



COYN Three-Year Strategy

Introduction

By June 2023, COYN will have grown into a nimble, proactive, and influential statewide advocacy-intermediary network that bridges policy and practice to achieve systems change at scale. To achieve this, COYN will center youth-led change to close the gap between state level policy organizations (both advocates and policymakers), ground-level service providers (implementers), communities (recipients/beneficiaries) to create policy-to-practice-to-community linkages and feedback loops that drive statewide systems-level change.

Strategy Highlights

Over the next three years, COYN will exclusively focus on building youth leadership capacity and improving workforce policy and implementation. Objectives will include: (A) developing a young leaders advocacy program to increase site capacity and create strong and recognizable voice for youth-led change, (B) partnering with the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) and key advocacy and service organizations to ensure the state's workforce systems prioritize Opportunity Youth for services that are of demonstrably high-quality, and (C) supporting the emergence of a strong and inclusive network of communities committed to youth-led change and quality services that can advocate and move change locally and engage, through COYN, in Sacramento. Critically, the systems change focus of the coming three years is narrow in scope; our focus is on ensuring CA's workforce development system lives fully into WIOA's legislative intent, as well as the cross-systems ambitions of the CWDB's unified state plan. Through the synergies of statewide reach and partnership with public institutions, centering youth leadership and advocacy, and providing convening support and technical assistance to COYN partner sites, COYN can drive systems change for at statewide scale for OY.

High Level Timeline

Through the June 2023, COYN expects the following priorities to shape our efforts:

- 1. Collaborative Infrastructure** **2019-2020**
Solidify governance, learn how to lead and activate policy responses as a network, establish strategic partnerships, and grow the network and build the brand.
- 2. Build Advocacy Muscle** **2020-2021**
Deepen partnerships with policy organizations and CWDB to support development of WIOA waiver to prioritize system impact youth, including the codification of a youth-centric, trauma-responsive practice model based on Los Angeles's P3 work; initiate collaboration with select local workforce boards to improve youth programming and service delivery; and deepen engagement on H RTP initiatives. Partner with young leaders to trace the outlines of meaningful youth partnership, including designing a COYN Policy & Advocacy Fellowship program.
- 3. Lift Up Young Leaders** **2021-2022**
Formalize resources for youth-led organizing and policy development, through implementation of the COYN Policy & Advocacy Fellowship program. Continue WIOA access and quality work in partnership with CWDB through the launch of a statewide community of practice.
- 4. Support Youth-Led Change & Connect Policy and Practice** **2022-2023**
Cement system for engaging young leaders in policy development and advocacy in partnership with CWDB and other system level actors to craft legislation, and drive implementation and program design that includes the expertise of young leaders at all stages.

About COYN

COYN formed in 2015 when the five California communities that were inaugural members of the Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions, Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund (now the Opportunity Youth Forum) began to regularly convene to build connections and share information. COYN's formation reflected the recognition that to achieve equitable economic and educational outcomes for youth and young adults it is necessary to address structural and systemic issues through policy and advocacy.

COYN was established with the underpinning belief that through a network structure we can behave as a single larger entity increasing our power to affect change and support shared learning in this emerging field. COYN will facilitate statewide organizing and policy advocacy to remedy systemic inequities affecting Opportunity Youth across California.

Five Key Concepts of the Strategy

COYN is an advocacy-intermediary

COYN can add the most value by bridging the gap between local collaboratives and statewide policymakers. COYN will focus on building the capacity to develop and advance policies that support Opportunity Youth, while activating local collaboratives to engage in coordinated local and state-wide policy advocacy. COYN will do this with an intention to center young leaders in all local and state advocacy efforts.

COYN is a network of networks

COYN is explicit in its intention to be a network of networks, and this means COYN only seeks members that are collaborative backbones, coalition leads, and/or network intermediaries. COYN's membership has always been structured as organizational, but for maximum network effect, COYN will exclusively aim to partner with other networks.

