OVERVIEW

“Since its creation three years ago, Opportunity Now has supported thousands of young people and involved hundreds of employers. It has become an integral part of the fabric of our city and it is exemplary of the public-private partnering that makes Nashville so special.” – David Briley

Opportunity NOW is Nashville’s hub for youth employment, offering a variety of programs and supports to help young people ages 14–24 prepare for, get, and keep jobs. The initiative strives to be responsive to a variety of ages and skill levels, creating both age-appropriate programs, as well as tools to help youth connect to the wide array of year-round job opportunities available to young people in Nashville.

ALL HIGH-QUALITY YOUTH PROGRAMS SHOULD CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING:

SAFE, WELL-SUPERVISED WORKSITES
Young workers should be in safe places where they have sufficient supervision to help them navigate workplaces as new settings and experiences with new risks as well as opportunities for growth.

AGE APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO MEANINGFULLY CONTRIBUTE WITHIN THAT WORKSITE
Young people who are learning how to work should be generating meaningful work product that contributes to the goals and priorities of the team to which they are attached.

SUFFICIENT ADULT SUPPORT
Young people newly experiencing the workplace and the role of being someone who works need to have adults around them to whom they could turn if needed.

WAGES
Wages give employment programs their most job-like characteristics and provide a unique opportunity for learning about all aspects of being someone who works for a living.

ALL OPPORTUNITY NOW PROGRAMS AND TOOLS CONNECT YOUNG PEOPLE TO ALL OF THESE CORE ELEMENTS AND SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF EARLY EMPLOYMENT AS A WAY TO LEARN TO BE THE KINDS OF EMPLOYEES NASHVILLE’S WORKFORCE NEEDS.
Opportunity NOW provides access to, and awareness of, the privately available jobs in Nashville that are appropriate for youth. These worksites with their age-appropriate opportunities for young people to meaningfully contribute are pulled-together in a single place, making it easier for young people to find the right work for them. The ON portal (accessed through ON.nashville.gov) connects young people to jobs they did not know were available to them, from employers they may not even have known existed. This investment in technology provides easy access to already available opportunities and since ON only posts positions that have been vetted as appropriate for young and inexperienced workers, those young people are assured that the positions found in that one place are likely to lead to employment.

Since its inception in 2017, Opportunity NOW has partnered with 613 employers offering 24,477 positions appropriate for youth and entry level workers.

One of Opportunity Now’s most consistent employer partners has been Metro Parks and Recreation who employ over 300 seasonal employees. These summer workers help make community centers, spray parks, community pools, nature centers, and other parks’ offerings available to more of the Nashville community.
The Opportunity NOW High School Internship program places rising 11th and 12th graders and new high school graduates from all over the city in local businesses and community organizations. For six weeks during the summer, young people complete age-appropriate tasks at their worksites, all while learning first-hand about the organizations where they work as well as the kinds of careers possible within each individual business, university, government agency, or non-profit.

Since the inception of Opportunity Now (ON), Hospital Corporation of America has been one of the Initiative’s most important partners and sponsors. HCA leadership, working in concert with ON staff, have focused their generous, three-year funding commitment specifically on internships in non-profits. Local nonprofits possess wonderful opportunities for young workers and can use the workplace help, but often lack the financial resources to pay the costs associated with their employment. So, HCA underwriting has provided truly meaningful experiences for youth and been a huge boon to participating nonprofits.

FEEDBACK FROM BOTH YOUTH AND EMPLOYERS IS OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE

Justin Sweatman-Weaver, of Alignment Nashville, enthused that “The young people matched with our organization were an absolute perfect fit! . . . I only wish we had our interns for more time.” Similar sentiments are shared by many, including Barb Lonardi at Crossroads Campus, who commented “We have participated in ON for the past three years since its inception. Through the generosity of HCA, we have offered 4 students per summer the opportunity to work with us. It has been a great experience for all involved. We look forward to our continued participation.” Matthew Walker Health Center Intern, Tolu, summed up the feelings of most interns, “ON helped improve my confidence and working skills for the future and helped me build connections among adults.”
EXPERIENCE WORK PROGRAM

Opportunity NOW’s Experience Work program provides work-like experiences for 14-16 year-olds but does not utilize traditional employment settings. Instead, Experience Work partners with youth-serving organizations to provide project-based work experiences. These partners offer young people arts and community-development based projects to work on with a team. Through this program, 14-16-year-olds work as part of a team to complete a project and build skills. Experience Work focuses on building the soft skills that employers seek including communication, problem-solving, teamwork, flexibility, and showing initiative.

“WHERE WE WERE. WHERE WE ARE. WHERE WE ARE GOING.”

