

# Ethiopian Human-Centered Immersion & Innovation Lab

Sponsored by the Mission Impact Council and the Ethiopian Community  
Woodbury Central Park • August 26, 2017

The Mission Impact Council (MIC) and the Ethiopian community organized a half-day immersion to identify and challenge key inequities and change life opportunities for youth and families. The following pages document the passion, insights, and needed opportunities that merged from the small group discussions on the topics of youth development, employability, education, cultural identity and engagement, and health and wellness. The Mission Impact Council is committed to continuing to talk and ensure that these conversations lead to innovative and community-based solutions to increase opportunities identified by the community.

The Mission Impact Council is a collaboration of over 30 diverse organizations headed by the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities, Youthprise, and the Greater Twin Cities United Way.



# Growing Ethiopian Youth Development

## Opportunities for Youth Program Access

- How might we create more summer learning activities because parents are concerned about safety. Most Ethiopians live in apartment buildings with limited access
- Affordability of after school programs is a problem
- How might we have programs for our children at YMCA?
- Want affordable camping opportunities
- Can't find resources
- Parents working a lot to provide resources for children/ time limited
- Kids are not able to go to YMCA camping/ not affordable
- Need less screen time and more active, affordable summer programs
- More ways to involve youth in different talents like music and sports.
- Lower payments for after school programs
- How do families learn about after-school activities and afford it?
- Need affordable extra curricular activities and tutoring
- Tutorial and after school program opportunities because parents have no financial means to get out-of-school time help to their kids

## Opportunities for Better Information

- Opportunities are out there... how do we make people aware?
- Guidance to understand the resources that are available because often resources are created with assumptions that people can navigate them easily and they are not always "for all."
- Getting the right information to the right people
- Explore resources for youth because youth don't have an idea where to go
- Parent not knowledgeable to explore resources because cultural and educational barriers
- Need summer program meetings conducted informing parents of what programs/ opportunities exist
- Parents don't know of opportunities for kids—can't as easily support or assist
- Guidance and resources need to be made available to youth and families so they can all learn what options are available together.
- Need CORRECT information and guidance because will help them to make the right decision

## Opportunities for Leadership

- Get youth involved in the political system
- I want them to engage in society fully because that is how you solve your problems and be heard by other people.
- Want community involvement
- Position youth to understand systems/ policies and how to advocate for equality because of minimal representation in community/ corporate leadership.
- Want youth involvement in political science
- Hard to be a leader when they don't know who they are

## Opportunities for Youth Voice

- How might we create a youth development organization/ intermediary to support Ethiopian youth in Woodbury because there is a growing population in this city? Because they need to ask—no one will give it to them.
- Help youth to gain confidence to speak up for what they need to be successful and to learn about themselves and what they need.
- We want youth to have mentoring/ leadership opportunities because our youth need to have a voice.
- Youth need to have their voices heard because often their voices don't show up and they can help be the solution.

# Growing Ethiopian Career/ Employability Development

## Opportunities for Career Education

- We need to provide role models for kids to know what the job opportunities are because kids may not have the information to realize what they can achieve and be able to see people like them in those jobs.
- Give youth help to get their future career
- Increase their ability to choose the right career
- Help choosing the right career
- Getting a job depends on what you study (before you study you should study the market for different jobs)
- We need to promote financial literacy for our kids so they can understand the importance of financial independence
- Youth that came from Ethiopia recently can learn to focus on careers that don't need much language
- Not having guidance for career
- Ideal credit union work with high school students
- There is pressure to become doctors and lawyers rather than what youth want to be

## Opportunities for Networking

- GAP: Parents have lofty dreams for youth and hope (doctors, lawyers, biologists) but not realistic connections and support resources (mentors, counselors, guidance).
- Youth don't have references for jobs

## Opportunities to Develop Job Skills

- How to navigate the corporate world because they need to be able to promote themselves
- Family and community together provide information and career fair and other kinds of resume building strategies
- Readiness for jobs; career discussions; prep for college; writing college apps.
- Training in a job
- Entrepreneurship: workshop for Ethiopian community
- Not knowing steps to guide children how to apply for jobs

## Opportunities for Summer Jobs/ Internships

- Summer Jobs/ Internships needed (stepping stone for future career)
- Make it easier for kids to get jobs
- Youth may not be aware of quality internship possibilities because not have a natural network to tell them
- Job training for young kids
- How do we involve companies to offer summer jobs?
- Employability can be impacted by exposure to corporate programs early in the school process.
- Not knowing steps to guide children how to apply for jobs

