

ST. MARY'S COUNTY



Introduction to Disconnected or “Opportunity” Youth

Improving Outcomes for 16- to 24-Year-Olds
Who Are Out of Work and School

Today's Agenda

Welcome and Objectives

National Data and Background

Statewide Data

Promising Strategies, Collective Impact, and Case Studies

Call to action in St. Mary's County

Today's Objectives

The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Provide a **basic overview** of youth disconnection from a National, State, and Local perspective;
- Equip participants to **begin conceptualizing local strategies** for addressing this population, including:
 - Identifying the local disconnected population and/or recognizing where to find them;
 - Recognizing specific barriers to school and work;
 - Identifying existing resources in St. Mary's County
 - Identifying potential stakeholders and beginning to consider how they might be engaged.

A National Crisis

- Almost **six million** youth ages 16-24 are out of school and work.
- Reached peak during 2007-2008 and has mostly **stayed static**.
- Impacts **every State**, in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

What's Going On?

Two groups of youth are being left behind:

- Youth ready to work, but do not possess the skills that employers want
- Youth not ready to work because of individual and systemic barriers

Impact and Opportunity

On youth:

- 2x more likely to live in poverty
- Poor physical and mental well-being
- Poor social bonds

On communities:

- Higher crime rates
- Increased social services
- Lost revenue

*If the current cohort were working, the impact on our economy would be **\$4.7 trillion** over their lifetime.*

Subpopulations

Disconnected youth are a heterogeneous group made up of varied subpopulations with different needs.

Educational Attainment

- *Dropped out of high school (31%)*
- *Have a high school diploma (47%)*
- Earned a college degree (4%)

Key Risk Factors

- *Living below poverty*
- *Parental unemployment*
- *Physical or mental disability*
- *Homelessness or insecure housing*
- *Transitioning from systems*
- *Living in racially segregated neighborhood (negative result unless white)*

Race

- *Black (21.6%)*
- *Native American (20.3%)*
- *Latino (16.3%)*
- White (11.3%)
- Asian American (7.9%)

Gender

- Males (53%)
 - *Black males (25%)*
- Females (47%)
 - *Mothers (33%)*

Racial Disparities

Wide disparities exist among disconnected youth by race.

