

**Ready by 21<sup>®</sup>**

**Leadership Capacity Audit**

***New Orleans, LA***

**Key Findings &  
Recommendations**

**February 14, 2011**

**Prepared by the Forum for Youth Investment**

## About the Forum for Youth Investment

The Forum for Youth Investment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan “action tank” dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are Ready by 21®— ready for college, work and life. Informed by rigorous research and practical experience, the Forum forges innovative ideas, strategies and partnerships to strengthen solutions for young people and those who care about them. Founded in 1998 by Karen Pittman and Merita Irby, two of the country’s top leaders on youth issues and youth policy, the Forum is a trusted resource for policy makers, advocates, researchers and practitioners. The Ready by 21 Strategy was created by the Forum based on more than a decade of work with state and local leaders interested in broad scale change. Ready by 21 is a registered trademark.

## About Ready by 21

Ready by 21 is a strategy that helps communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for work, college and life. It taps the expertise and dedication of leaders within communities, meeting them where they are and helping them chart a course for better outcomes for young people. Using innovative strategic planning tools developed by the Forum for Youth Investment and the National Partners, Ready by 21 coaches support and mobilize communities to amplify their efforts to prepare youth for success.

## About Leadership Capacity Audit

Partnerships, goals, data for planning, improvement strategies – this is the language of leadership. Broader partnerships, bigger goals, better data, bolder strategies to improve program quality, consistency and reach – these are the goals of leadership. The Forum has identified 13 standards associated with these four building blocks. To support this work, we have developed a leadership capacity audit – a set of structured surveys, interviews and processes designed to assess a community’s overall leadership capacities. Leadership capacity audits serve the same purpose as financial audits. They provide leaders with a structured opportunity to receive feedback on core functions that

are critical to their mission so that they can increase their overall horsepower to make sustained change.

## About the Ready by 21 National Partnership

An unprecedented coalition of organizations representing government, education, nonprofit, business, research and philanthropy sectors, the National Partnership is a “dream team” of the country’s most effective agencies. It works with trailblazing leaders who are shaping youth and community development policies and best practices. Its combined reach is over 650,000 state and local leaders who impact the lives of more than 1 million children and youth across the United States.

National Mobilization Partners include United Way Worldwide (signature partner), the American Association of School Administrators, America’s Promise Alliance, Children’s Cabinet Network, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the National Collaboration for Youth, National Conference of State Legislatures and Search Institute. The Ready by 21 National Partnership is focusing its outreach and technical assistance efforts in the Southeastern states.

## About the Southeast Cities Challenge

The Southeast Cities Challenge is a regionally specific initiative of the Ready by 21 Partnership which is working with Southeast cities and regions to develop core leadership capacities around developing broader partnerships, bigger goals, better data and decision-making, and bolder strategies.

# Introduction

The destruction wrought on the City of New Orleans / Orleans Parish (“New Orleans”) by the levee failures is well documented as are ongoing efforts to repair and improve infrastructure and services. As recovery moves beyond restoring housing, public safety and schools, community leaders are focusing their efforts on repairing the broader social fabric of New Orleans. Several ambitious initiatives are underway to address the critical needs of children and youth, including innovative efforts to revamp and revitalize K-12 education, juvenile justice and public recreation. Equally important, there is growing, if uneven, civic engagement and increasing awareness that long-term success will require meaningful youth and community participation.

This confluence of public engagement and energetic leadership – from the mayor’s office and the Children and Youth Planning Board to the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership and the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, among many other stakeholders – suggests that now may be the time to advance an ambitious, coordinated agenda on behalf of children and youth. As one Children and Youth Planning Board member put it: *“We couldn’t have focused on doing coordinated forward thinking two years ago. We were too busy fighting fires.”*

Truer words have not been spoken. Tactical coordination is hard. Strategic coordination is even harder. Broad leadership coordination – aligning goals, agendas, resources, data across systems, sectors, and issues – is virtually impossible unless a critical group of leaders have the capacity, motivation and authority to start the process and stay the course. In New Orleans this hard work is in its infancy and its success is far from assured. The determining factor will not be the depth of children’s needs (certainly great), or even the robustness of community, school and family

supports (fragmented and incomplete). It will be the amount of collective horsepower in New Orleans – and the ability of the community to harness that horsepower and “move the small gear” (see graphic below).

