



# African American Community Design Group January to May, 2015

## A Project of the Mission Impact Council

**DESIGN GROUPS:** The Mission Impact Council and African American community leaders and youth held a series of five monthly design meetings.

**GOAL:** The goal was to begin identifying needs and *co-creating* initiatives that would increase life opportunity and equity for all African American youth.

**CONTENT:** Monthly discussions focused on five topics: youth development and leadership, employability, diversity, health and wellness, and education.

**RESULTS:** Community members, including youth, identified key gaps and obstacles in each of the above areas that could increase life opportunities and equity for their youth. Their comments and ideas are presented on the following pages in three sections:

1. **Access:** Do African American youth have equal *access* to youth programs and opportunities?
2. **Quality:** Are the programs that African American youth access *high quality*?
3. **Purpose:** Do existing programs serve the most important *purposes and needs* of African American youth and their community?

### The Mission Impact Council

The Mission Impact Council convenes diverse organizations and communities to work together for positive social change through developing innovative and community-based solutions that change life opportunities for and with urban and underserved youth in the Twin Cities. The co-chairs of the collective impact initiative are:

- Wokie Weah, President of Youthprise
- Todd Tibbits, Chief Operating Officer of the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities
- Meghan Barp, Senior Vice President, Community Impact, at Greater Twin Cities United Way

For more information, contact Hedy Walls, the Vice-President of Social Responsibility at the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities: [hedy.walls@ymcatwincities.org](mailto:hedy.walls@ymcatwincities.org).

# African American Youth Development & Leadership

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
<b>Access</b>	<b>Strengthening Leadership Programs</b>	Provide more tools and training for those doing experiential learning opportunities/ camps.	Need more support for people teaching leadership (including cultural knowledge).
	<b>K-12 Leadership Education</b>	Develop more leadership and service programs in K-12 schools	Leadership programs should be for every youth (and schools is the way to do that).
	<b>Resources</b>	Provide resource support for youth to be involved in leadership programs outside of school.	Resources (fees and transportation) is an obstacle for some.
	<b>Communication</b>	Need more awareness to what program possibilities exist.	Youth miss out because don't know what is available; use peer marketers
<b>Quality</b>	<b>Diversity</b>	Lack of diversity in program leadership leads to social and emotional communication barrier.	Systems tend to reproduce themselves and hire, nurture, and promote others like themselves.
	<b>Social Awareness</b>	Programs should build racial consciousness and awareness about social disparities.	Create opportunities for youth to learn social awareness about what social problems exist and why.
	<b>Youth Voice</b>	Youth want to be actively involved in creating programs.	Offer teacher & youth worker training on youth voice and authentic youth-adult partnerships; increase youth voice in curriculum and delivery
	<b>Mentorship</b>	Provide more access to role models & mentors in out of school time.	Important that African-American youth be inspired by change makers in their own community.
	<b>Parental Support</b>	Positive youth development requires strong families.	Hard to have healthy kids without healthy families and community.
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Understanding</b>	Provide opportunities for youth to see themselves as leaders (mindshift).	Many youth lack understanding of what leadership is. Don't see themselves as leaders.
	<b>Vision</b>	Find a common youth agenda that inspires the community to work together.	Everyone wants youth success but have different ideas about HOW that can be done.
	<b>Advocacy</b>	Opportunities for African-American youth to learn to advocate for themselves and change unjust systems.	Important not just to understand social disparities, but to have skills & strength to pursue equity and opportunity.
	<b>Support</b>	Mainstream programs like YMCA need to act as a referral agency	Link youth to other services they need. not offered by the Y

# African American Employability Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
<b>Access</b>	<b>Summer Internships</b>	Need for more paid summer internships.	It's a huge incentive if youth are paid something; hire the "less fortunate" so they can get a feel for real life jobs.
	<b>Volunteering</b>	Although paid internships are preferred, interesting volunteering can help prepare	Youth may start out as a volunteer and then be hired later to work at the same place.
	<b>Professional Internships</b>	Create more opportunities for youth to work in an office environment; big businesses can inform youth on steps to being successful.	Youth don't see themselves in these environments; they want understanding of how corporate America works and how to succeed in these environments.
	<b>Mentors</b>	Want more big brother/ big sister role models and mentors for employability.	Help youth get job ready (e.g. writing a resume, mock interviews, dress for success (and sometimes buying clothes for an interview).
	<b>Communication</b>	Need more awareness of available opportunities and programs; more information on what programs exist.	Youth often don't know what is already available; improve communication in how these opportunities are shared (some don't have easy access to internet).
<b>Quality</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	Teach entrepreneurship and opportunities for youth to either invent or participate in a small business or start-up.	Some youth are natural entrepreneurs but need some coaching, support, encouragement, and experience.
	<b>Career Education</b>	More focus in schools for skill development to qualify for jobs	Want education to be more relevant to make youth more employable.
	<b>Updated Job Training</b>	Train youth in 21st century skills.	Provide educational experiences that are relevant to youth gaining employment in today's markets.
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Family Education</b>	Teach financial literacy.	Knowledge can help stabilize family household.
	<b>Soft Skill Training</b>	Need communication skills/ language arts and financial literacy.	How to dress for success, interview skills, etc.