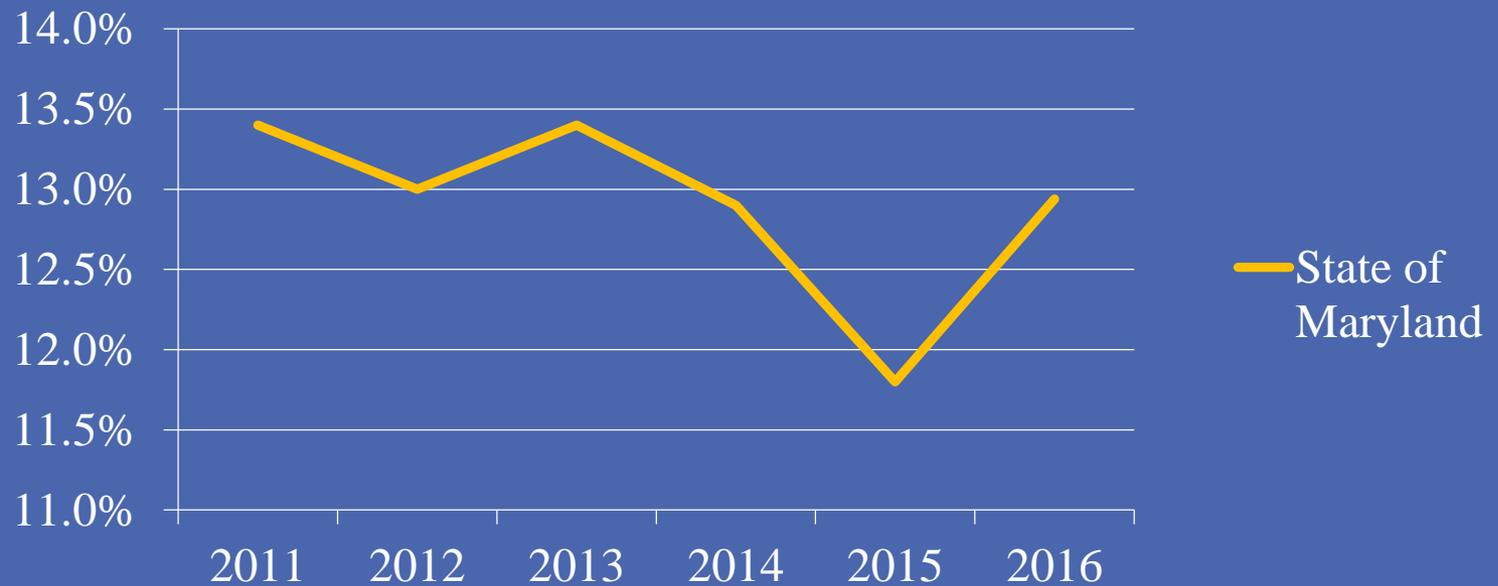


Nationally, **Latino or Hispanic disconnection** is starting to show signs of improving. **Black or African-American disconnection** is not.