COYN requires a high floor of member participation

In moving toward a network of networks orientation, COYN will need to maintain piercing clarity on expectations of membership and roles and responsibilities, to ensure a diffuse network is able to activate consistently and act as a single entity to achieve systemic change. This clarity is crucial to ensure partner coalition leads are not cannibalized, and domains are respected. COYN will more explicitly codify membership with specific behavioral definitions around the necessary threshold of participation in order

to add value as a reliable policy advocacy-intermediary that can activate young leaders and communities in support of policy changes that advance equity.

COYN will stay narrowly focused on workforce development

WIOA is the only federal resource stream that specifically targets the workforce development needs of Opportunity Youth, recognizing the value of employment experiences and the opportunity to develop and expand services, supports, and experiences that cross institutional boundaries and help weave together experiences in a young person's developmental trajectory. The legislative intent of WIOA points to the opportunity and imperative to position WIOA resources and the workforce development system at the intersection of the K-12 and postsecondary education systems as a critical bridging resources for vulnerable populations, and as the binding agent that can connect the totality of the career pathways ecosystem. Further, other federal and state investments in K-12 and community college in the form of the federal Perkins program and the CA Strong Workforce program point to this very notion. Improving the effectiveness of the workforce system can have a catalyzing effect on the other systems that Opportunity Youth interact with and need to be more responsive.

COYN will formalize statewide with advocacy partnerships

COYN is best positioned to partner with established advocacy organizations that have relationships and infrastructure in Sacramento to develop, influence, and advance policymaking. COYN adds value by connecting those organizations to voices and perspectives from the field and on-the-ground advocates who can inform policy and be activated in support of advocacy initiatives.

Important Goals/Milestones

Achieve policy victory through legislation co-sponsorship

August 2020

COYN is currently co-sponsoring state-level legislation (SB 1103) with the GRACE Institute and End Child Poverty in California campaign. Achieving a meaningful legislative victory will enhance COYN's reputation and strengthen our ability going forward to develop and coordinate further support and lift up policy solutions from partners on the ground. COYN members should be ready to catalyze action in local communities in support of this goal over summer 2020.

Establish policy alignment with the CWDB

December 2020

Key federal resources for OY flow through the CWDB and adjacent state agencies like EDD and the community college system (in the form of Pell grants and Perkins resources). Connecting and aligning our work with the CWDB is important to ensure that COYN has a direct line to the state workforce system's policy setting and implementation oversight body. Further, the state does not have a comprehensive youth policy or plan, and thus approaches to youth services vary widely across the state with regard to implementation and impact. This creates a unique opportunity to improve the state youth workforce framework and support the dissemination and replication of best practices and innovations.

Establish TA partnership with New Ways to Work

October 2020

COYN is not an expert in the workforce system, rather it is a connector between state policy and community collaboratives. COYN will partner with New Ways to Work to leverage their knowledge, experience, and relationships with the California workforce development system to create openings for influence and engagement with local WDBs that are meaningful and value add.

Co-host Sacramento advocacy day

May 2021

COYN will host an advocacy day to bring together members of the network and policy partners to build the network and the field, to advocate for OY with legislators, and to identify key policy priorities for 2021-2022.

Expand COYN Coalition to ten members

June 2021

COYN must increase its geographic reach if it is to be a more representative voice of OY in the state, and must link to OY coalitions in the areas of highest disconnection (Bakersfield, Fresno, Riverside County, and San Bernardino/the Inland Empire), and build engagement in the more rural north-central of the state and in Sacramento.

COYN must also connect with other existing state and regional OY coalitions. For example, the local conservation corps network, and the remnants of the YouthBuild association, as well as other youth-led groups like Opportunity Youth United.

Formalize COYN Fellows resources and program

June 2022

Young leaders are critical to COYN's work both philosophically and tactically. COYN seeks to resources partner sites to train and sustain a designated young leader to engage in statewide work and participate at the governance level to guide COYN, and ensure that the voices of those closest to the pain or central to decision-making and policy development. COYN intends to be a true partnership between young people and systems leaders.