Is the timing right for New Orleans to align efforts and pursue an ambitious agenda for children and youth? Findings from investigative work commissioned by the Baptist Community Ministries and conducted by the Forum for Youth Investment with support and guidance from the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership suggests that the answer is a cautious yes.

*“The community is really primed for moving forward. It’s a critical time and I worry that if we don’t get ourselves organized and start doing the things that I’ve talked about, we’ll lose momentum and the support of the mayor and city council. Now that we’ve gotten them to appoint the right people to Children and Youth Planning Board, we need to move right now.”*

**-New Orleans Ready by 21 Audit participant**

Over the past three months, members of the newly reorganized Children and Youth Planning Board and other key community leaders were interviewed or surveyed using the Ready by 21® Leadership Capacity Audit. The audit puts names and standards to the work leaders do (e.g., engaging stakeholders, setting goals, aligning resources) and asks them to score and comment on two questions: How essential is it that these tasks be done well in order to make lasting changes in community supports and youth outcomes? How well do you think they are currently being



**Change the way  
we do business**

**Change the landscape  
of communities**

**Change the odds  
for children and youth**

**Moving the small gear makes a BIG difference**

performed in the community?

The summary scores and main comments from these responses are presented in this report, combined with recommendations for next steps. As you read the summary, ask yourself four questions:

- Do these findings and recommendations ring true?
- Do they compel me or my organization to act or to advocate for others to act?
- Is it clear what should be done first?
- Am I convinced that acting on these recommendations will make a difference to New Orleans' and my organization's capacity to change lives?

Even if your initial answers are "no" or "not sure," we hope that the following analysis will begin to illuminate a path that you and your colleagues can follow to improve performance across the Ready by 21

### Ready by 21 Leadership Standards: 4 Building Blocks and 13 Standards

#### Broader Partnerships

- 1.1 Engaged stakeholders
- 1.2 Aligned coalitions, networks and intermediaries
- 1.3 "Cradle-to-career" leadership council

#### Bigger Goals

- 2.1 Clear goals for children and youth
- 2.2 Defined supports and performance measures
- 2.3 Youth-centered communications and planning

#### Better Data and Information

- 3.1 Data-driven planning
- 3.2 Aligned data systems
- 3.3 Useful information about what works

#### Bolder Strategies

- 4.1 Improved systems and settings
- 4.2 Aligned policies and resources
- 4.3 Engaged children, youth and families
- 4.4 Increased demand

leadership standards and turbocharge New Orleans' collective horsepower for change.

It is only by changing the way we leaders do business that we can change the odds for children and youth.

## Audit Process

During summer 2010, community leaders from New Orleans learned about the Ready by 21 Partnership's efforts to strengthen leadership capacity in other Southeast communities and began exploring opportunities to bring the Ready by 21 process and resources to New Orleans. In November 2010, a local funder, Baptist Community Ministries (BCM), attended a session about the Ready by 21 Audit, and asked the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership (GNOAP) to consider managing the audit process with a goal of having this work done in time to inform the work of the newly reorganized Children and Youth Planning Board (CYPB). BCM ultimately made a grant to GNOAP to fund the audit and help coordinate data collection. All parties agreed to complete the audit process and produce an initial report of findings by mid-February 2011.

Delivery of this report completes the first phase of the audit process. New Orleans' Ready by 21 work, however, has just begun. Deciding whether and how to share the findings and implement the recommendations is the next step, followed by securing the human, financial and political resources to move forward. The Forum for Youth Investment and the Ready by 21 Partnership stand ready to assist.

**WHO?** Staff members from GNOAP formed the core team for the audit process. This team participated in an interactive webinar with Forum staff in December 2010 to review and customize the audit process for New Orleans. During the webinar, the team discussed: (1) who would participate in different elements of the audit process; (2) how the audit process could connect with work currently taking place in New Orleans; and

(3) potential audiences and formats for audit deliverables.

**HOW?** The audit is designed to paint a preliminary picture of a community's collective leadership capacity in an effort to prompt reflection, planning, and, ultimately, targeted improvement efforts. Forum staff members conducted surveys, formal interviews, informal one-on-one and group meetings, and document review, and asked members of the core team to summarize local knowledge using field-tested diagnostic tools. The audit reflects opinion as much as fact. It is done with, not for, the community. Findings and recommendations are vetted for accuracy and relevance with the core team. Forum staff will offer support and counsel to the core team and local funder(s) as they determine the best way to release the findings and recommendations.