## Opportunities for Mentors

- Role Models that reflect the community so that youth can aspire to do more and be more.
- Youth should have a plan/goal that they can complete and they should stick to it. (More mentoring can help to achieve this!)
- Youth encouragement and mentoring is needed because sometimes they don't know which way to go
- How might we attract Ethiopian mentors because it is important that youth see leaders who look like them.
- Role model to help the youth to be interested in learning
- Discover opportunities through mentorship how to find connections through professional organizations.
- Helpful to have adults 2-3 years older to provide feedback
- More resource and guidance available because it helps them to chose what they want in their life.
- More Big Brother/Big Sister Mentorships (get adult perspective
- Want corporate mentors

# Growing Ethiopian Educational Opportunities

## Opportunity for Quality Education

- Create strong educational equity for Ethiopian students to allow kids to have all the opportunities to join a 21<sup>st</sup> century work force
- Focus on math and science in lower level.
- Good education is basis for opportunity.
- High value on education
- Parents need help choosing the location of the school for their children that will help the children fit, do well, etc.
- Specific resources in the school to assist children/ youth
- How do we help children to be success in school and choose careers.
- Parents encourage children to read and connect with others who are educated
- Education systems need more resources to dedicate quality time in assessing students' abilities and goals.
- Math and science are both important
- Students born in the USA placed in ESL
- Parents need to be advocates
- Important to have small classes so that there is an opportunity for discussion.
- People with different culture need to learn how to cultivate the importance of education.
- School districts are strong but there is competition with students for extra curricular academic support
- What is most important is for kids to learn and discover new things

## Opportunity for Homework Help

- Need tutoring available for kids after school and weekends
- Provide subject-specific tutoring
- Value on finishing homework before doing other activities (soccer, music, etc.)
- How to help the kids with homework or find volunteers to help with homework.
- Discounted rates for tutors that cost money/ can't afford
- Hard to find tutors in some areas of the community
- Problem of family not having educational background
- Family works long hours and not available
- Get help with education
- Find help with homework
- Parents' work long hours and can't tutor.
- Participate in volunteering because youth misses connection to employer
- Need tutors to help with homework
- Parents working, don't know the school subjects

## Opportunity for Higher Education

- How to get help with the college fund
- Access to college tuition fee/ help
- Help navigating the higher education entrance process
- Most immigrants don't know the process of completing applications/ or finding resources such as financial aid/ scholarship
- How might we create more access to higher education?
- A challenge to know how to apply for/ pay for college
- Need OST programs to learn job application, college application, scholarships.
- Focus on science and engineering
- Like smaller class size in small colleges

## Opportunity for Culturally Competent Teachers

- How can we ensure that teachers and school officials are culturally competent because they are key influencers of Ethiopian kids.
- Education: students identify with teachers that look like them. IT would be good to have Ethiopian teachers in the school districts.

# Growing a Youth's Cultural Identity

## Opportunity to Develop a Positive Cultural Identity

- We want them to know where their families came from and to know about their ancestors. We need a strong community.
- We need to maintain a cultural identity in our youth through cultural identity kids can maintain the cultural values of their heritage.
- How might we instill a strong sense of cultural identity because Ethiopian kids need to know their language and history.
- Parents challenged to help/allow children to integrate into new culture and also teach Ethiopian culture
- Cultural identity very important to teach Ethiopian youth the culture, values, and language
- Cultural identity—young generations need to immerse /accept themselves in diverse cultural world.
- Sometimes political and language differences get in the way of teaching culture.
- There is not enough space in churches—could help teach and reinforce culture
- Teaching culture is largely up to the family but hard for them to do it all.

## Opportunity to Overcome Obstacles to Cultural Transmission

- It is challenging to transmit the culture because we don't have a process in place to educate the youth about the rich culture of Ethiopia
- Cultural identity conflicts—kids being taught one thing at home and being told conflicting information outside the house It's frustrating to parents to not get youth involved in faith/ cultural awareness.
- Kids prefer to talk in English
- Youth get discouraged from speaking in cultural languages
- Kids are worried about being deported/ they feel like secondhand citizens
- We want our kids to get the best out of the 2 cultures (Ethiopian and American) and apply it throughout their life.
- Our children are lost and confused in both
- Kids get confused at ages 14-15-16-17. Listen to other kids? Or parents?
- Kids are told immigrants are criminals and they must defend themselves
- It is a challenge to teach kids their history.
- Youth aren't rooted in culture
- Make it easier for kids to know their culture.
- Need cultural resources to provide holistic support
- Be honest about why you believe what you do/ share your history/ lead by example
- The media has negative impact on all African Americans
- Racial inequality in MN should improve
- GAP; Need to help Ethiopian kids connect as an American without losing their Ethiopian cultural heritage
- Balancing how important it is to keep our identity and integrate with the American culture.
- Kids are confused because of cultural differences.



