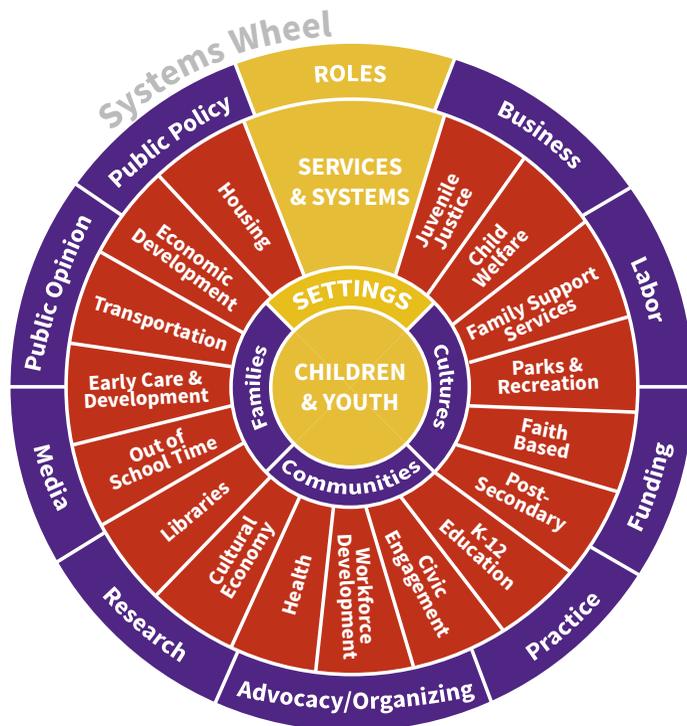# YOUTHSHIFT 101

A PRIMER ON COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR NEW ORLEANS YOUTH

WHAT IS YOUTHSHIFT?

Over the last two years, leaders from more than 60 child and youth focused organizations and agencies in the greater New Orleans area have embarked on a community change initiative to improve the life outcomes for all young people in New Orleans.

Representing the wide variety of stakeholders concerned with the well-being of young people, YouthShift offers the 17 different systems and over 400 agencies that work with and on behalf of children and youth in New Orleans:

- a common vision for improving outcomes for young people;
- recommendations for deeper organizational coordination; and
- tools to help them improve and align their supports and services.

Systems Wheel

The Systems Wheel is a graphic representation of many of the stakeholders commonly associated with children and youth. Children and youth don't grow up in programs but rather, in families, communities, and cultures (the inner ring). They and their families are profoundly influenced by the quality and accessibility of the services, supports and opportunities created by formal and informal institutions (the second ring). These, in turn, are shaped by larger societal structures and forces that have important influences on the institutions that directly support children and families (the third ring).

YouthShift is a group of youth serving agencies and organizations who have adopted a whole-child, collective impact approach to develop a plan to improve the academic, social, and behavioral outcomes for children and youth ages 0 to 25 in Orleans Parish. YouthShift envisions a flourishing New Orleans in which young people, and their families and communities, are happy, healthy, secure, and empowered. **We believe that all young people should:**

- Be healthy, confident, and hopeful.
- Have the skills to succeed in sustainable careers.
- Have high quality, stable education and learning options.
- Live, learn, work, and play in healthy, enriching environments.
- Be free from violence in all forms.
- Be treated fairly and with respect.
- Have the opportunity to become effective leaders and engage with their communities.
- Have caring adults in their lives that they can turn to for guidance and support.
- Be connected to families that have the resources to support their children's physical, social-emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development.

"We can use YouthShift to ensure that young people in New Orleans will be able to thrive and succeed!"
KIM TRAN,
NEW ORLEANS
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Collective impact is more rigorous and specific than collaboration among organizations. There are five conditions that, together, lead to meaningful results:

1 **Common Agenda:** All participants **share a vision for change** that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.

2 **Shared Measurement:** All participating organizations **agree on the ways success will be measured and reported**, with a short list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.

3 **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through **a mutually reinforcing plan of action**.

4 **Continuous Communication:** All players engage in **frequent and structured open communication** to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

5 **Backbone Support:** An **independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative** provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.

Source: *Kania and Kramer, 2011*

HOW DOES YOUTHSHIFT WORK?

