systems are working together to dismantle them
- Focus on systems change
- Educational materials and experiences are trauma-informed and rooted in equity
- Use of restorative & abolitionist practices

RECOMMENDATIONS

Promote Unity, Collaboration, and Coordination Amongst Youth Organizing Entities:

- Identify a physical space to be shared by youth organizing groups that supports:
 - » Co-working for member groups
 - » Relationship building and social exchange amongst organizers
 - » An accessible safe space for youth where they feel comfortable and secure
 - » Cultivation of unity and morale amongst different groups
 - » Opportunities to center healing and address harm
 - » Proactive collaboration amongst groups where they can leverage each other's strengths and expertise

NOTE: This space should be a police-free zone. Any security companies should be vetted to ensure no violent, racist or criminalizing practices

- Establish a Southeast Michigan Youth Organizing coalition/network grounded in shared values and understanding of youth organizing:
 - » Learning community - peer-to-peer learning and support
 - » Increased coordination of groups
 - Coordinated action planning
 - Shared communication
- Establish a community steering committee of youth organizers (grounded in shared vision and defined terms) to determine how future funds are utilized and distributed
 - » I.e. [Transforming Power Fund model](#)
- Nurture a strongly connected, interdependent network of statewide youth organizers
 - » Alleviate sense of competition (for resources and youth) amongst groups
 - » Support more statewide coordination

Increase Resources and Sharpen Giving Strategies:

- Increased funding to support:
 - » Hiring youth organizers
 - » Equalizing pay of staff and youth
 - » Compensating youth fairly (not using gift cards as payment)
- Multi-year grants so groups can plan and build over time without worrying that their funding will disappear, allowing them to:
 - » Have resources to cover basic needs
 - » Budget for emergency services/needs
 - » Provide support beyond just money
 - Mental health and wellness resources
 - Mentorship opportunities for youth organizers
 - Technical assistance and other assets

NOTE: Ensure funding does not inhibit the organizing process or things like mutual aid that may be a part of the organizational culture

- Paid staff person(s) to lead coordination of a regional youth organizing coalition

Support the Cultivation of Youth Engagement Best Practices:

- Provide funding for trainings that highlight youth engagement best practices:
 - » Support youth-led trainings and coalitions
 - where adults listen to and respect youth as experts
 - » Train adults on how to undo adultism and prevent causing harm
 - » Workshops where organizations address ageism, adultism, power dynamics, and tokenism (ie. ask in grant applications how organizations do or plan to address ageism/adultism in their programs)
 - » Trauma-informed, restorative, and abolitionist practices are utilized

Photo courtesy of DAYUM



Prioritize the Agenda, Vision, and Leadership Development of Youth Organizers:

- Support organizations that center youth as leaders by:
 - » Investing time and energy into the youth - focus on DEEP (building caring relationships) vs. WIDE (reaching as many people as possible, but not necessarily in a meaningful way)
 - » Elevating youth as decision-makers at different levels in the organization
 - » Facilitating leadership development so that the youth can grow within the organization and as leaders

Fund Leadership Development Opportunities for Organizations:

- Strengthen the organizing skills of those groups with an existing commitment to youth organizing through educational and training opportunities:
 - » Building generations of leaders with this training model
- Support access to quality political education curriculum and training programs for organizers so they understand:
 - » Policy, legislation, and how systems change occurs
 - » Racial and social justice education, solidarity across differences
 - » History - exploring past movements
 - » Organizing cycles - short-term and long-term
- Regional youth organizing training network including learning community, fellowships, coaching, mentorship:
 - » Ask youth what topics they want to learn more about
 - » Incorporate lessons learned from history of local youth organizing efforts
 - » Include trauma-informed organizing practices
- Support opportunities to learn about what's working well in other places:
 - » Utilize trainings that already exist and add local context
 - » Cross-city site visits and learning exchanges
 - » Identify trainers
- Capacity building support:
 - » Identify ways to bring people from constituents to members to leaders to organizers
 - » Train youth leaders in base building
 - » Education and resources around self-care and rest to prevent burnout and center healing