### What and When?

⇒ In early January 2011, two Forum staff members spent a day in New Orleans to meet with a range of leaders from various sectors who work on children and youth issues. During this visit, Forum staff interviewed leaders about current activities and initiatives, collected information on the range and accessibility of data regarding children and youth, and administered a battery of diagnostic tools to document stakeholder engagement and generate a basic picture of New Orleans' coalitions and networks. Results from these diagnostics are included in appendices attached to this report.

⇒ In mid-January 2011, Karen Pittman, the co-founder, CEO and president of the Forum for Youth Investment, was in New Orleans to discuss Ready by 21 principles and their implementation in the community. Ms. Pittman met with the Children and Youth Planning Board, Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership, Baptist Community Ministries, senior staff from Mayor Landrieu's office, and other key business leaders and practitioners from a range of sectors that work on children and youth issues.

### New Orleans' Audit Process Participants

#### Core Team:

Lauren Bierbaum, Ph.D., Director of Research, GNO Afterschool Partnership  
Bebe Ryan, Director of Strategy and Development, GNO Afterschool Partnership  
Gina Warner, J.D., Executive Director, GNO Afterschool Partnership

#### Leader Interviewees:

Thelma Harris French, President and CEO, Total Community Action, Inc.  
Ernestine S. Gray, Chief Judge, Orleans Parish Juvenile Court  
Kevin Gutterrez, Deputy Superintendent, Louisiana Recovery School District  
Geoff Nagle, Director, Tulane University Institute of Infant Health and Early Childhood Mental Health; State Director, BrightStar – Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory Council  
Brooke Smith, Director of Strategic Partnership, Office of Mayor Mitch Landrieu, City of New Orleans  
Kyshun A. Webster, Sr., Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Operation REACH, Inc.

#### Community Rating Survey Participants:

18 community members (of 30 invited) completed the Ready by 21® Community Rating Survey, including members of the Children and Youth Planning Board as well as other stakeholders engaged in the Audit process

#### Ready by 21® Audit Team:

Karen Pittman, Co-Founder, President and CEO, The Forum for Youth Investment  
Larry Pasti, Director of Field Services, The Forum for Youth Investment  
Tom Devaney, Managing Director, David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality  
Pam Stevens, Ready by 21 Coach, The Forum for Youth Investment  
Stephanie Randall, Senior Program Associate, The Forum for Youth Investment

⇒ From mid-January through early February, the Forum’s Ready by 21 consulting team completed audit data collection and analysis. During this period, Forum staff:

- ✓ Reviewed key documents concerning New Orleans children and youth and the services and systems serving them. Nine documents were provided to the Forum by the New Orleans core team. The Forum located additional reports and publications via web searches. See Appendix E for a complete list of reviewed documents.
- ✓ Conducted in-depth interviews with six individuals identified by the core team as key leaders in New Orleans. Five of the six interviewees also rated New Orleans’ current capacity in each of the 13 Ready by 21 Leadership Capacity standards using the “Change Horsepower” diagnostic worksheet.
- ✓ Distributed the Ready by 21 Community Rating survey to 30 leaders in the broader New Orleans community. Eighteen leaders (60% response rate) completed the survey.

## Findings

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New Orleans’ audit results are consistent with those generated in other communities. Community leaders believe that, to meet their mission, they need to improve their capacity and horsepower in multiple areas. Indeed, when given an opportunity, New Orleans leaders willingly acknowledge and lament what the Forum calls the “leadership capacity gap.” That is, they identify gaps, often substantial, between the optimal and actual local conditions and structures available to help them