FACT: 89.3% of Opportunity NOW participants said they could work with others to achieve a common goal

PEER LEADERS

The Peer Leaders program employs 75 young adults ages 20-24 to provide staff support for each Experience Work team. Peer Leaders are trained in social and emotional learning, positive youth development, and other concepts valuable to entry level employees in Nashville’s youth service sector. The program targets future teachers, social workers, teaching artists, and other college students seeking to change the world, and functions as a fellowship opportunity offering a combination of paid work experience, classroom training, and on-going adult mentoring.

Peer Leaders are employed, trained and supported by STARS Nashville. STARS Nashville also provides experienced school counselors and social workers who not only support the Peer Leaders through their work experience, but who also are available to provide as-needed psycho-social support and response for emotional or trauma-related issues that may face 14-16 year-old Experience Work participants.

FACT: 85.9% of Opportunity NOW participants said they could show initiative to solve problems
OPPORTUNITY YOUTH COLLABORATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

From its onset, Opportunity NOW has sought to support Nashville’s next generation of workforce in accessing employment and meeting their economic potential. However, even in the initiative’s brief existence, it has become clear that a substantial subset of young people are not connecting with the employment and educational opportunities available in Nashville.

In Davidson County, approximately 9,100 young people ages 16-24 are not working and not in school, and therefore are not accessing the education and employment pathways leading to economic opportunity. Disconnection among this age group is not limited to Nashville. Nationally, the young people are known as “Opportunity Youth” because they hold untapped potential for their local economies, communities, and their own personal economic mobility.

In 2019, Opportunity NOW invested in a study of disconnection among local young adults. The goal was to develop a holistic approach to preventing disconnection and to support Nashville’s Opportunity Youth in reconnecting to employment and education. To design, implement, and interpret the study, Opportunity NOW employed a team of young adults with lived experience of disconnection. These young people not only served as key informants, but also as originators of ideas, and as equal partners in the work itself.

The Opportunity Youth Collaborative, the youth/adult partnership convened to review the study, developed eight recommendations for how Nashville could work together to improve outcomes for these young people. These recommendations have shaped further work and engaged a variety of stakeholders and funders both locally and nationally.

OPPORTUNITY #1
Incorporate Youth Voice and Leadership: Create space for youth and adults to come together to construct systems, a strategy that will not only lead to effective systems, but also to the development of pipelines of engaged, diverse young leaders who can lead this work for future generations.

OPPORTUNITY #2
Strengthen Support for Navigating Career Pathways: Create a career pathway system that has clear career trajectory options, entry points, transitions, strong supports, work experience, and other elements critical to the success of participants.

OPPORTUNITY #3
Equip Providers for Effective Leadership: Opportunity Youth need and want to build strong relationships with peers and caring adults to help them wrestle with the complexity of the challenges they face.

OPPORTUNITY #4
Add a Focus on Financial Stability: Focus on financial literacy at key points in order to foster financial stability, the capacity for economic upward mobility, and well-being.

OPPORTUNITY #5
Equip Providers for Effective Relationships: Develop communities of practice that will foster learning environments for providers to gain additional tools and advance their skills to build holistic, positive, and effective relationships with O.Y.

OPPORTUNITY #6
Increase Outreach and Recruitment: Involve Opportunity Youth in the design of outreach and marketing strategies throughout the system of support in order to more effectively reach other O.Y.

OPPORTUNITY #7
Align Prevention and Intervention Efforts: Develop strong and strategic alignment of efforts to help young people stay connected or reconnect to the support they need, enabling them to continue their education and to gain employment.

OPPORTUNITY #8
Reach Potential Dropouts Early: Design strategies that focus on supportive services in the school system, stronger data collection on early indicators, more coordinated referral efforts for struggling students and dropouts, and infusion of workforce development in curriculum.
In addition to providing the core elements of high-quality youth employment programs, Opportunity NOW integrates financial literacy into every program and work experience. By doing so, Opportunity NOW seeks to increase the financial capability of young people. Many participants receive their first paycheck as part of one of the initiative’s programs.

49.7% of participants said they create plans for their money prior to participation, after Opportunity NOW.

86.3% of young people said after Opportunity NOW that they manage their money extremely well or somewhat well.

62.4% of young people had a checking or savings account before working with Opportunity NOW; 88.8% reported having a checking or savings account after working with Opportunity NOW.
THANKS TO...