The State of Opportunity

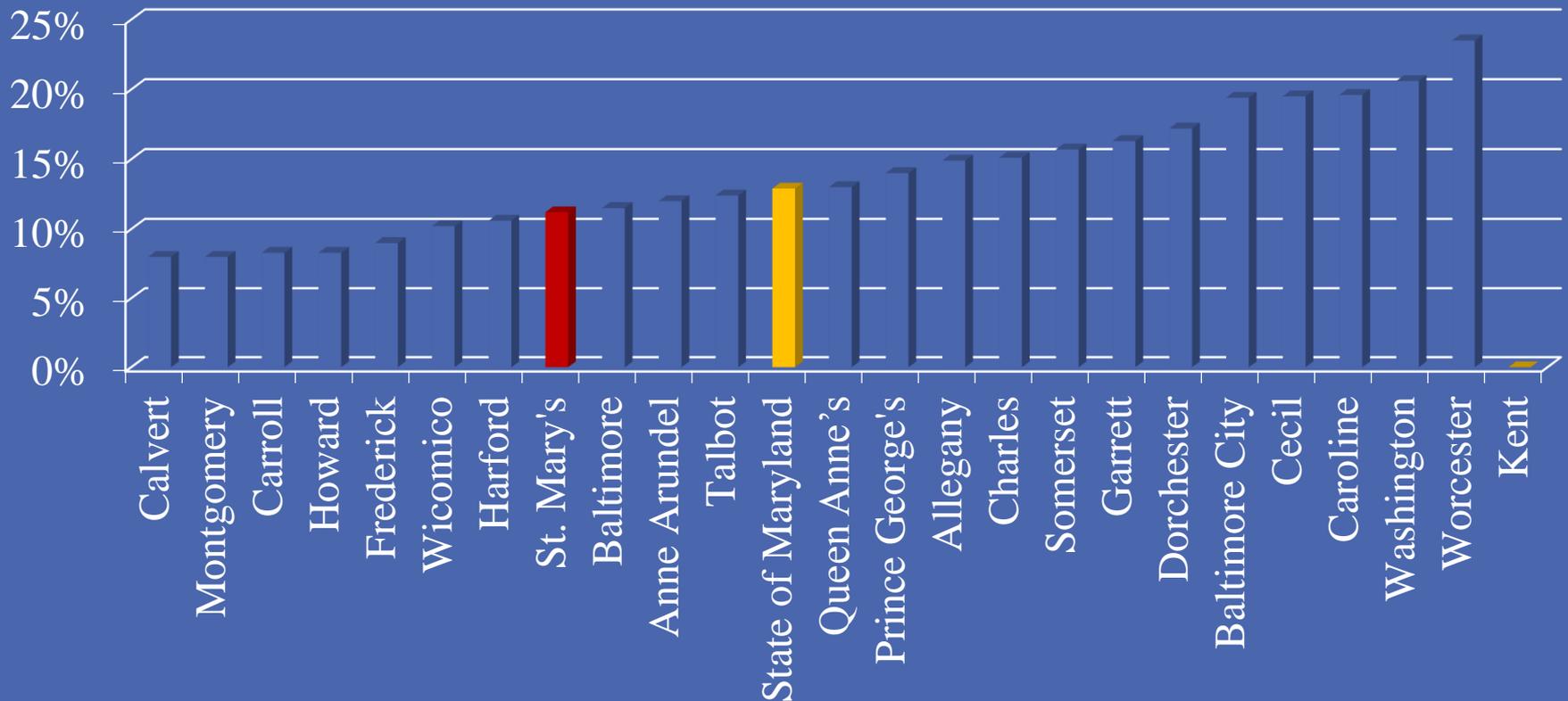
In Maryland

- 85,660 Opportunity Youth



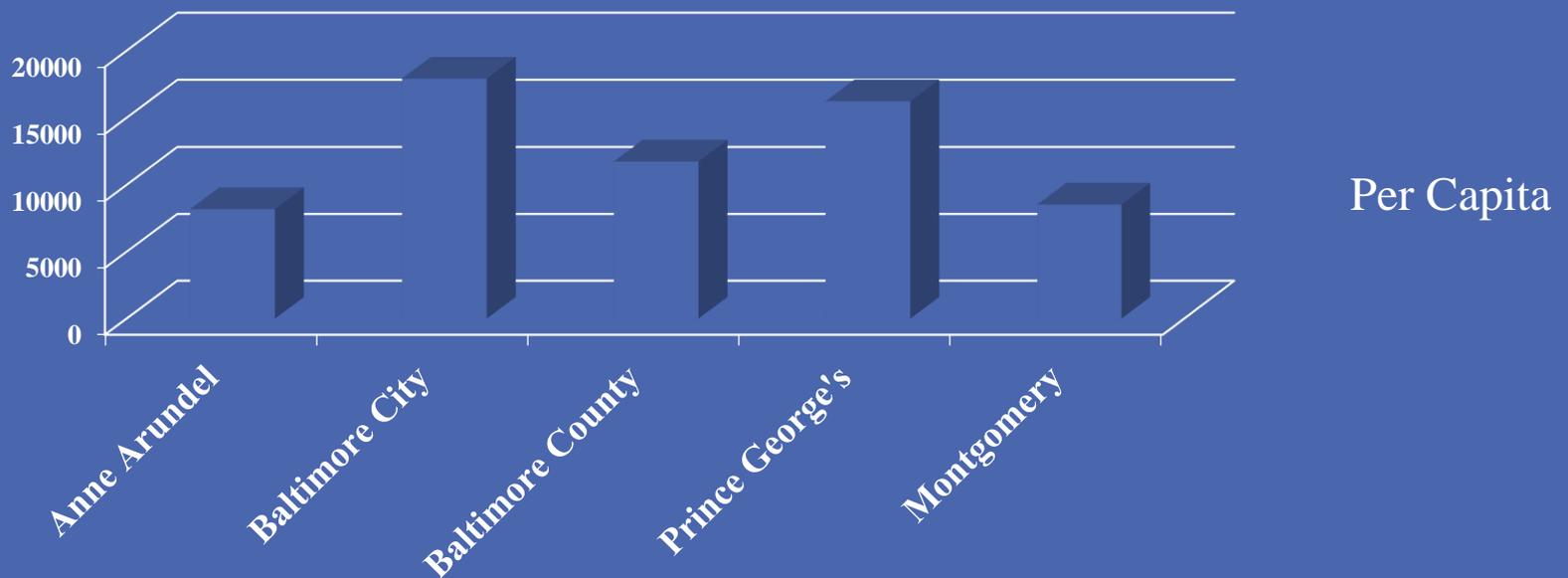
The State of Opportunity

Disconnection by jurisdiction:



Statewide

- Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Prince George's and Montgomery have the most per capita disconnection.



