

Opportunity Youth Collaborative

Connecting Boston's Opportunity Youth

The Boston Private Industry Council and the Boston Opportunity Agenda jointly convene the Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC), a dynamic group of stakeholders working to improve systems and outcomes for Opportunity Youth (OY) in Boston.

Who are Opportunity Youth?

Opportunity Youth include 16-24-year-olds who are:

- Unemployed and not in school;
- Enrolled dropouts—students who are enrolled in high school, but not attending class regularly and not progressing;
- Enrolled in college part-time and not employed; and
- Not enrolled in school and only working part-time.

Reconnecting Opportunity Youth

The OYC came together in 2013 to increase Boston's capacity to serve Opportunity Youth (OY), most of whom are Black and Latino. The OYC conducts research and strategic planning, and then pilots new practices and seeks to influence systems change. By knitting together existing programs and supports, the OYC creates supported pathways through postsecondary to career. At the same time, the OYC uses advocacy to effect policy changes that will accelerate progress for these young people.

The OYC's goals include:

- More OY accessing and completing bridging programs to enter community college;
- On-ramps to adult training programs for OY;
- Expanded postsecondary transition support among high school equivalency and alternative diploma programs; and
- Public data and OYC database to better track OY pathways and progress.

**Opportunity Youth
will make \$392,000
less than the
average worker
over the course of a
lifetime**



**For more information,
please contact:**

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The Connection Center

The Connection Center is a one-stop resource for 18-24-year-olds who have already earned a high school credential—the largest segment of Opportunity Youth (OY) in Boston. Launched in 2015 by the OYC, the Connection Center engages, assesses, and connects OY with best-fit education and career programs. The OYC's theory of action is that a vigorous outreach and referral process through the Connection Center will provide a visible stream of OY to community colleges and training programs. That stream, combined with the OYC's collective research, planning, and advocacy activities, will drive colleges and training agencies to adapt programming for these young adults.

Adult basic education provider X-Cel Education staffs the Connection Center. X-Cel's success coaches assess clients to identify assets, barriers, and career and personal interests, and develop a personalized plan for each youth. The X-Cel team provides a supported hand-off to each young person's next step, following their progress for at least the first year and allowing them to return to the Connection Center for guidance at any time.



Pathway Partners

In planning for a stronger system in Boston, the OYC realized that connection services alone were not enough—its research found a wide gap between the large number of OY in Boston and the relatively small number of education and training opportunities available to them. Therefore, the OYC and the Connection Center partnered with high-performing organizations such as the Asian American Civic Association, College Bound Dorchester, Jewish Vocational Services, Year Up, East Boston Neighborhood Health Center, and Bunker Hill Community College to provide college bridging and navigation support, employment coaching and referrals, and job training for OY.