## Growing a Youth's Cultural Identity (Continued)

### Opportunity to Teach About Ethiopian Culture

- Self-esteem development because it helps develop self-identity and self-confidence
- Want for youth to have family value
- Youth need to learn Ethiopian language and culture
- Want to teach dress code, food, language, history
- Key cultural values: modest dress codes; respectful conduct; discipline.
- Know who you are/ what you want to be/ listen to different perspectives
- We would like to see our kids to show their cultural identity and tradition to their friends and the community.
- Become an example in day to day life
- Teaching our kids about our culture and their identity after and before school.
- Provide a platform of role models for kids to maintain a connection to their culture
- Perseverance

### Opportunity to Create an Ethiopian Community Center

- Ethiopians do not have strong community and they are divided
- There is a need to create a collective effort to bring Ethiopians together and unify because it seems that we/they are identifying as separate groups.
- Ethiopian Community Center will help promote and also be used as a powerful community tool to drive information for educational and scholarship/ internship opportunities
- There is no facility in the Community to transfer culture.
- The more the adults come together into community thinking the better the youth involvement
- Ethiopian Community Center because they need to learn more about their culture
- Open Ethiopian Community Center for the kids to learn heritage, language.
- Community Center for mentoring and coaching
- Community Center where could teach entrepreneurship
- Community can't find help from the Ethiopian community
- Create a strong community bond.
- Kids need central location to learn their culture
- There is no place for youth to gather
- More teaching of collective thinking than individualism for the adults

### Opportunity to Develop a Positive Cultural Identity

- Churches should have the biggest role because most Ethiopians have a very close connection to their churches. It will be the best place to reach out to the community.
- Community can be reached through the church
- Church play a big role because there is no organization to represent Ethiopians
- Key place to learn the culture
- What is most important is to maintain a rich spiritual background because it promotes morality.
- Would welcome having churches and faith communities to teach culture
- More religion/ culture learning opportunities

# Growing Youth's Cross-Cultural Capabilities

## Opportunity for Cross-Cultural Engagement

- Create intentional cross-cultural interactions with upcoming Ethiopian celebrations because there needs to be more interactions and understanding/ relationship building
- Parents need to be open-minded to tell (encourage) their children to learn and play with kids of different cultures.
- Understanding other cultures stems from a strong understanding of one's own cultural identity
- Need to understand our own culture and embrace other cultures—we are stronger together
- Want to be open minded/ connect with other culture• Allow youth to participate in camping/sleep overs because this will integrate them to diverse cultures.
- Introduce people to new cultures (we are more alike than different)
- We are different than Somali—We don't want to be separate/ want to be integrated and still maintain our own culture
- We have to assimilate and dissimilate to understand other cultures
- Move forward the next generation to be skilled in interacting outside of school or at work.
- Encourage our youth to work with other cultures
- Opportunity to learn about and engage with other cultures because it will help them embrace their own culture
- Focus on cross-cultural mindset for the community
- How might we encourage cross-cultural relationships because Ethiopian kids exist in a very diverse society?
- Want to both respect and know own culture and integrate with others (need to know both)
- Encourage Ethiopians to involve with other cultures
- The greatest hope for them is to connect with the society and be successful in their life, not facing the challenges we faced

# Growing Youth's Health and Wellness

## Opportunity to Access Medical System

- Need affordable health and wellness in the community
- Address Diabetic/ Drug addiction/ Mental health because of change in diet and lack of education in areas of healthy living
- Need Ethiopian doctors, professionals to help – parents can't always do it (kids don't tell them all their feelings).
- Cultural sensitive health education (language barrier, interpreter)
- Language barriers to health system
- Fear of talking about sexuality

## Opportunity for Mental Health Support

- Kids need more emotional support
- Mental health seen as spiritual problem
- Mental health –pressure balancing two worlds (home and school)
- Ethiopians need education to express their illness openly.
  
- Fear of telling about a sickness
- Fear and shame about talking about illness

## Opportunity for Good Nutrition

- Need: Affordable, locally grown food to cook at home (Whole Foods—Amazon)
- Teach youth how to cook at home (good meals and food from scratch)
- Unbalanced eating habits
- Someone to help navigate the health system
- If you can't watch your kids closely, they may end up unhealthy
- Autistic kids

## Opportunity for Family Support

- Parents should be involved and open minded about other cultures so that kids can see that and be involved with others.
- Parents can't catch up with kids as they grow
- Parents busy working
- Parents were raised very differently in Ethiopia than the way youth are raised here
- Emotional support for family / youth (vulnerable to American peer pressure)



