

The New Orleans Youth Master Plan



The children and youth of New Orleans deserve lives filled with positive experiences and healthy relationships simply because they are our children and youth, worthy of our collective best.

The Youth Master Plan is a **comprehensive roadmap for creating and sustaining a positive youth development-focused, results-oriented New Orleans**. It is our shared opportunity to be deliberate about the potential of our city's youth, build pathways to leverage that potential, and **shift the way we do business** at every level.



Through this plan we recognize the challenges we face, but more importantly, we see the opportunities to build together a better future that values and supports the strengths of our children, youth, and communities. **When our youth are well, we all are well**, demonstrating our collective best!

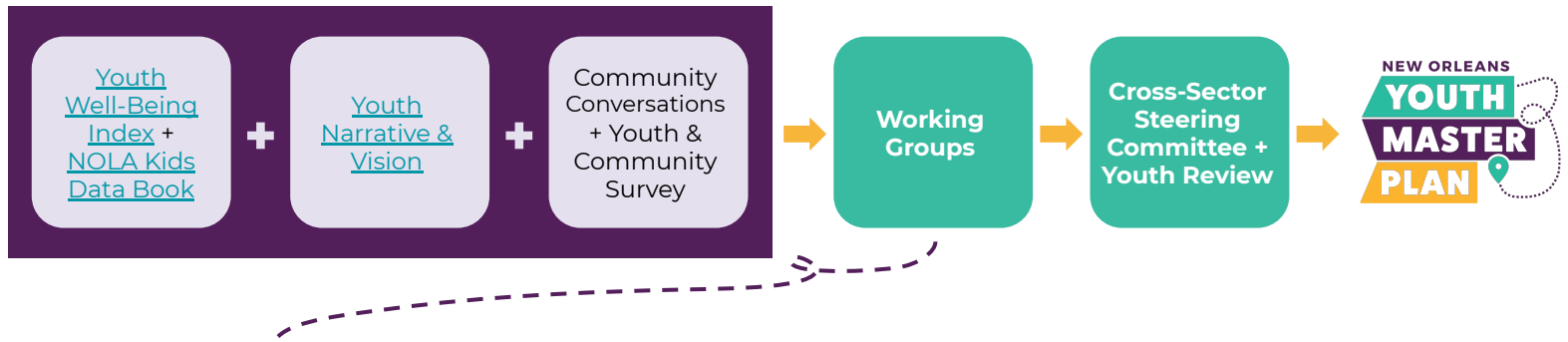
The Youth Master Plan is about coordinated, city-wide action. The cross-sector solutions outlined in the following pages will not just exist on paper. Beginning in 2021, **Implementation & Action Tables will be launched to work collaboratively in bringing these aspirational solutions to life**, leaving behind what's not working, strengthening what is, and innovating towards [our shared vision of youth success](#).



Consider yourself enlisted in the movement to be a city where the full self-expression, leadership, creativity, and culture of all children and youth comes together to create a true community where everyone succeeds. **Isn't that what we ALL want?**

Join us and stay in touch at nolayouthmasterplan.org.

How We Developed the Plan



Building Youth-Centered Solutions

Youth, community, and sector leaders gathered over four weekly sessions to create solutions that address the unmet needs of children and youth, from birth to 24.

~80 People Representing NOLA



Youth Leaders



Community Leaders



Sector Leaders

Split up to focus on 5 age groups, from birth to 24

Focusing on 6 Youth Master Plan areas of focus

Our Guiding Principles



Coordinate & Strengthen What Exists, Raising Collective Awareness



Young People Exist Within Their Family & Community Contexts



Youth Voice is at the Center & Youth Vision is the North Star

Deliver on Every Need



Be Data-Informed & Measure Strengths



Youth & Community Wisdom Are Our Greatest Assets



Center a Positive Youth Development Framework



Develop Inclusive & Equitable Strategies



Promote Silo-Busting Strategies

What's in the Plan?

The Youth Master Plan lays out solutions within six Youth Master Plan areas and centers on five developmental stages from birth to 24 (see right). These solutions were developed by our cross-generational, cross-sector working groups. These solutions seek to direct city-wide actors and resources to address the issues as laid out in the plan, to meet our goals, and to uplift the lives of our city's youth and their families today, throughout the next ten years of this plan, and far into our city's future.