Abe’s Garden
Adventure Science Center
Alignment Nashville
Amazon
America Saves for Young Workers
American Cancer Society
American Lung Association
Bank of America
Barbershop Harmony Society
Barefoot Republic Camp
Barge Design Solutions
Bass, Berry & Sims PLLC
Bedrock
Belmont University
Best Buy
Bethlehem Centers of Nashville
Bone McAlister Norton PLLC
Book'em
Boys and Girls Club of Middle Tennessee
Bridgestone America, Inc.
Catholic Charities
Cheekwood Estates and Gardens
Cities for Financial Empowerment
City Pets Animal Care
Cliff's Cabinet Company
Communities in Schools of Tennessee
Conexión Americas
Cottage Cove
Crossroads Pets
Cumberland International Trucks, Inc.
Davidson County General Services
Davidson County Human Resources
Davidson County Juvenile Court
Davidson County Mayor's office
Davidson County Planning Department
Davidson County Property Assessor
Davidson County Sheriff's Office
Dollar General
Enterprise Electric, LLC
Enterprise Solutions
EyeCatcher’s Empire Beauty Bar
Fannie Battle Day Home for Children
Fifty Forward
Friends Life Community
Friends of Warner Park
Frist Art Museum
From the Heart Int’l Education Foundation
Gideon’s Army
Gilda’s Club
Global Education Center
Global Outreach Developments
Hands on Nashville
Harperth Conservancy
Hillers Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electrical
Holly Street Daycare
Homework Hotline
Humanities TN
Jackson National Life Insurance
Junior Achievement of Middle Tennessee
Kindful
Leadership Academy, LLC.
LETS Play
Lightning 100
Low’s Home Improvement
LSC Communications
Marriott
Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center
McDonald’s / Gracoys Mgt. LLC
McNeely Pigott & Fox Strategic Communications
McNeilly Center for Children
McHenry Medical College
Messer Construction Company
Metro Action Commission
Metro Clerk & Master, Chancery Court
Metro Clerk Office
Metro Community Education Commission
Metro Department of Codes & Safety
Metro Finance and Procurement Department
Metro Historical Commission
Metro Information Technology Services
Metro Nashville Bee Board
Metro Nashville Police Department
Metro Office of Family Safety
Metro Office of Juvenile Court Clerk
Metro Parks and Recreation
Metro Public Health Department
Metro Public Works
Metro Social Services
Metro UT & TSU Extension Davidson County
Metro Water Services
Mid-Cumberland Human Resource Agency
Mister Car Wash
MNPS - Academies of Nashville
MNPS - Federal Programs and Grants Management
MNPS - Glencliff High School
MNPS - Information Technology Services
MNPS - Office of School Security
MNPS - ON Target Summer Camp
Moves and Grooves
MP & F Strategic Communications
Mt. Zion Baptist Church
Muscular Dystrophy Association
Nashville Business Incubation Center
Nashville CARES
Nashville Children’s Theatre
Nashville Civic Design Center
Nashville Conflict Resolution Center
Nashville Downtown Partnership
Nashville Electric Service
Nashville Entrepreneur Center
Nashville Film Institute
Nashville Financial Empowerment Center
Nashville State Community College
Nashville Zoo at Grassmere
NeedLink
NICE - Nashville International Center for Empowerment
Notes for Notes, Inc.
Onset
One Voice Nashville
Olivet Missionary Baptist Church
PENCIL
Penske
Prado Studios
Project C.U.R.E.
Project Transformation TN
Renewal House
Rocketown
Room In The Inn
rue21
Senior Ride Nashville
ServiceSource Delaware
Silsoe Health
Sodexo
Southern Word
St. James Missionary Baptist Church
St. Luke’s Community House
Stansell Electric
Stantec
Teach for America
Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition
Tennessee State Board of Education
Tennessee State University
Tennessee Tribune
Tennessee Department of Education
The Big Payback
The Nashville Food Project
TIME
Trevoza Urban Farm
TruGreen
Turnip Green Creative Reuse
UPS
Vanderbilt University - Music Library
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
Warabrook College of Art
Why We Can’t Wait
You Have the Power
YWCA Girls, Inc.
WeGo Public Transit
Workforce Essentials
UBS Financial Services
United Way

Special Thanks:

Brandeis University
The Community Foundations of Middle Tennessee
Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee, Inc.
Hospital Corporation of America
ifArhom
Ingram Industries, Inc.
Kaegi Resources
Knowledge Bank
Martha O'Bryan Center
Metro Arts Commission
Metro Nashville Development and Housing Agency
Nashville After Zone Alliance
Oasis Center
Start Nashville
Tailored Business
The Metropolitan Council
Workbay
Youth Can
HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Employers can engage with Opportunity NOW in any of the following ways:

HIRE: Partner with the initiative to hire young people directly.

SPONSOR: Provide work sites for young people participating in the structured programs.

CONTRIBUTE: Donate towards the per participant cost of serving a young person in the program.

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