



## The Issue

(Why are we doing this anyway?)

**Every child and young person must have positive opportunities for learning and development in the non-school hours.**

**All young people deserve strong families to nurture them in early childhood and support them as they grow. As they get older, young people need the academic study provided by school. Likewise, they need the practical life lessons, values, skills and experiences shaped by participation in youth organizations, faith organizations, sport programs, parks and recreation, afterschool programs, neighborhood activities, part-time jobs, mentoring relationships and other aspects of community life.**

**As a state, we have invested heavily in the school experience of our children and youth. It is time to invest new attention, energy and resources in the skills and experiences essential for each young person to contribute to community life as an individual, family member, worker and citizen. Minnesota's quality of life, now and in the future, depends on the creativity, knowledge, inclusive spirit and civic engagement of all its citizens. We must invest in out-of-school time learning opportunities in every community, and we must give young people the encouragement and support to make responsible choices.**

# Our Vision

(Outcomes we'd like to see in Minnesota)

As part of the University of Minnesota President's Initiative on Children, Youth & Families, the Commission on Out-of-School Time was charged with crafting the vision and strategies to ensure Minnesota's young people have engaging opportunities to learn and develop in their non-school hours.

## **In undertaking this work, it is our vision that in the near future . . .**

- Youth are eager to explore their potential and become engaged in exciting opportunities to enjoy, learn, and serve during their non-school hours.
- Families are ready and able to support their children in making healthy choices during the out of school hours – choices to learn, belong, and contribute.
- Communities invite business leaders and neighbors, schools and faith communities, seniors and teens to come together to support and nurture the variety of constructive opportunities and places children and youth need to grow up health.
- Public policies support the people, organizations, and collaboration that are needed to offer high-quality opportunities staffed with caring volunteers and professionals and widely available to all youth from those in poverty to those who are new immigrants.
- The state is a place where it is not the size of their parent's income, the place of their birth, or the color of their skin that determines the types of opportunities available to a young person.
- An effective system of public and private funding leverages the greatest number of opportunities for all youth and that returns demonstrable benefits to the state and to the donors.
- A system of training and technical assistance recruits, promotes, and rewards the army of volunteers and professional staff needed to make these opportunities come to life and engage our youth.
- Citizens understand and enthusiastically support constructive opportunities that engage youth and help them to become productive workers, active citizens, caring people, and effective leaders.
- Systems help parents and youth find the opportunities right for them.
- A statewide collaborative entity exists to serve as a catalyst, resource, and advocate for engaging out-of-school opportunities all over the state.

# Charges of Work Groups

## **1. STIMULATE POSITIVE YOUTH CHOICES**

Recommendations that would identify and create peer, family, community, and state mechanisms to support, reward, and help guide young people as well as families to more deliberately choose and use positive formal and informal out of school opportunities

## **2. CREATE COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES**

Recommendations that would identify and create mechanisms in every city, town, and village to both

- a. canvas young people and parents about their interest and dreams in order to shape the kinds and types of programs needed AND
- b. plan, develop, resource, implement, and evaluate a coordinated fabric of out of school opportunities responsive to youth voice, accepting of diversity, and that promote learning & development

## **3. BUILD PUBLIC WILL**

Recommendations that would establish effective mechanisms that build public will in order to hold citizens and leaders accountable for creating and sustaining an appropriate range of high quality, widely accessible opportunities for young people during the non-school hours.

## **4. ESTABLISH STATE MECHANISMS**

Establish effective state mechanisms for supporting, resourcing, evaluating, and assuring access to quality out of school opportunities that provide positive choices for young people

## Critical Issues Identified by Commissioners

**Disengaged Youth** - Re-engage young people out of the system. Reach those not participating and get them involved. Go where they are. Support ways for kids to invite/outreach out to other kids. Saito report on *Listening to Young People*.

**Isolated Places** - Address opportunities for youth in isolated places such as Minnesota's 600 communities with fewer than 2,500 people where youth, resources and programs are fragile and spread thin. Figure out how to do it and how to pay for it. Create "islands of opportunity" in opportunity deficit communities. Involve young people in solutions. Reach poorest or culturally isolated urban neighborhoods. Find ways to involve young people who have family responsibilities in non-school hours.

**Targeting Community Resources** - Be explicit about community role in "safety net" for all kids or most in need. Address issues of target audiences for out-of-school time opportunities, high costs of participation, transportation for geographically isolated. Reach those at margins. How much programming does it take to meet all the targeted need? What would it cost? Identify part of solution like parks and recreation, community education, libraries, shopping areas.

**Voucher & Passport System** – Promote youth access and documentation of unique learning and skills chosen by young person. Consider voucher plan for funding or personal record book to document learning, interests, possibilities and participation. Create system for community/adults to see and value youth's choices and accomplishments. Get larger system to recognize and give credit.

**Traits of Quality Program** - Be clear about what quality program looks like. Help parents and youth know what to look for. Identify essentials for accountability, to illustrate power of quality to public, to make case that intentional opportunities better than serendipitous learning experiences.

**Bicultural Program Needs** – Consider targeted support to involve multicultural community or new immigrants. Focus on special needs of staff and volunteers such as training for bilingual people. Get clearer about what is needed to help these programs succeed. Consider efficacy of linking programs to citizenship and inclusion. Cultural competence is an access issue.

**Sustainability** – Sustainability is fundamental to fiscal discussion. What policies and funding mechanisms create a steady stream of reliable multi-year funding for these learning opportunities? Look at practical collaborations for funding stability. What other clever combining, bundling, leveraging, matching can we do to create stable environment for programs? Consider how to reduce competition, move field to act/respond more as a whole.

**Accessibility** - Do we fund programs or fund kids/families? How do we create climate plus fiscal support for a system where all can participate? For many youth, issue is finding opportunity and then affording to take part. How do we assure participation by those who are isolated, poor, not invited is not caused by financial limitations? How do we move opportunity-depleted communities be become opportunity-rich communities?

**On-Going Research, Bridging, Evaluation Intermediary:** Build statewide operating system to pump knowledge, data collection, research, etc. into the field. Sustain "think tanks" and stimulate vision, policy directions, etc. Serve as convener/broker to help faith-based organizations and others know what to ask for from funders, how to move into OST work with young people.