YouthShift has spent the last 18 months collecting data and conducting research to identify: the challenges and opportunities that young people confront in New Orleans, the activities of the organizations who are working with and for young people to help them achieve their goals, and the opportunities for organizations and agencies to work together to strengthen supports for children, youth, and their families.

YouthShift identified six priority areas with 22 local conditions that hinder our community from realizing its aspirations. These local conditions are not all unique to New Orleans, but were identified as being present here in particularly salient ways.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING: Physical, behavioral, and social health

• Not all children and youth have access to a primary care and/or behavioral health providers.
• Not all children and youth have consistent access to healthy, nutritious food.
• Not all youth and families have access to sexual and reproductive health education and services.
• Not all children and youth are free from acute or chronic trauma.

ECONOMIC STABILITY: Sustainable careers and quality of life

• Not all children and youth have the foundational and critical thinking skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce.
• Not all children and youth have access to diverse high-quality postsecondary opportunities.
• Not all children and youth are exposed and connected to career pathways.

LEARNING: Cognitive, vocational, and social-emotional

• Not all children and youth have access to high quality early care and education programs.
• Not all children and youth have learning opportunities that include arts, enrichment, culture, and social emotional learning.
• Not all children and youth are prepared to successfully transition between developmental stages.
• Not all schools are able to intervene quickly when children exhibit behaviors (chronic absence, truancy, behavioral incidents, etc.) that are predictors of negative academic outcomes.
• Not all children and youth receive fair disciplinary treatment in schools.

SPACE AND PLACE: Physical environment

• Not all children and youth have access to safe spaces in which to play and exercise.
• Not all children and youth have safe, stable housing.
• Not all neighborhoods have adequate transportation options for youth to get to work, after-school activities and school.

SAFETY AND JUSTICE: Protection and fair treatment

• Not all children and youth are safe from direct and indirect forms of violence.
• Not all children and youth are safe from abuse and neglect.
• Not all children and youth are free from the impacts that over incarceration have on family stability, economic opportunity, and the safety nets that support children.
• Not all children and youth are treated fairly and with respect by the justice system.

YOUTH VOICE: Empowerment and opportunity to participate

• Not all children and youth are actively engaged and empowered to participate in decision making processes that affect them.
• Not all children and youth are adequately supported to have a voice and be actively and equitably engaged.
• Not all young people have opportunities to apply leadership skills in a positive way.

"There are so many people and organizations pouring their love and energy into making life better for the children of New Orleans. If love and energy were the only criteria for success, New Orleans children and youth would surely rank top in the nation. What we need is something to help us all work in the same direction so that we're building on each other instead of pulling against each other. That's what YouthShift can do for us."
MARTI DUMAS, EDUCATOR

Shared Vision
+Continuous Communication
+Constant Learning
+Common Measurements
=Better Outcomes for Kids

Research has consistently demonstrated that no one system or partnership will be able to create desired impact on its own. New Orleans is fortunate to have numerous leadership groups and initiatives that seek to improve the quality of life for those that live in the city.

To date, **YouthShift has identified over 400 organizations and agencies working with or on behalf of New Orleans children and youth**. Many of them participate in the over 50 coalitions, collaborations, collectives, affinity groups, and taskforces that have been identified by YouthShift who have come together to focus on a particular field, sub-population, or interest. Since January 2015, over 20 YouthShift partners have mapped **over 30 different "solutions"- individual programs and initiatives** that are currently working to address one or more of the 22 local conditions. This number of solutions mapped will grow over the next few months to include those provided by schools and the faith based community.

"Developing a comprehensive community-driven vision for our children's future in New Orleans is paramount. YouthShift, to me, literally shifts the focus away from what our community lacks, and instead strives to build on strengths by connecting resources in a meaningful and sustainable way for children, youth and families."
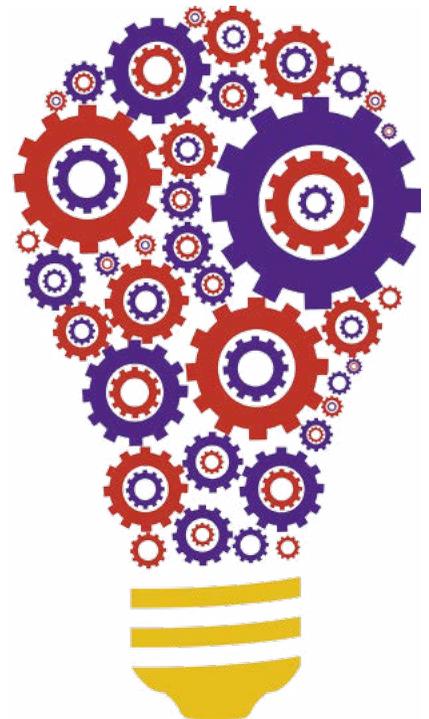TASLIM VAN HATTUM, LOUISIANA PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE

"Just like a master plan helps to ensure a city's architecture and construction abide by and are attuned to the needs of its citizens, YouthShift will help to ensure that all decisions that affect New Orleans' young people going forward will operate from a set of collective principles."
VINCENT ROSSMEIER, COWEN INSTITUTE

What are the opportunities for youth-serving organizations to work together to meet their goals?

A 2011 research study was conducted to determine the capacity and will of cross-sector leaders in New Orleans to embark on a collective impact strategy to improve child and youth outcomes. Data suggested interest in developing a common vision for children and youth, quality standards, sustainable funding strategies, and common performance metrics for organizations that worked with young people but demonstrated a lack of understanding on how to operationalize these ideas. This lead to the **formation of a cross-sector YouthShift design team, workgroups, and a steering committee**, each tasked with formulating processes, collecting and analyzing data, and developing strategies to create a child and youth master plan for the city of New Orleans.

Throughout the planning process, YouthShift has **surveyed and interviewed over 175 individuals and organizations** on their funding mechanisms and interests, financial capacity and operations, program quality strategies and needs, and their priorities for intermediary and backbone functions. Community organizations and individuals reported concerns with the lack of: consistent, year-to-year public and private funding, coordination between youth serving organizations and sectors, complementary goals for children and youth across organizations and sectors, data systems that "talk" to others, and a strong coordinating body to facilitate quality improvement, communications, and true cross-sector integration.

YOUTHSHIFT IN ACTION

In 2015, YouthShift will release a master plan for children and youth services in New Orleans and support implementation activities aligned to its recommendations. The master plan will identify: the needs of children based on current data, existing resources and efforts for children and youth, gaps in services, and strategies for youth-serving practitioners, policy-makers, philanthropists, and city agencies to improve outcomes for children and youth. While the master plan is not yet finalized, we have already identified several goals for the next two years related to our four interrelated strategies.

SHARED VISION
• Document the specific "solutions" provided by over 100 organizations and agencies working to address the local conditions.
• Develop interventions and identify organizations to address local conditions where gaps are identified.
• Increase the number of organizations that adopt the vision outlined in YouthShift to 100 by the end of 2016.

CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT
• Increase opportunities for youth to have leadership roles in the development and implementation of YouthShift strategies.
• Use the information gathered through YouthShift as a community resource to encourage shared understanding of community assets and opportunities.
• Facilitate increased opportunities for families to directly engage with YouthShift.

CONSTANT LEARNING
• Publish an annual report card on child and youth outcomes (The Youth Index) to increase the availability of child and youth data for the public.
• Create data collection strategies for gaps in information identified by YouthShift.
• Increase cross-program and cross-sector training opportunities.
• Create a program quality improvement working group within YouthShift and launch a pilot program quality improvement initiative with at least 10 youth-serving programs.

ACCOUNTABILITY
• Develop a cross-sector YouthShift leadership table with a codified accountability structure by 2016.
• Develop a data-driven policy agenda for children and youth by the end of 2016.
• Adopt a shared set of quality standards for youth development by 2017.
• Disseminate an update on progress made in the implementation of the YouthShift master plan by the end of 2017.

