Disconnected Youth

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

MARYLAND

FOUNDED 1634

Governor's Office for Children
Promoting the well-being of Maryland's children

Today's Agenda

9:30am – 9:35am	Welcome and Objectives
9:35am – 9:50am	National Data and Background
9:50am – 10:00am	Statewide Data and Digging Deeper
10:00am – 10:05am	*Video*: Opening Doors: Connecting America's Youth
10:05am -10:45am	Promising Strategies, Collective Impact, and Case Studies
10:45am – 11:00am	**BREAK**
11:00am – 11:30am	*Activity Part One*: Next Steps for Building a Local Strategy for Reconnection. What Do We Know?
11:30am – 12:00pm	*Activity Part Two*: What Do We Have, What Do We Need, and Where Can We Find It?
12:00pm – 12:30pm	Beginning to Conceptualize a Local Strategy
12:30pm	**Adjourn**

Today's Objectives

The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Provide a **basic overview** of youth disconnection from a national, State, and wherever possible, local perspective;

- **Inform local planning** through research and analysis of best and promising practices for reconnecting youth;

- 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 gaps in local data and services;

    - Identifying necessary 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%)

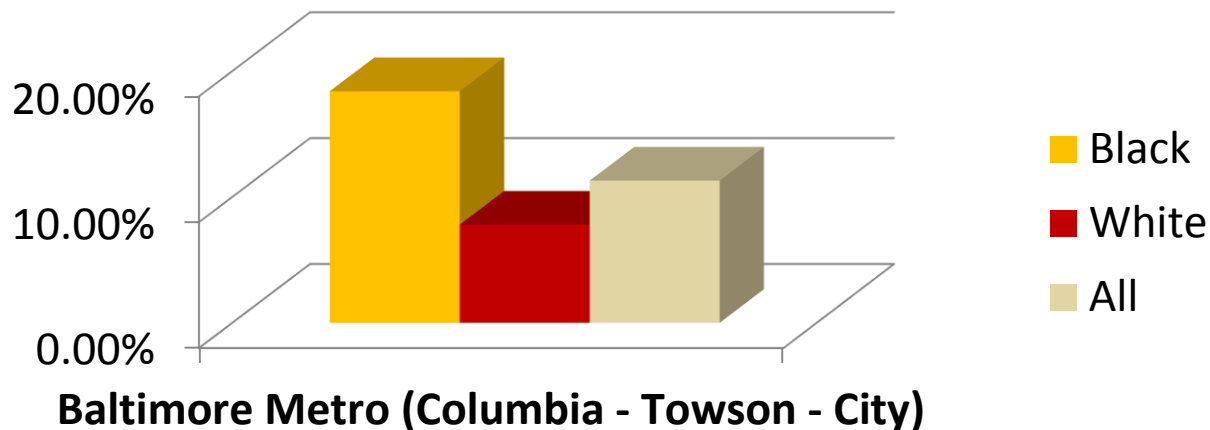## Gender

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

Mind "the Gap"

Wide variations exist among disconnected youth by race and ethnicity. This is often referred to as "the gap."

- One approach to youth disconnection is to reduce the gap between black and white connectedness.

- The more racially segregated a neighborhood, the greater likelihood that youth are or will become disconnected – if they are black.
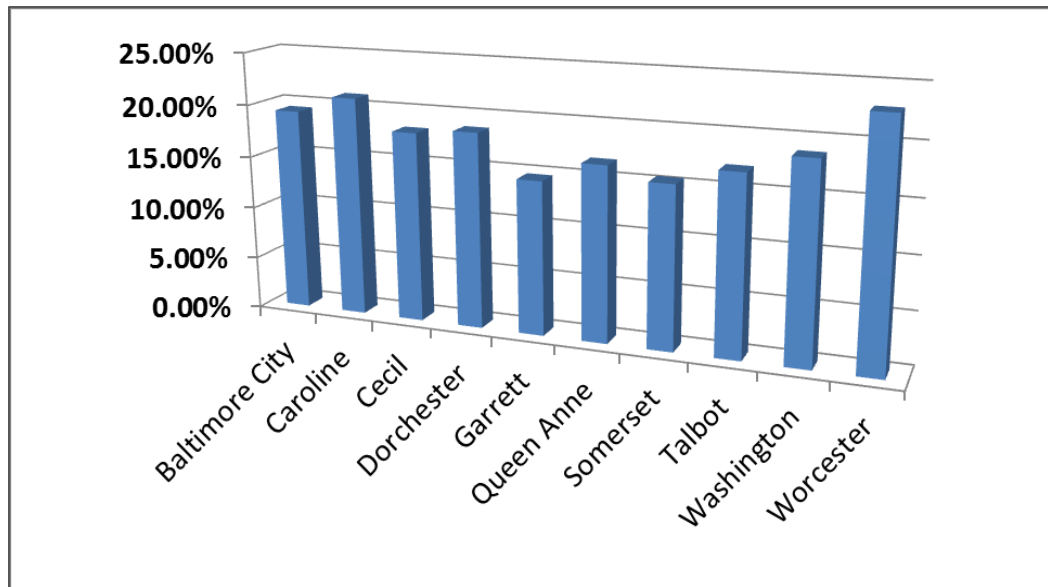