Statewide By Gender

Males and females similarly likely to be disconnected:

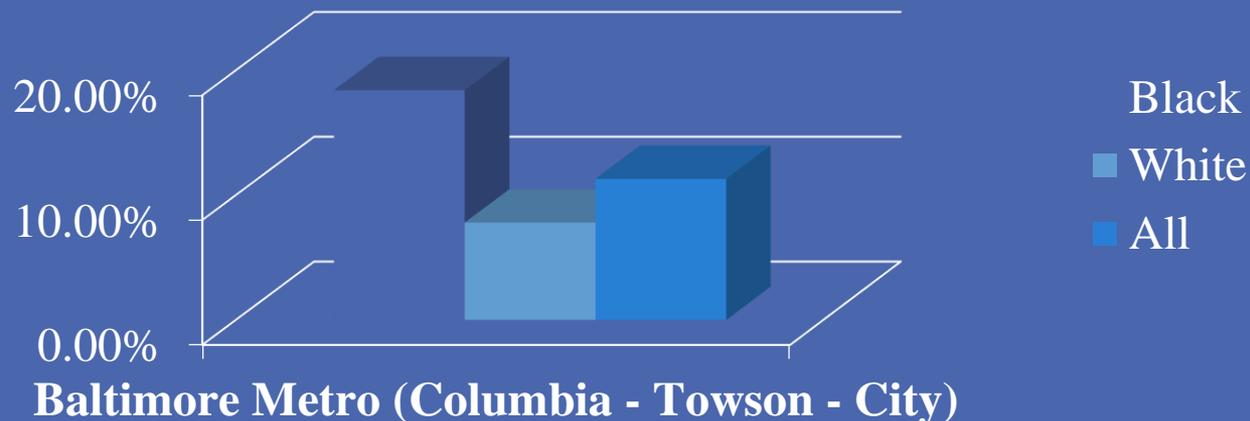
Unemployment Rate by Age and Gender				
	Males 16-19	Males 20-24	Females 16-19	Females 20-24
United States	31.1%	17.7%	25.8%	14.5%
Maryland	29.8%	17.6%	24.4%	14.1%

But: rates of disconnection by gender can vary by jurisdiction, so it's important to collect local data.

Statewide Racial Disparities

Wide disparities exist among disconnected youth by race.

One approach is to address the gap between black and white connectedness.



- Howard County – low disconnection overall but high racial disparity (see Kristen Lewis)
- Maryland ranks 10th out of 10 states with highest African American population for black male workforce participation (see White House Council of Economic Advisers)
- Baltimore is “the worst” among all metropolitan areas for economic mobility and future earnings (see Raj Chetty)

Activity

Who are our disconnected youth?

- Subpopulations

- Where can we find disconnected youth in St. Mary's County?

Identifying Disconnection Locally

Different municipalities have used different methods to identify disconnected youth in their locality. Some methods include:

- Youth turned away from summer jobs programs
- High school dropout rate
- Opportunity Index, **opportunityindex.org**
- The U.S. Census Bureau/American Community Survey number of youth by county who are seeking work but unemployed
- Drop-in centers or connection centers
- Data sharing among local agencies and community organizations (homeless shelters, independent living programs, workforce development, local school system, home visiting programs)
- Street outreach / youth-led engagement