Six Youth Master Plan Areas

20-24
15-19
11-14
6-10
Birth-5



Five Developmental Stages

Why a Youth Master Plan?



Our Challenges

This Youth Master Plan seeks to bring attention to many of the issues that can prevent our young people from succeeding. **Our systems as they exist do not meet the needs of our youth.** Our historically siloed approaches to supporting our young people and their families are often costly, overly-punitive, and blind to the unique developmental stages, cultural needs, and lived experiences of New Orleans children and youth. In addition, **New Orleans' legacy systems of discrimination have played a significant role in how our city has been shaped**, often cutting off children, youth, and their families from the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

Our Aspirations

The children and youth of New Orleans are not broken or damaged. They can rise above circumstances and have the ability to define their own path. **They deserve homes, schools, and communities that prioritize their value, sense of safety, and well-being**, that understand developmentally appropriate behavior, and that model compassionate and positive youth development approaches that center youth.

Our New Approach

In this Youth Master Plan, we are advancing a new approach — and a commitment to shift the ways we collectively think about our young people.

Across all Youth Master Plan areas, we will work with partners to develop strengths-based indicators (e.g. positive self-esteem, presence of a loving caregiver) that actors across the city can leverage to measure progress and bring the plan vision to life.

All of this will only be possible with true and sustained partnership and power-sharing with our children and youth. Together, we will build from a foundation of respect towards a future in which young people and adults work together to lead New Orleans in becoming a more compassionate, just, and equitable city.

READING THE SOLUTIONS BRIEFING

Each set of two slides covers one of six Youth Master Planning (YMP) areas. Each area includes statements outlining the major issues and goals in a given YMP area, followed by a list of working group solutions.

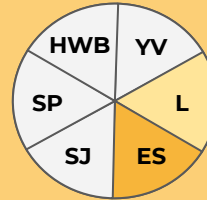
ES2. Expose young people to career and technical education opportunities that increase their awareness of post-high school career pathways, and provide them the training and relationships needed to make an informed choice between viable post-graduation options.

Developmental Stages

20-24
15-19
11-14
6-10
Birth-5



YMP Areas



YMP Areas Shading

Dark color highlights the primary focus of the solution, light orange highlights other connected YMP areas.

Solution with Abbreviation

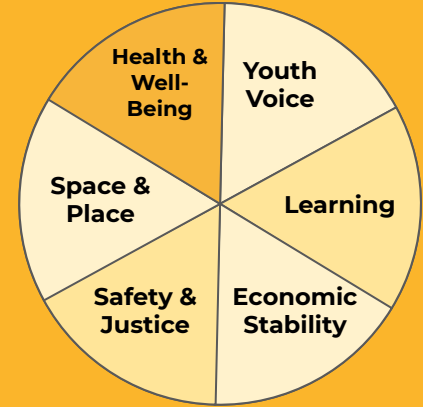
For example, ES = Economic Stability

Developmental Stages Shading

Dark purple highlights the developmental stage that is most directly impacted by the solution. Medium purple highlights other ages that are closely impacted.

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Issue: Our siloed physical and mental healthcare systems — often costly and inaccessible — do not adequately address the unique developmental stages, cultural needs, and lived experiences of New Orleans children, youth, and their families. There is **limited training and knowledge** for healthcare professionals and community members on how best to support young people experiencing various types of trauma. As a result, rather than **preventative care and early interventions, young people's main interaction with the system can be through hospitalizations or institutionalizations.**



Goal: We envision a city in which our youth have positive, healthy relationships with caring adults and peers. Youth and their families are aware of and engaged in healthy prevention activity, are free from trauma, and **have reliable access to the physical and mental healthcare they need.**

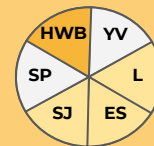
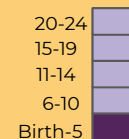
- **Our current goals** are decreased percentages of young people experiencing exposure to violence, symptoms of depression, substance abuse, PTSD and anxiety, and suicidal ideation.
- **Our mid and long term goals** are to create benchmarks for strengths-based well-being indicators.