Baltimore Metro (Columbia - Towson - City)

While **Latino or Hispanic disconnection** is higher than that of the population overall, it is improving rapidly, though we do not know why.

Statewide

There are more than **93,000** disconnected youth in Maryland.
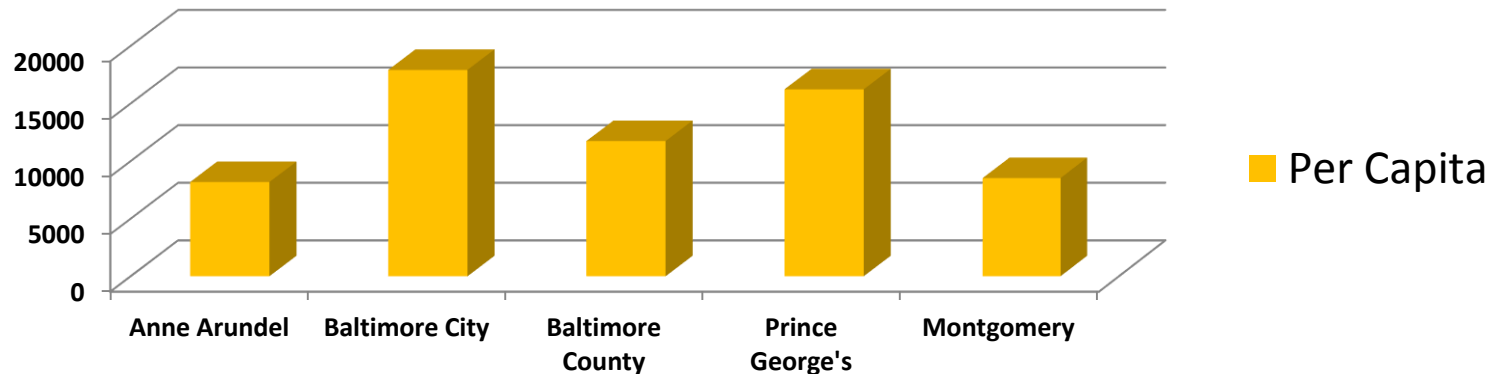
- **Statewide problem:**

    - Jurisdictions with highest % of youth population disconnected are in City, Western Md., and on the Eastern Shore.

    - 10 jurisdictions have higher disconnection than the national average.

Statewide

Relatively low percentage of youth population disconnection? Don't get excited:

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

- Howard County cited in national study for large gap between black and white youth disconnection rates.

- Maryland ranks 10th out of 10 states with highest African American population for black male workforce participation

- Baltimore is "the worst" among all metropolitan areas for economic mobility and future earnings

Pop Quiz!

Where might you find disconnected youth in your jurisdiction?

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)