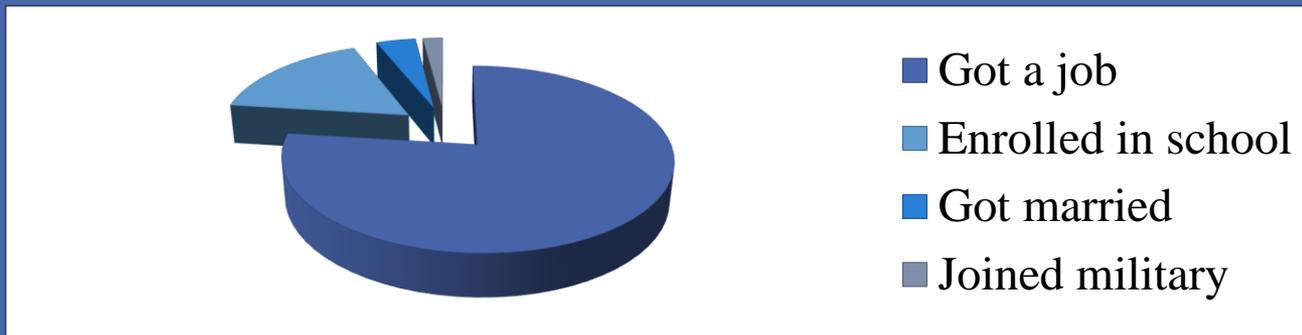
Challenges

The competition for acceptance into a promising workforce program is fierce. As a result, youth are often left behind if they exhibit one or more challenges:

- Lack of reliable child care
- Criminal history
- Reading and math skills below 9th grade
- Transitioning from foster care
- High-functioning disability
- Lack of transportation

Promising Strategies

The most common method of reconnection is getting a job.



Programs for reconnecting youth to work are as varied as the populations that they serve. However generally promising programs rely on four key principles:

- 1. Flexible pathways to educational attainment**
- 2. Multiple pathways to employment**
- 3. Soft skills and mentoring**
- 4. Community service/engagement**

Promising Strategies

1. Flexible pathways to educational attainment

- Create multiple paths to re-enrollment
- Increase access to alternative programming (accelerated, dual enrollment, bridge)
- Reduce “seat time”
- Encourage flexible scheduling
- Provide childcare

Promising Strategies

2. Multiple pathways to employment

- Prioritize businesses that hire youth.
- Develop a variety of experiences – paid work, apprenticeships, job shadowing.
- **Engage employers**
 - Use employer toolkit from White House Council for Community Solutions.
 - Create employer engagement strategy.
 - Employers will hire youth when it is easy to do and they believe it will be positive for their business.
 - Be aware of private sector initiatives to reconnect youth:

www.gradsoflife.org

100kopportunitiesinitiative.org

Promising Strategies

3. Soft Skills and Mentoring

- Employers are generally willing to hire youth with low job skills, but draw a line at poor soft skills.
- Five key skills:
 - Social skills (get along with others)
 - Communication skills (oral, written, non-verbal, listening)
 - Higher-order thinking (problem solving, critical thinking, decision making)
 - Self-control (delay gratification, control impulses, focus attention, manage emotions, regulate behaviors)
 - Positive self-concept (confidence, self-efficacy, self-awareness)
- Research shows that simple supports make a big impact on youth's success in the workplace (alarm clocks, text message alerts, bus fare).

Promising Strategies

4. Community Engagement

- **Volunteerism** and **group membership** are critical to building professional networks.
- Linked to sharp reductions in disconnection, *especially among the most disenfranchised*.
- Can be combined with soft skills training and mentoring.
- Need not be formalized or frequent to have an impact.
 - Participation in civic/service organization
 - Participation in ANY organization (religious, sports)
 - Volunteering
 - Working to solve a problem
 - Helping a neighbor

Collective Impact

One program cannot do it all.

In 2012, the White House Council for Community Solutions identified over 100 communities who have “moved the needle” on youth disconnection (more than 10% reduction over a set period), and found that these communities approached the problem through **collective impact**.

Collective impact is a strategy where different organizations align efforts to solve a problem.