Health & Well-Being Solutions

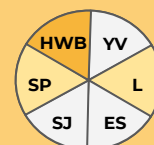
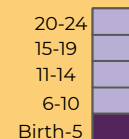
Developmental
Stages

YMP
Areas

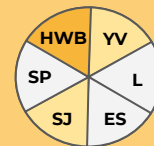
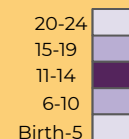
HWB1. Ensure the provision of long-term services for new and/or young parents (i.e. home-visiting programs, parent support groups) by promoting existing programs and investing in additional supports.



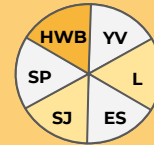
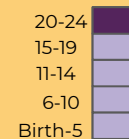
HWB2. Create and distribute information that supports caregiver's access to emotional/mental health and wellness resources/services. This includes increasing awareness of what good emotional/mental health and wellness looks like; how to access and sustain care for themselves and their families.



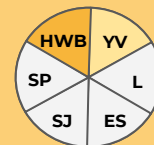
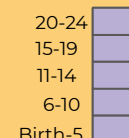
HWB3. Provide trainings tailored to young people and adults on how to support youth safety and well-being by **enhancing a child's agency to speak their truth — particularly when their safety is threatened** — across home, school, and community settings.



HWB4. Provide training for all adults engaged in youth-serving programs **on how to best support young people who may experience emotional/behavioral/mental health challenges.**



HWB5. Create criteria to gauge the cultural competence of behavioral and physical healthcare systems, as well as how systems incorporate youth and families' agency and voice.



SPACE & PLACE

Issue: New Orleans' **legacy systems of discrimination play a significant role in how our city is designed**, and urban planning has not traditionally prioritized the evolving needs of our children and youth — who make up over 25% of the city's population. As a result, **children, youth, and their families are cut off from opportunities and resources, face displacement and disconnection**, and lack safe and fun places to play, gather, grow, and build identity. Residents of all generations benefit when cities are intentionally planned to be child-friendly — when they promote safety, health and wellness, connection to nature, and stronger communities with a greater sense of belonging and stewardship.



Goal: We envision a New Orleans where **all young people live in resilient communities that promote youth voice**, environmental stewardship, champion equitable climate change solutions; and have consistent ease of access to clean, safe, and affordable spaces (indoor and outdoor) in which to play, learn, explore, exercise, build community.

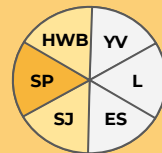
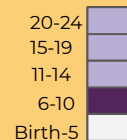
- **Our current goal** is increased percentage of households that can access youth-centered spaces with programming in 15 minutes or less via transit, bike, or on foot; and increased percentage of households aware of and able to access community services within 1 mile of their house.
- **Our mid and long term goal** is to create benchmarks for strengths-based space & place indicators, that may include and define resident satisfaction with neighborhood.

Space & Place Solutions

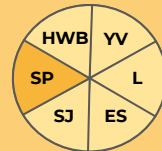
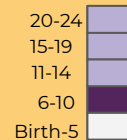
Developmental
Stages

YMP
Areas

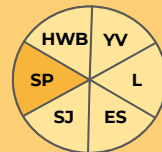
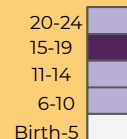
SP1. Improve and maintain safe and active mobility options in all neighborhoods, as determined by the residents, to ensure connectivity to **essential services** (food, healthcare) and **social infrastructure** (parks, playgrounds, libraries).



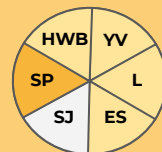
SP2. Ensure all neighborhoods are shaped by youth voice in the creation of beautiful spaces & places where young people can live, play, learn, explore, and create community.



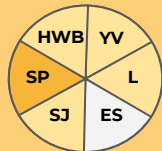
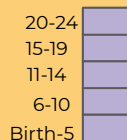
SP3. Ensure the public transit system encompasses the entire New Orleans metro area, and **is safe, and lower-cost or free to youth**.



SP4. Invest in social infrastructure—libraries, community centers and other gathering spaces—that are easily accessed from every neighborhood, equipped with programs and on-site youth services that are staffed by trained people who are paid a living wage.