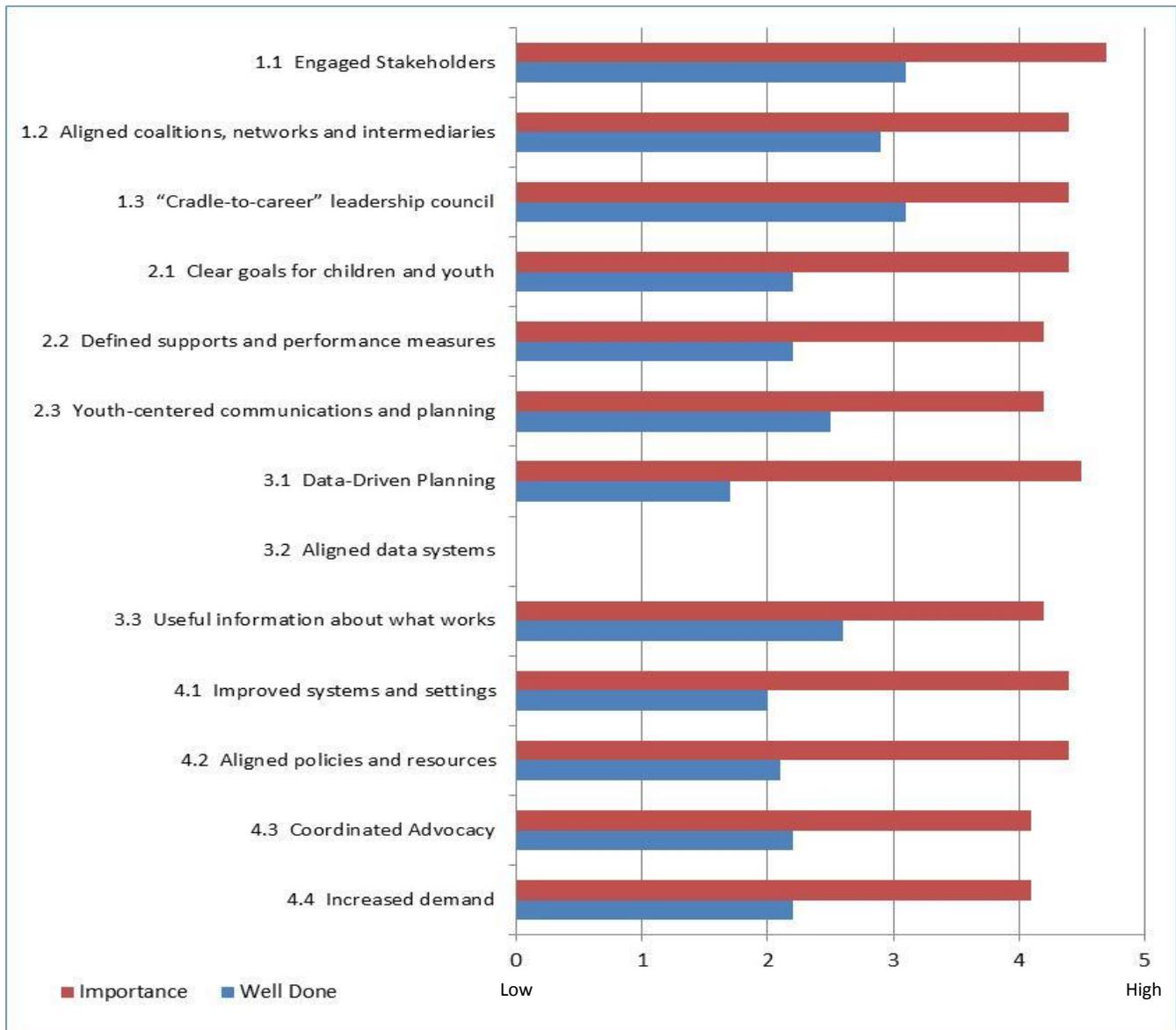
carry out their plans to improve child and youth outcomes from “cradle to career.” What distinguishes one community from another are the very specific ideas about both barriers and opportunities for closing this gap. Results from New Orleans’ audit – and leaders’ perspectives on improvement priorities – are summarized and discussed below.

**Audit Results.** The Ratings from the on-line survey suggest that leaders who are well-positioned to assess the connectivity, horsepower and inclusivity of the groups and structures charged with improving developmental trajectories and outcomes for New Orleans’ children and youth believe that there is substantial work to do. Overall, the ratings reveal that local leaders:

- Believe that the Ready by 21 Leadership Standards represent very important performance metrics for their collective work and offer useful signals about their likelihood of achieving success. [Mean Rating > 4.0 for all standards].
- See substantial room for improvement across virtually all of the standards. [Mean Rating < 3.0 for 10 of 13 standards].