Collective Impact

**Common
Agenda**

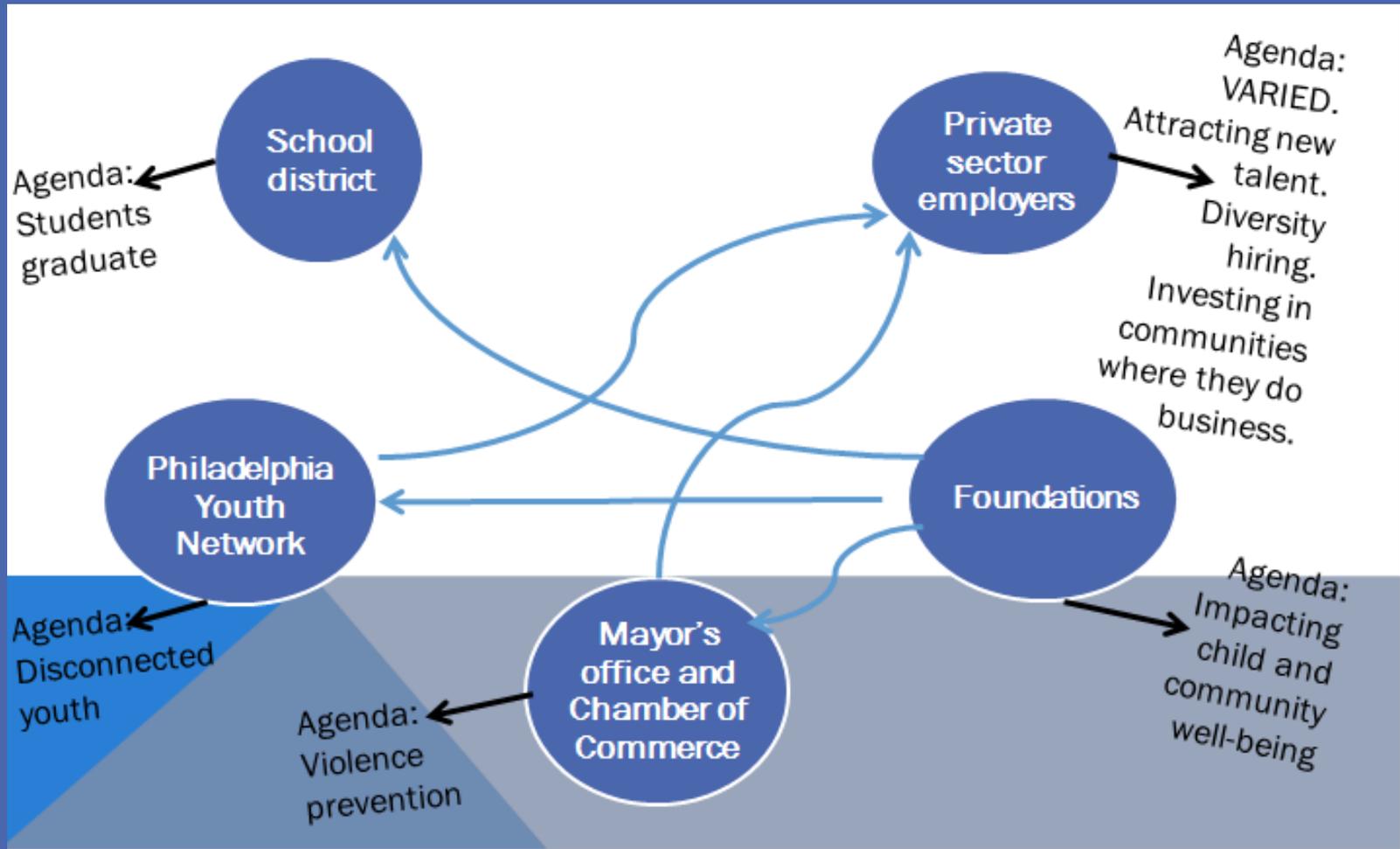
**Backbone
Organization**

**Common
Progress
Measures**

Communication

**Mutually
Reinforcing
Activities**

Case Study: WorkReady Philadelphia



Case Study

College Promise

1. Start with data **Large #s of youth becoming disconnected after HS**
2. Assemble all stakeholders **Public colleges, Mayor's office, K-12 school district, community orgs.**
3. Unite around a common agenda and shared metrics **Goal: increased post-secondary enrollment and completion.**
4. Develop a shared plan **First semester free tuition; waived enrollment fees; guaranteed admission; expanded scholarships.**
5. Communicate! **Regular check-ins let stakeholders refine their tactics as necessary.**
6. Results **43% increase in college enrollment, 500% increase in course completion.**

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Thank you!