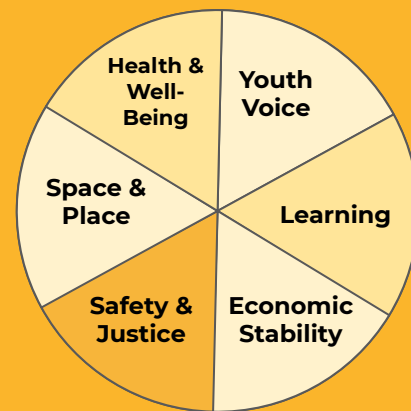


SP5. Activate community spaces with relationship-based mentorship models, where volunteers are supported with the training and tools needed to succeed.



SAFETY & JUSTICE

Issue: When **systems fail to be proactive and responsive** in developmentally appropriate and compassionate ways, **we fail all our children, from birth to 24**. Our systematic approaches to **discipline, rather than positive youth development and healing**, are punitive, trauma-inducing, developmentally inappropriate, and perpetuate racism in schools and communities, starting at pre-school. The children and youth of New Orleans are not broken or damaged. They can rise above circumstances and have the ability to define their own path. They deserve homes, schools, and communities that prioritize their value, sense of safety, and well-being, and understand developmentally appropriate behavior and respond with compassionate and developmentally appropriate approaches.



Goal: We envision a New Orleans where **all young people live, learn, work, and play in environments that are safe and free from harm** — including environmental toxins, indirect and direct forms of violence, abuse and neglect, and punitive discipline. These environments are also free from the fear of incarceration and its impacts on family stability, economic opportunity and the safety nets that support children and youth.

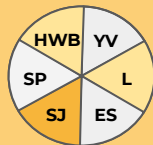
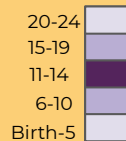
- **Our current goals** are decreased # of young people who enter the criminal justice system, decreased length of time engaged with the system, and reduced # of returns to the system; decreased # of young people who have witnessed or experienced violence, abuse, or neglect; decreased # of suspensions, expulsions and disciplinary infractions.
- **Our mid and long-term goal** is to create benchmarks for strengths-based safety & justice indicators, which will include safety from environmental toxins.

Safety & Justice Solutions

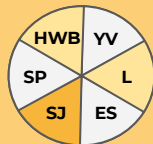
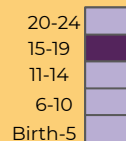
Developmental
Stages

YMP
Areas

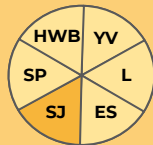
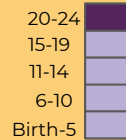
SJ1. Invest in preventive interventions that are culturally appropriate, evidence-based, and designed to increase prosocial behavior and promote the development of healthy coping skills in young people.



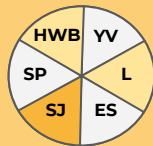
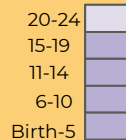
SJ2. Expand utilization of restorative approaches in schools and community to include everyone impacted by conflict, crime, and violence. Fully utilize restorative justice programs to respond to student misconduct and reduce youth involvement with the juvenile justice system and adult criminal justice system. (See Solution L3)



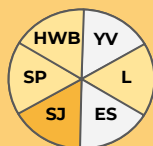
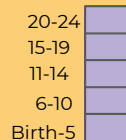
SJ3. Define and advance a clear juvenile justice advocacy agenda, including but not limited to **restorative justice (including trauma-informed care), safe housing, decarceration / reentry, supportive family involvement, and drug courts** geared to the young adult population.



SJ4. Adopt developmentally appropriate positive behavior interventions that are healing-centered, focusing on compassion and resilience, throughout community programs, schools, the juvenile justice system, and other settings.



SJ5. Coordinate a network of support for families that provides physically and emotionally safe spaces for caregivers to talk about challenges and victories of raising a family and use the principles of adult-learning, family support, and resource-sharing.