Fund Groups to Practice Intentional Recruitment and Retention Strategies:

- Support intentional base building using clear recruitment and retention strategies across the region:
 - » Clear and accessible entrypoint for youth interested in organizing
 - » Support the development of a comprehensive resource guide for those that want to get into youth organizing in this region
 - » Strategies that focus on recruiting new youth, so that organizations are not pulling from each others' youth base
 - Workplace and school-based recruitment/organizing
 - Be patient with the youth organizers and understand them outside of organizing
 - Utilize trauma-informed practices
 - Don't give up on youth if they don't show up to a meeting, or don't communicate the way adults want
- Support organizations to provide wraparound supports for youth beyond organizing in efforts to address youth burnout:
 - » Provide a safe and comfortable environment for youth to talk, heal, and find relief
 - » Meet basic needs, engage in mutual aid
 - » Meet youth where they are at - opportunities to engage in short-term and long-term organizing efforts
 - » Peer-to-peer support and mentorship opportunities (near peer can be a great model)
- Make youth organizing a viable and sustainable career path that is financially sustainable:
 - » Competitive compensation (and benefits) for youth organizers and staff
 - » Alumni engagement - when a young person leaves this space, how to keep them engaged while meeting their needs/boundaries
 - » Develop opportunities for youth beyond 18 years old interested in continuing to organize

Photo courtesy of Congress of Communities



Ensure Transportation Availability and Accessibility:

- Consistently raised as a major barrier and challenge in youth work



Photo courtesy of DAYUM

- There is a shared need for coordinated transportation solutions:
 - » Funding youth organizing around the issue of transportation
 - Free bus passes for youth
 - Systemic change on this issue (mass transit system in Metro-Detroit)
 - Support existing groups to transport youth while they organize around long-term systemic solutions
 - Support hubs in different neighborhoods, so that youth don't have to travel to one place (even central location may be difficult to get to)

NOTE: Advisory council is NOT in support of funding a privatized solution

Cultivate Healthier Relationships Between Philanthropy and Youth Organizing Entities:

- Consider how long the foundation is willing to support the building of this body of work and be transparent with grantees
- Reassess grantmaking practices – expectations, metrics, and cycles:
 - » Assess funder intentions, engagement, and proximity to the work
 - » Create more equity in youth grants - assess disparities in grant sizes for youth work
 - » Consider more unrestricted multi-year grants
 - » Consider supporting the operational capacities of youth organizations, not just the programming
 - » Investment in DEEP youth engagement over WIDE youth engagement
 - » Offer multiple ways to report on progress, like short videos that illustrate how funding was used and what impact it had
 - » Engage youth in grantmaking processes - listen to the ideas they come up with
- Providing support beyond just money – technical assistance and other assets as requested by those most impacted by systems drive and co-create:
 - » Funding for rest and self-care (i.e. mini Miller sabbatical fellowship for young folks for self-care)
- Build healthy relationships amongst organizing groups while also investing in their individual capacity:
 - » Consider how to support collaboration without forcing it - the right balance
 - » Facilitate and support connections with organizations in other cities for both staff and youth
- Support the development of systems of financial sustainability so organizations can generate their own income streams
- Build authentic relationships and trust with grantees
 - » Engage beyond requirements
 - » Clarify what authentic relationships between grantor and grantee look like
 - » Acknowledge power dynamics
 - People with money vs. people who need money
 - Naming that there's an imbalance of power between funder and organizations receiving money
 - » What does trust look like?
 - Multi-year grants may provide more security because of a commitment
 - Operational support to help infrastructure and not just programming
 - Grantors experiencing the impact of how the funds are being used - participate in events or activities
 - » Involving community and young people in whole grant-making process front to back, not just giving the money out:
 - Opportunities for youth to review, edit and co-create budgets
 - Funders paying young people for their work and expertise
 - » Practice transparency:
 - Higher level understanding of how money flows through our communities
 - Grantmaking all the way to the broader system



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