The chart on the next page shows New Orleans’ leaders combined responses to two questions regarding the Ready by 21 Leadership Standards: How essential is meeting these standards to our ultimate success in improving development trajectories for children and youth from “cradle to career?” How well are we as a community doing against these standards?

## Leadership Capacity Gaps in New Orleans\*



\* The Ready by 21 Community Rating survey (n=18) covered 12 of the 13 Leadership Capacity Standards. Information regarding data system alignment (3.2) was collected using separate diagnostics. See Appendix D for details.

It is immediately obvious in the survey data that New Orleans' leaders see substantial room for growth across all of the standards, with the largest gaps concentrated in performance areas related to cross-sector collaboration (e.g., clear goals for children and youth; defined supports and performance measures; improved systems and settings; aligned policies and resources) and data-

driven planning. Stakeholder engagement as well as data quality and connectivity are also seen as substantial, but secondary challenges.

Interview participants largely corroborate these quantitative findings, lamenting in particular the uneven engagement by stakeholder groups such as the business and faith communities, the paucity of

accessible, high-quality data on children and youth, and the sector-specific silos and interagency conflicts that seem to have survived and perhaps even hardened post-Katrina. As interviewees said:

*"The coalitions which arose after Katrina have not necessarily been effective, with pressure to participate for fear of being left out. What resulted were lots of people coming together and spending a lot of time, but no real impact came out of it."*

*"While lip service to the concepts of data sharing has existed for 20 years, it is still almost nonexistent across collaborations, much less stakeholder groups. This needs to be rectified before any further steps can be taken in this direction."*

*"[Networks and coalitions can] sometimes [be] a little bit competitive because, you know, the resources are so finite...So everyone's busy fighting for their scraps, so they can't fight together."*

Importantly, in spite of the nearly universal critique of New Orleans' current performance against the leadership capacity standards, audit participants are cautiously optimistic about the future. Many believe that Mayor Landrieu's administration has the vision, and is building the political infrastructure and will necessary, to advance its ambitious agenda for children, youth and families:

*"The mayor's office is committed to children and youth issues and has an ambitious vision – but execution is currently limited by capacity. [There is lots of evidence that...] the administration will be able to overcome [that obstacle]."*

-New Orleans Ready by 21 Audit participant

A number of respondents also indicate that, with the appropriate mandate and supports, an existing network or coalition *could* assume a lead coordinating role and drive critical efforts to: develop a youth master plan; facilitate cross-sector goal setting, performance monitoring and reporting;

and champion efforts to engage key stakeholders and increase public demand. Indeed, during the audit, community leaders identified multiple entities that might fill this needed role, including the newly reconstituted Children and Youth Planning Board, Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership, and New Orleans Recreation Department Commission, among others. The following quotes reflect the opinions of most Audit participants:

*"CYPB is supposed to assess services and needs in the community, identify gaps and develop a plan to address those service provision gaps. Not just about juvenile justice, child welfare, education, all of that. CYPB should be the go to entity for what's going on with children and families."*

*"GNOAP [holds a leadership role] in terms of what they've done to help individuals coalesce around what happens in the space they help support. Not only after-school programming but extended programming ideas and scenarios and how that connects to what is being designed as the new New Orleans Recreation Department. There's a lot of energy around that."*

Questions remain, however, about whether any of these entities currently has the necessary cross-sector connections, mandate, decision-making authority, resources and structure to successfully and sustainably execute such a charge. The following quotes are representative:

*"We have great potential and good starting points, but we aren't maximizing where we can take those structures and mechanisms. We [are building momentum] but we have a long way to go."*

*"We're doing better [but] there's a great need for more coordination/collaboration – particularly around priorities and goal-setting at the community level. As opposed to focusing just on groups that have funding for specific initiatives, we need to establish three or five*

*community-wide goals and then develop community-level plans for pursuing those goals.”*

*“The Children and Youth Planning Board exists, has the power of legislative mandate behind it, and (theoretically) is comprised of the right combination of community organizations and position appointments. However, it has not yet proven effective, and needs a clear charge as well as a communication strategy to reposition it as an authority.”*

Given the range of possible capacity improvement targets, limited time and resources, and other post-Katrina challenges, the obvious questions are: Where to start? What steps should New Orleans’ leaders follow now to maximize their impact?