ECONOMIC STABILITY

Issue: In Orleans Parish, **wages of adult workers in a child's family determine their poverty status, and low-wage jobs are far too prevalent** with about two-thirds of jobs paying less than \$15 an hour. Coupled with unaffordable housing costs, childcare costs, health care costs, and an increase in the general cost of living in the region, children, youth, and their families struggle to survive and thrive. Eighty-two percent of New Orleans families with children have at least one working parent, yet 37% of New Orleans children, primarily children of color, continue to live in poverty. **Siloed networks and systems keep young people in a state of disconnection from relevant education and workforce opportunities and pathways.**



Goal: We envision a city in which our young people and their families earn living wages in positive work environments and have awareness of and access to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in diverse, high quality career pathways.

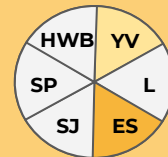
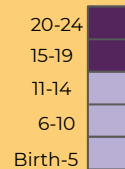
- **Our current goals** are decreased number of families living below the [ALICE](#) threshold through an increase in wages; decreased percentage of young people disconnected from education and workforce opportunities; and increased number of young people on a career pathway post high school.
- **Our mid and long term goals** are to create benchmarks for strengths-based economic stability indicators, including the interconnection and functionality of systems designed to aid youth connection.

Economic Stability Solutions

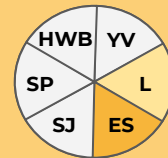
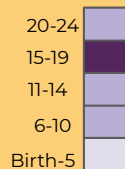
Developmental
Stages

YMP
Areas

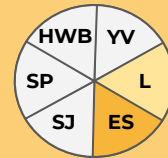
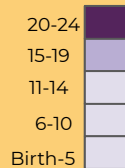
ES1. Advocate for increased minimum wage with equitable benefits as part of a coordinated effort in partnership with the City and other policy-makers at the State level.



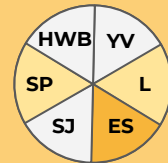
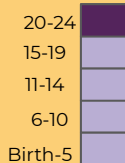
ES2. Expose young people to career and technical education opportunities that increase their awareness of post-high school career pathways, and provide them the training and relationships needed to make an informed choice between viable post-graduation options.



ES3. Improve existing and develop new workforce development training programs focusing on New Orleans' new and growing economic sectors, and in collaboration with the State. Economic sectors may include technology, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, film & TV, etc.



ES4. Leverage highly visible and accessible community spaces (e.g. libraries, recreation centers) as job training sites for young people and their families, with the goal of fostering skill building and job readiness.



LEARNING

Issue: The systems of education in New Orleans do not meet the mental, social, emotional, or curricular needs of our young people, starting from birth. This is demonstrated by the inadequate investments in quality early childhood education seats; support for educators, caregivers, and parents; and community-based learning opportunities. As a result, young people are at risk of disengaging from and/or being pushed out of school, graduating with limited exposure and choice, being funneled through a punitive system, and not matriculating successfully to and through higher education and/or career pathways.



Goal: Learning should be designed and credited in a way that is informed by the **lived experiences and needs of young people and their families**. We envision a city in which youth have equitable learning opportunities and positive learning environments (in and out of school time) with developmentally appropriate youth-centered curriculum.

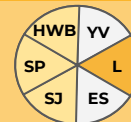
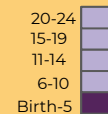
- ***Our current goal*** is increased levels of school engagement across the spectrum, evidenced by a reduction in truancy rates by 50%, a reduction in out-of-school suspension rates by 25%, a reduction in expulsion rates by 50%, and an increase in completion rates for post secondary and/or credential learning by 25%.
- ***Our mid and long term goals*** are to create benchmarks for strengths-based learning indicators that account for increased levels of school engagement across the spectrum, social-emotional learning, and out-of- school-time learning starting from birth.

Learning Solutions

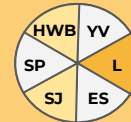
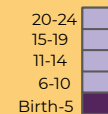
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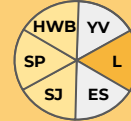
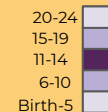
L1. Recognize and broaden community wisdom around the importance of brain development in the first three years of life through public awareness campaigns and policy efforts.



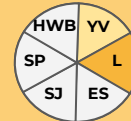
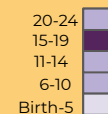
L2. Train educators, caregivers, parents, and the youth development workforce on how to identify, understand, and respond to challenging age-appropriate behavior in ways that redirect with care, build resilience, and are learner-centered.