- If you build it…

Gaps in Services

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:
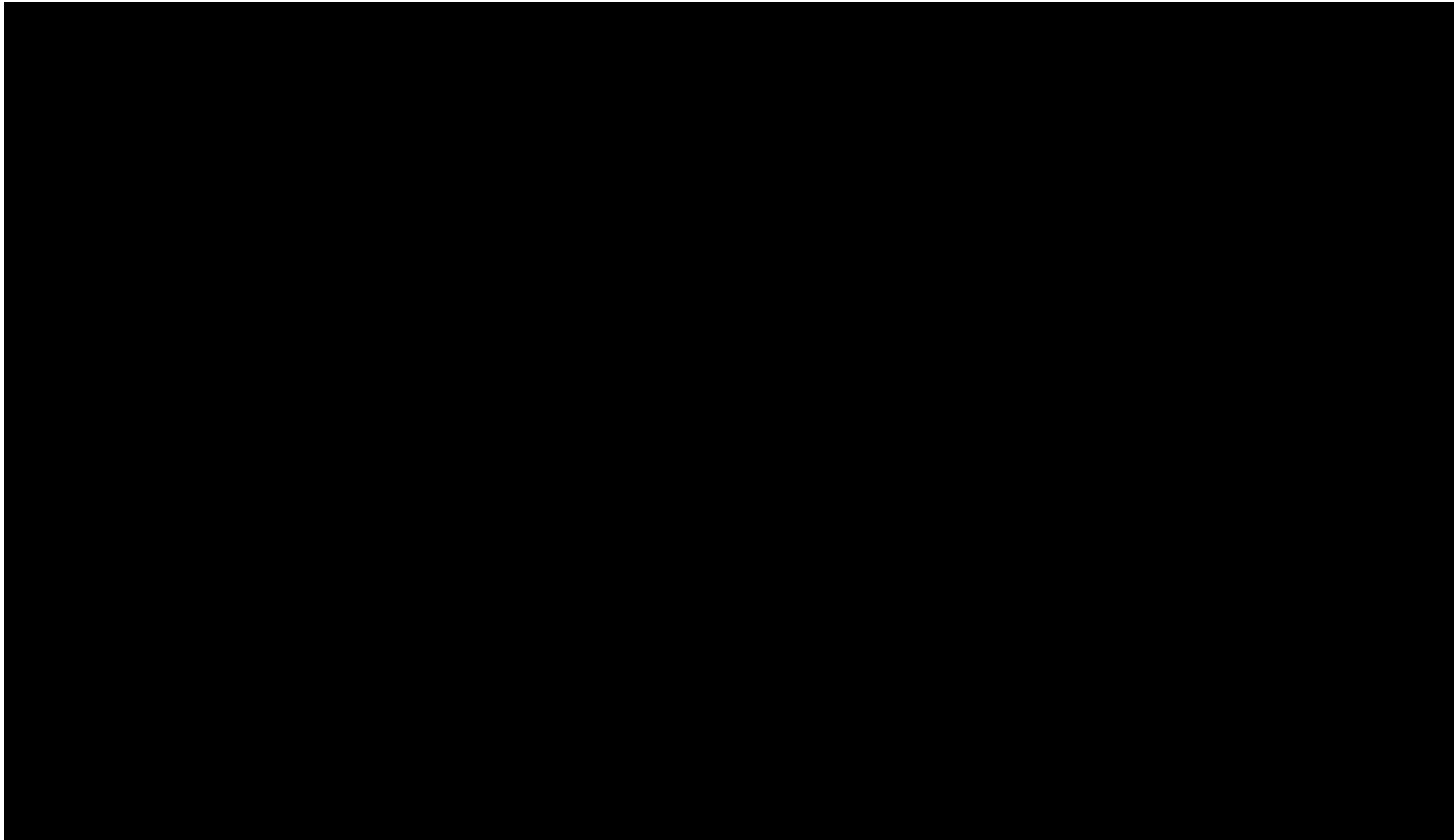
- **Lack of reliable child care**

- **Criminal history**

- **Reading and math skills below 9th grade**

- **Transitioning from foster care**

- **High-functioning disability (i.e., autism without intellectual disability)**
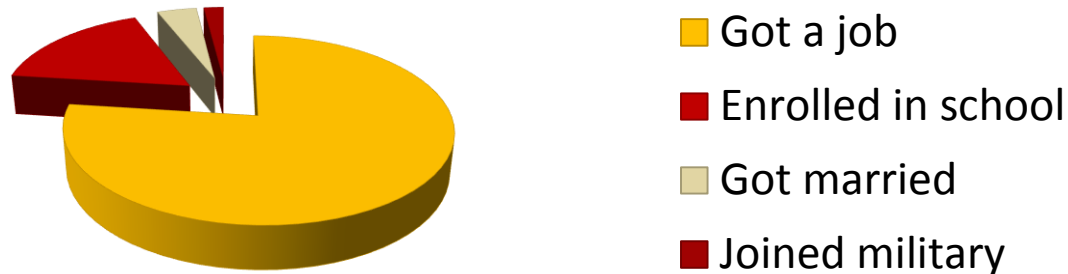
Break!