The principles of YouthShift are already being operationalized in New Orleans to improve the odds for children and youth. Examples of emerging efforts in data-driven decision making, improving program quality, aligning funding, and sustainability include:

The **Opportunity Youth Data Sharing Council** (OYDSC) was created in late fall 2014 when 10 organizations who work directly with Opportunity Youth, young people who are ages 16-24 and are disconnected from school and work, decided to jointly develop a performance management framework and adopt the use of the *Efforts to Outcomes* (ETO) software. OYDSC will be able to improve case management and data capacity, establish seamless and consistent intake and referral processes across the participating organizations, institute a Performance Quality Improvement plan across their respective programs, and **use data to tell the story** of how opportunity youth move toward self -sustainability. OYDSC will be positioned not just to understand why and when their youth are disconnecting, but potential avenues to improve the systems which safeguard against disconnection.

The Data Center, one of the most trusted resources for data about Southeast Louisiana, is critically acclaimed for their work related to Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts, environmental impacts on Louisiana's coastlines, and economic and workforce development. With anchor funding from **Baptist Community Ministries, the Institute for Mental Hygiene, GPOA, and the Greater New Orleans Foundations**, The Data Center will now publish **an annual report card on the status of children and youth** in New Orleans to give stakeholders real-time information on our collective efforts to improve outcomes. The "Youth Index" will serve as one vehicle to track YouthShift's progress toward achieving its long-term goals and will include data on the 22 local conditions identified as barriers for young people's success.

"Young people depend on us to create an environment where they can thrive. I view our role in YouthShift as facilitating data-driven decision making and setting the table for cross-sector work to be intentional and informed. There are many ways to impact positive youth outcomes, but we cannot be intentional if we do not have or are not using data effectively."
NICOLE JOLLY,
PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
YouthShift Backbone Organization, 2012-2015

"The Forum is proud to partner with YouthShift to help bring precision to the passion of its leaders so that all young people in New Orleans have a right to be ready for what's next in their lives."
KAREN PITTMAN,
FORUM FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT
YouthShift Technical Assistance Provider

Mutually reinforcing activities related to improving **program quality and capacity building** have also been spearheaded by partners like **Urban Strategies** and **Café Reconcile**. Each organization launched a series of professional development trainings to help their peers improve quality, and explore ways to build the field of professionals working in the youth development sectors. The New Orleans Kids Partnership, a collective of over 40 organizations in Louisiana, launched a coordinated services workgroup as part of their **GROW (Great Resources Where Y'At?)** Initiative. Funders, too, are applying YouthShift's goals in their own capacity building efforts. Last spring, the **Laureus Foundation's Model City** initiative used YouthShift's maps of resources, active collaborations, and solutions to help them craft their funding strategy for sports-based youth development. They continue to use the YouthShift framework to inform their strategies to improve the quality of programs.

In addition, **Baptist Community Ministries,** in partnership with the **Forum for Youth Investment** and the **Cowen Institute at Tulane University,** are currently updating several **funding and policy scans** related to charter school finance, out-of-school time funding, and local, state, and federal funding for Opportunity Youth. Slated for release in spring 2015, we anticipate using the data to advocate for increased youth-friendly policies and funding.

In late 2014, the **Orleans Parish Children and Youth Planning Board** (CYPB) resolved to leverage the strategies and recommendations of YouthShift for full CYPB adoption.

The CYPB is a statutorily-created policy and advocacy board comprised of up to 26 cross-system leaders charged by the State of Louisiana to improve the physical, social, behavioral, and educational needs of children in Orleans Parish.

We believe that this is just the beginning and look forward to working with our community partners to increase our identified strategies to achieve these audacious goals.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOUTHSHIFT?

In the next few months, YouthShift will release and widely disseminate a master plan for improving children and youth outcomes; lead the adoption of the plan and implementation of its recommendations; help support the development of the annual Youth Index on child and youth indicators that will measure the collective impact on children and youth outcomes; evaluate our staffing models; and launch implementation activities designed to align and improve programs and services for vulnerable children and youth in New Orleans. Learn more about the history and process of YouthShift in the YouthShift Blueprint, access YouthShift tools, and watch our progress: www.nolayouthshift.org.

THANK YOU

With thanks to our funders, technical assistance partners, the Forum for Youth Investment, facilitators, and the hundreds of individuals and organizations who have contributed to the formulation, design, strategy, and implementation of YouthShift to date.

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YOUTHSHIFT

Collective Action for Citywide Success

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CHILDREN IN NEW ORLEANS	YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS	ORGANIZATIONS IN YOUTHSHIFT	COLLABORATIONS IN NEW ORLEANS	VISION