# African American Educational Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
<b>Access</b>	<b>Educational Relevance</b>	“Make education more relevant, interesting, and practical for my future goals” (e.g. internships, service-learning, career experiences).	Include wide range of 21st century skills and development opportunities in education (art, science, music, poetry, travel, dance).
	<b>School Vocational Education</b>	Fund more grassroots programs for vocational education.	More certificate programs to equip and provide access to different jobs
	<b>School-Credit Internships</b>	More opportunities for credit for practical application through internships and apprenticeships.	Many students have a preferred style of learning by doing that is often not addressed in schools.
	<b>College/ Higher Education</b>	Provide coaching and guides to access colleges, scholarships, and other related opportunities.	Give academic support to get youth college-ready; provide bridges for youth to access summer campus programs and tutoring.
<b>Quality</b>	<b>Policy Changes</b>	Need larger scale changes in policy, systems, & environment (inspired by dialogue between educators and community).	Look at systems and policies that adversely impact youth (e.g. suspension); look for new ideas/ solutions.
	<b>Teamwork</b>	Find more ways to for parents, youth, families and school to work together.	Teamwork wins; use broad definition of family (not just those in your home or blood relatives).
	<b>Value and Respect</b>	Reaffirm the inherent value of each student.	Youth need respect regardless of scores or educational outcomes.
	<b>Leadership Education</b>	Provide more leadership preparation for how to make a difference.	Youth need skills to change systems that aren’t working for them.
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Social-Emotional Learning</b>	Give more support to the non-cognitive skill development.	Skills like empathy, grit, growth mindset, and perseverance are critical to life success.
	<b>Innovation</b>	Advocate for policies that create innovative programs and systems	System not working for too many youth; create support for innovation and experimentation.
	<b>Confidence and Motivation</b>	Some youth don’t see the value of education; need to reframe benefits of education beyond wealth alone.	Help discover how education helps empower, give confidence, lead to greater understanding of self and others, and a more satisfying life.

# African American Health & Wellness Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
Access	<b>Early Screening</b>	Create opportunities for early screening (i.e. 3 year olds).	Prevention to catch any problems in eyesight, hearing, etc. when young.
	<b>Holistic Health</b>	Develop total youth wellness (define as physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental).	All these are linked to one another and any one can interfere with youth's life opportunities.
	<b>Community Gardens</b>	Missing opportunity for most youth.	Gardens are a way to connect youth with healthy and organic foods.
	<b>Mental Health</b>	Easier access to quality care.	Critical to support families struggling with youth mental health issues.
Quality	<b>Equity in Physical Fitness</b>	Some groups (e.g. young girls) and areas (e.g. North Side) have fewer fitness opportunities.	Expose kids and families to local resources like parks and programs available for physical activities in out of school time.
	<b>Social-Emotional</b>	Support youth's self-confidence.	Message: We love and believe in them.
	<b>Health Records</b>	Increase school-community youth advocates to solve bureaucratic problems (e.g. shots records).	Do so without disrupting or displacing youth and family members.
Purpose	<b>Nutrition</b>	Talk about diet and nutrition with families and kids; affirm healthy eating; learn healthy cooking; make healthy foods as affordable as junk food so there is a real option.	Educate about what is healthy eating or not in current diet; how to count carbs for diabetes and what they means; how to eat healthy in your own culture.
	<b>Strength Building</b>	Cultivate youth's awareness of their own strengths.	Need programs that help youth identify and grow their superpowers.
	<b>Innovation</b>	Drive policy that creates innovative programs and systems to support good health.	Systems not working for too many youth; create support for innovation and experimentation for new ways to raise healthy youth.
	<b>Substance Use</b>	Need new and better ways to prevent substance abuse.	Information alone does nothing; this is a bigger systemic issue.

# African American Diversity Opportunities

How can the Mission Impact Council Act as a Supportive Ally?

	Issue	Opportunity	Insights
<b>Access</b>	<b>Diversity Within Diversity</b>	People overlook that there is significant diversity within the African American community.	There is strength, opportunity and challenges in that diversity.
	<b>Institutionalized Racism</b>	Need to examine policies and structures that perpetuate racial discrimination.	Look at schools, criminal justice system and more for built-in bias.
	<b>Cultural Identity</b>	Foster environments that support positive personal and cultural/ racial identity.	Critical that youth know who they are and have positive perspective on their culture.
<b>Quality</b>	<b>Police</b>	Need to build relationships between police force and African-American communities.	Rethink how police engage youth; create innovative solutions.
	<b>Teachers</b>	Need to deepen teacher empathy toward youth.	Decreases bias and discrimination and increase caring and support.
	<b>Media</b>	Need to develop campaign to counteract stereotypes and racist messages impacting our youth.	Support such a campaign by policy and by innovative ideas.
	<b>Inter-Racial Dialogue</b>	Foster Inter-racial dialogue between groups and community (need to step out of our comfort zone).	Need dialogue to surface and address racial disparities in MN; be respectful and bravely don't worry about offending..
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Cross-Cultural Connections</b>	Race-based cliques exist in schools (not enough mingling); also youth are not being taught about other cultures; school culture clubs are separate.	African American youth might host a conference to teach about each group's culture and tradition (real life experience and knowledge represented).
	<b>Cross-Cultural Advocacy</b>	There are other communities with similar experiences with whom we could make connections.	Connect to be more powerful advocates and allies in changing systems.
	<b>Strength Building</b>	Cultivate youth's awareness of their own strengths.	Need programs that help youth identify and grow their superpowers.
	<b>Innovation</b>	Drive policies that create innovative programs and systems.	Systems not working for too many youth; create support for innovation and experimentation to address persistent problems.