## Recommendations

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As post-Katrina recovery efforts move beyond basic infrastructure repairs, community leaders, funders and other key stakeholders are increasingly and appropriately turning their attention, policies and programs toward the developmental needs of children and youth. The combination of accelerating activity, growing public demand and energetic leadership from multiple sectors, including the mayor’s office, is certainly exciting, but it is occurring in an environment where coordinating structures are immature, resources are limited and frequently controlled by the State, and fragmentation remains a persistent challenge. Consequently, structural barriers continue to impede multi-lateral cooperation, stakeholder engagement, and effective decision-making and leadership. In our experience, the most effective way to begin addressing these barriers is by building, empowering and supporting a legitimate coordinating body. Until this occurs, there remains a real risk that New Orleans’ increasingly energized leaders, engaged public and multiple “moving

trains” may ultimately add up to less, not more, than the sum of their parts.

This is not to say that New Orleans is starting from scratch. In fact, like other Ready by 21 communities, New Orleans comes to the table with many strengths and many of the pieces required for success. It is the methods, structures and systems for focusing energies, initiatives and resources that are inconsistent or lacking and need to be improved. Our primary and immediate recommendation, therefore, is that New Orleans spend the next six months structuring a coordinating body / leadership council capable of: (1) managing a community-wide master planning process; (2) negotiating a common agenda and balanced set of goals; (3) reinforcing horizontal (cross-sector) and vertical (within sector) connections; and (4) overseeing the change and improvement process. Appropriately configuring and empowering such an entity or coalition will facilitate future improvement efforts across the other leadership capacity standards.

The good news is that a likely candidate for this role – the Children and Youth Planning Board – already exists, has a legislative mandate, and is, according to many audit participants, poised to take on the work. The bad news is that CYPB’s low profile, lack of dedicated resources and uncertain decision-making power mean that it is not yet optimized to successfully carry out the charge. Indeed, as New Orleans’ Ready by 21 initiative advances, local leaders will need to ensure that CYPB has and maintains the vision, mission, authority, organizational home, composition, formality, staffing, funding and cross-sector connections necessary to meet its mandate. Our Audit recommendations are intended to help local leaders set that process in motion.

We of course are not suggesting the CYPB assume sole responsibility for improving New Orleans' performance across all of the leadership capacity standards. Nor are we suggesting that work across all standards begin immediately. The work will not be easy and some of it will be quite technical (e.g., cross-sector data aggregation, alignment and reporting). CYPB will therefore need appropriate authorization from the Mayor's office as well as the commitment and cooperation of many other local stakeholder groups and in all likelihood technical partners. The Forum and Ready by 21 Partnership are ready and willing to help steward this process over the short- and long-terms. Our specific recommendations, in priority order, are detailed below.

**Recommendation #1 (Short-term): Give CYPB resources and horsepower to serve effectively as New Orleans' coordinating council.** This process should occur over the next six months and begin with an evaluation of CYPB's structural features against the six components of effective leadership councils described below and immediately transition into a master planning process. We anticipate that such an evaluation will indicate that, to be successful in this role, CYPB will require a formal "restart" that includes:

- A clearer public vision for its role.