L3. Address the punitive school culture by removing law enforcement officers and increasing the capacity for schools to support mental and behavioral health needs of students. Schools should be resourced to build a culture that leads and guides students with positive behavior interventions and support in classrooms and across campus. (See Solution SJ2)



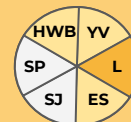
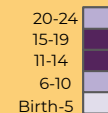
L4. Engage young people in curriculum design to increase youth agency in shaping learning and power-sharing with adults, such as through anonymous student-led teacher evaluation processes and greater access to administration.



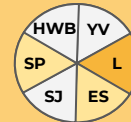
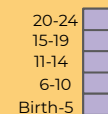
L5. Expand New Orleans Public Schools curriculum to include:

L5a. Social emotional learning (e.g. problem solving skills, building community with teams, practicing mindfulness)

L5b. Practical skill-building (e.g. financial management, resume building)



L6. Increase funding for learning and enrichment that falls outside of K-12 system, including early childhood education, out-of-school-time programming, and college / credential / career preparation programming.



YOUTH VOICE, AGENCY, & IDENTITY

Issue: New Orleans youth are often seen as the problem rather than partners in the solution. Opportunities where youth voice truly shapes decision-making in policies, practices, and environments that impact their lives are few and far between. As a result, many interventions that are meant to support the building of agency and identity are blind to youth needs — wasting time, talent, and resources. This absence of youth voice and authentic youth engagement represents the presence of adultism in New Orleans.



Goal: All initiatives that set out to support and engage youth must do so from a place of **partnership, respect, and power-sharing**. We envision a city in which our youth are supported to develop their own voices and are actively and equitably engaged to use their voices in decision-making and advocacy spaces and places.

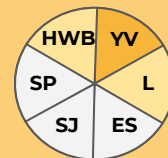
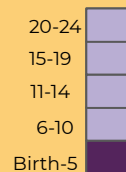
- **Our current goals** are increased opportunities for youth participation and leadership in boards, committees, commissions, and planning efforts across the city; and increased collective awareness of and value for supporting our young people's development of agency and identity.
- **Our mid and long term goals** are to set benchmarks for strengths-based youth voice indicators.

Youth Voice, Agency & Identity Solutions

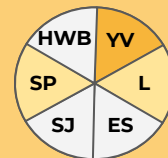
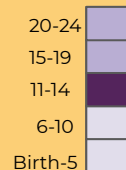
Developmental
Stages

YMP
Areas

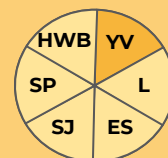
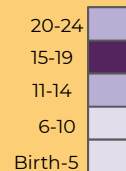
YV1. Recognize and broaden community wisdom around all youth developmental stages and milestones, with a focus on agency and identity, through a public awareness campaign.



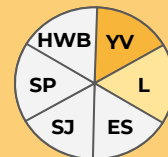
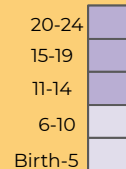
YV2. Provide young people with the civic education necessary to successfully engage in decision-making and advocacy spaces and places. Emphasize opportunities for leadership, sharing power with adults, and peer-to-peer organizing.



YV3. Expand meaningful opportunities for youth to be involved in existing decision-making and advocacy bodies across all public systems and within the nonprofit sector.



YV4. Ensure that opportunities for youth leadership and voice are available to all. Utilize intentional outreach to broaden the diversity, equity, and inclusion of youth participation.



Our Next Steps

Phase 2 of the Youth Master Plan will launch in January 2021 with implementation and action. **Tables will convene to design strategic action steps and ensure these solutions happen.** The full Youth Master Plan with all of its references, credits, and acknowledgments will be included in Phase 2.

Learn more and get involved at nolayouthmasterplan.org



The Youth Master Plan is a collaborative effort, led in partnership by the Children & Youth Planning Board, the Mayor's Office of Youth and Families, and the New Orleans Youth Alliance, who are responsible for its development, implementation, and administration.

Funded in Part By:

WK Kellogg Foundation
Conrad Hilton Foundation
City of New Orleans