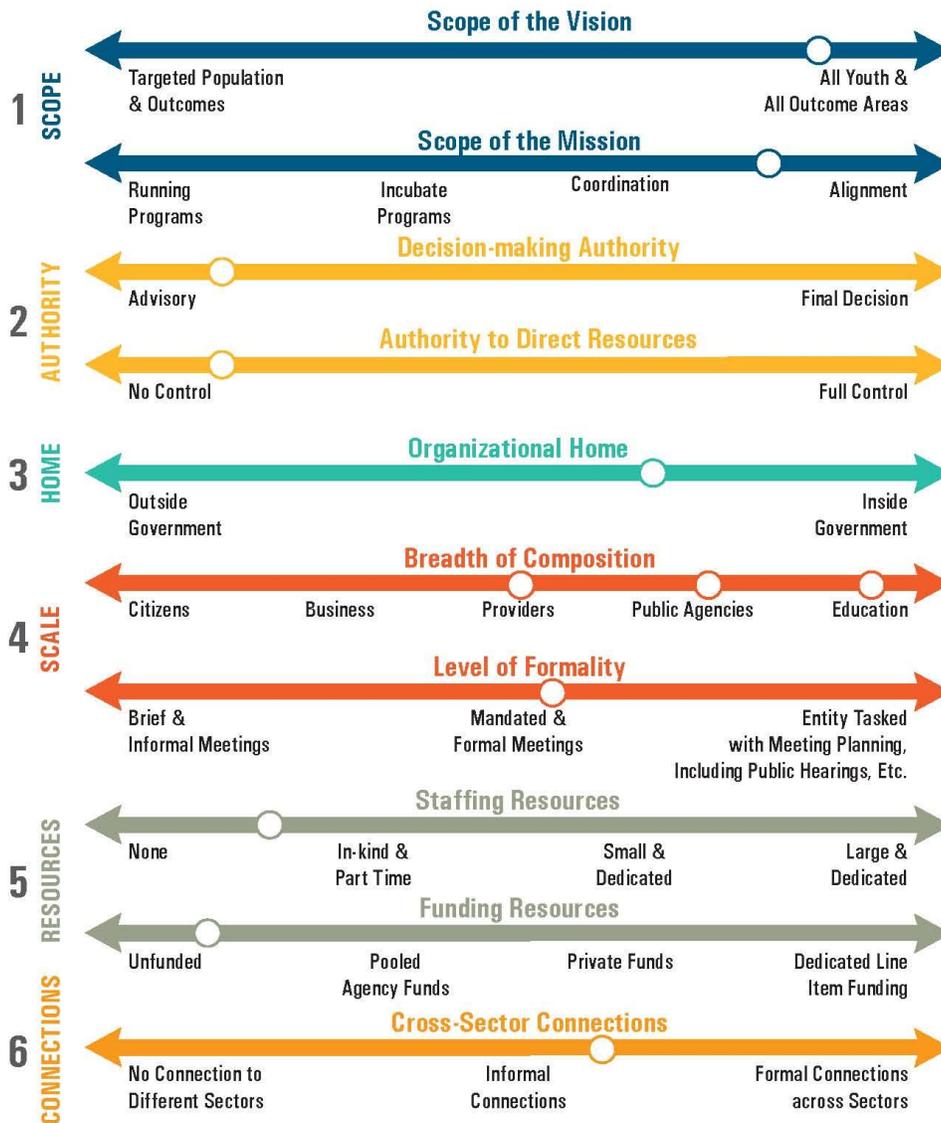
- A mission statement that defines its purpose as a planning and coordinating body.
- Clear guidance regarding the scope of its decision-making / policy-setting authority. This should include:
  - A stronger signal from the mayor's office that CYPB is charged with managing children and youth strategies.
  - Clarity regarding its relationship to and role vis-à-vis the reorganized New Orleans Recreation Department Commission and other high-powered, high visibility entities (e.g., public private partnership on economic development; other city departments that offer youth services or supports).
- Additional staffing and dedicated financial resources to execute core tasks (e.g., communications, data alignment, network mapping, quality improvement).
- Increased cross-sector connectivity as well as access to vetted technical partners. In particular, CYPB will need:
  - Active leadership from BCM to engage other local funders and ensure that the Board has sufficient resources.
  - Technical support and expertise to pursue improvements related to cross-sector data aggregation and alignment.

## Six Structural Components of Effective Leadership Councils

### Six Structural Components of Ready by 21<sup>®</sup> Leadership Councils

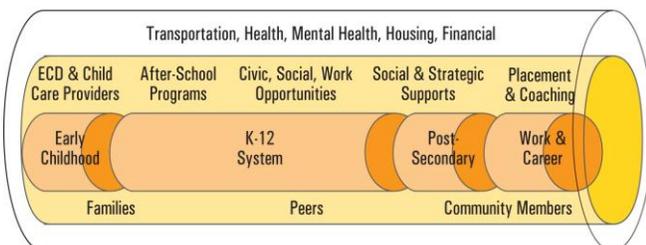
The Ready by 21 Partnership has identified six components -- scope, authority, home, scale, resources and cross-sector connections -- as key determinants of effective leadership councils. As New Orleans continues the hard work of connecting, coordinating and maximizing the impact of local, regional and statewide initiatives for children and youth, community leaders will need to ensure that the CYPB – or whatever other coalition or network is charged with leading efforts – is appropriately configured to meet its mission.

○ Ready by 21 consultants' consensus assessment of CYPB's current positioning across the six structural components.



**Recommendation #2 (Short-term): Charge CYPB with leading a youth master planning process for New Orleans.** As efforts progress to empower and appropriately structure CYPB as New Orleans’ lead coordinating council, the community should move quickly to initiate work on a cross-sector youth master plan, which would include performance metrics for your collective work across “ages and stages.” To kick-start these efforts, CYPB and other stakeholder groups should leverage prior efforts by the early childhood education, juvenile justice and public education sectors to develop and deploy data-driven performance monitoring and accountability systems. Ultimately, New Orleans’ master plan should:

- Reinforce CYPB’s role as the central coordinating body.
- Create an overarching narrative about the child and youth readiness outcomes that New Orleans desires, and the desired school and community supports the community needs to achieve its long-term vision. The narrative, which should explicitly include a localized version of Ready by 21’s “Insulated Education Pipeline,” (see graphic below) can guide the development of specific, cross-sector “readiness” targets, objectives and strategies.
- Capitalize on growing demand for data access and transparency by articulating goals, expectations, timelines and technical needs associated with aligning data systems, improving data access and implementing data-driven performance management.



**Ready by 21® Insulated Education Pipeline**

- Define strategies and tactics for communicating data on child and youth readiness, and on school and community resources in ways that not only inform decision-makers but spark and sustain community conversations and provider accountability.
- Advance efforts to assess performance and outcomes using a balanced set of indicators and metrics. The master plan should explicitly help New Orleans transition from “deficit” to “asset”-based language and metrics for the developmental stages and trajectories of children and youth.

**Recommendation #3 (Medium-term): Conduct due diligence, establish necessary partnerships and implement a data alignment and performance management strategy.** CYPB, with assistance from local experts and partners should:

- Evaluate the range, quality, inter-connectedness, accessibility and transparency of system-level performance indicators and children and youth outcome data. This work began with a series of diagnostics during the Audit process (see Appendices) but broader mapping and deeper dives are essential.
- Identify emerging agendas and existing efforts within and beyond New Orleans to define cross-sector performance metrics, align data systems, and/or improve the timeliness and quality of public reporting. Evaluate and consider “off the shelf” data aggregation, performance management, and virtual enterprise solutions.
- Develop a cross-sector data agenda. Based upon current capacities, we recommend that CYPB outsource responsibility for managing the data agenda to a third party organization or partnership (such as the mayor’s office or Greater New Orleans Community Data Center).

**Recommendation #4 (Medium-term): Develop strategies for and find opportunities to increase stakeholder engagement.** Although stakeholder engagement has increased in the post-Katrina era, it is far from universal. Indeed, audit participants suggest that the business and faith communities participate unevenly and that more opportunities are needed to engage families and youth in planning, decision-making and implementation. (This may require innovative strategies given the ongoing infrastructure challenges and the uneven penetration of CBOs across neighborhoods.) To improve performance on this standard, New Orleans’ leaders should:

- Invest in efforts to secure community and service provider “buy-in” to a common, asset-based vision for children and youth and to subsequent planning and performance monitoring efforts.
- Accelerate outreach and strengthen relationships with local corporate and philanthropic funders. Broad stakeholder engagement is critical for increasing public awareness of and commitment to your community's agenda.

## Conclusion

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As the audit process winds down, the Forum, with support from the Ready by 21 Partnership, hopes to continue its work with New Orleans’ leaders to develop capacity improvement plans and implement the recommendations found in this report. Our perspective is that, in the near term, New Orleans should focus its energies on building CYPB’s capacity to coordinate local efforts and on developing a cross-sector youth master plan. Once this infrastructure is in place, the community will be far better prepared to harness local ambitions and energies, and to efficiently pursue improvements across the other leadership capacity standards.

The Forum is committed to meeting leaders where they are, challenging them to do more and helping them to build the capacity to do so. This report represents our commitment to listen, learn and ask questions, and then to provide recommendations that are consistent with what we have learned works in other communities and states across the country. We look forward to our continued work moving forward, together.