See you in 15 minutes.

VIDEO

Opening Doors: Connecting America's Youth to Opportunity

Promising Strategies

The most common method of reconnection is getting a job.

Legend:
- Got a job
- Enrolled in school
- Got married
- Joined military

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, summer jobs, 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
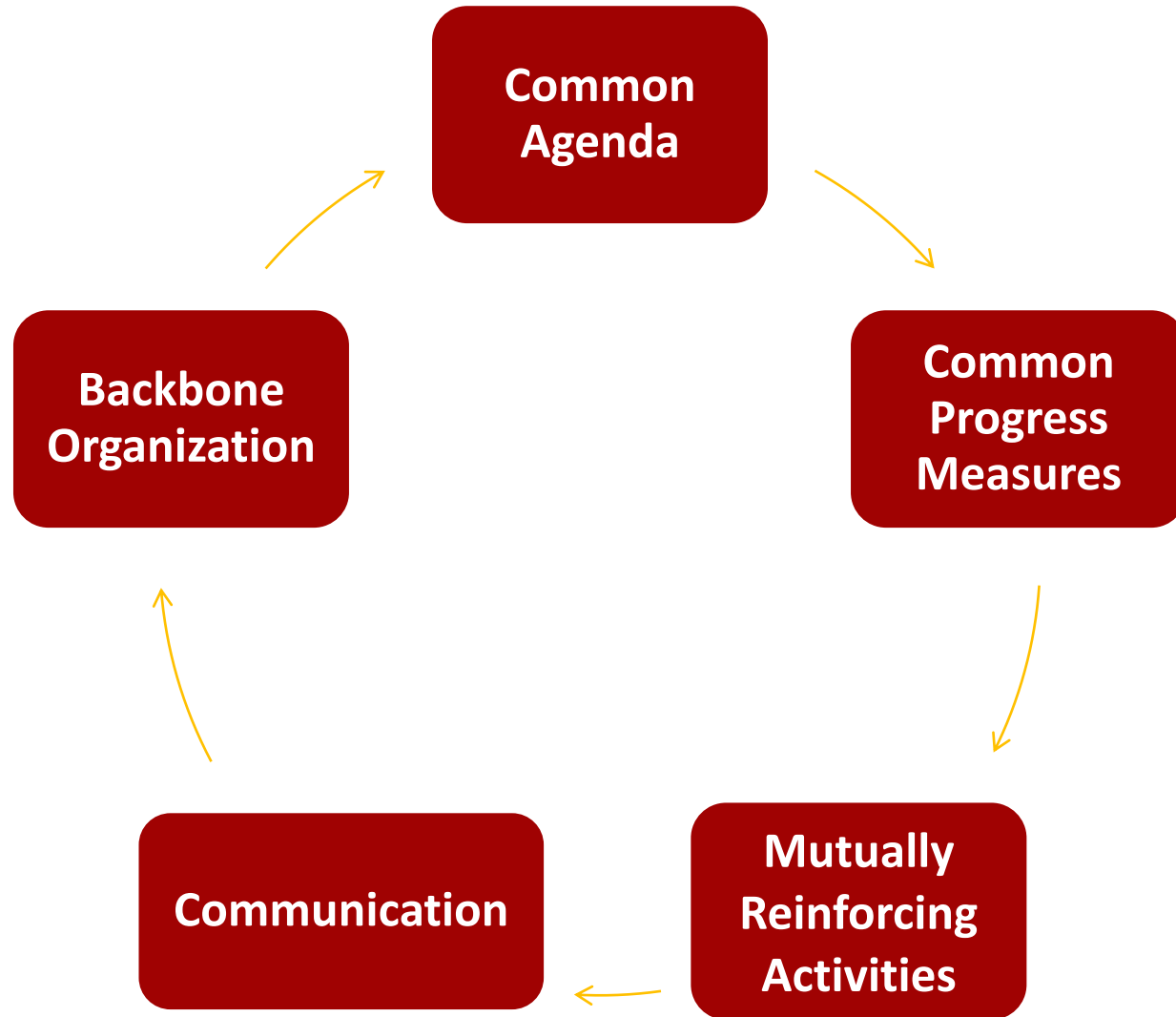
  - Helping a neighbor

Collective Impact

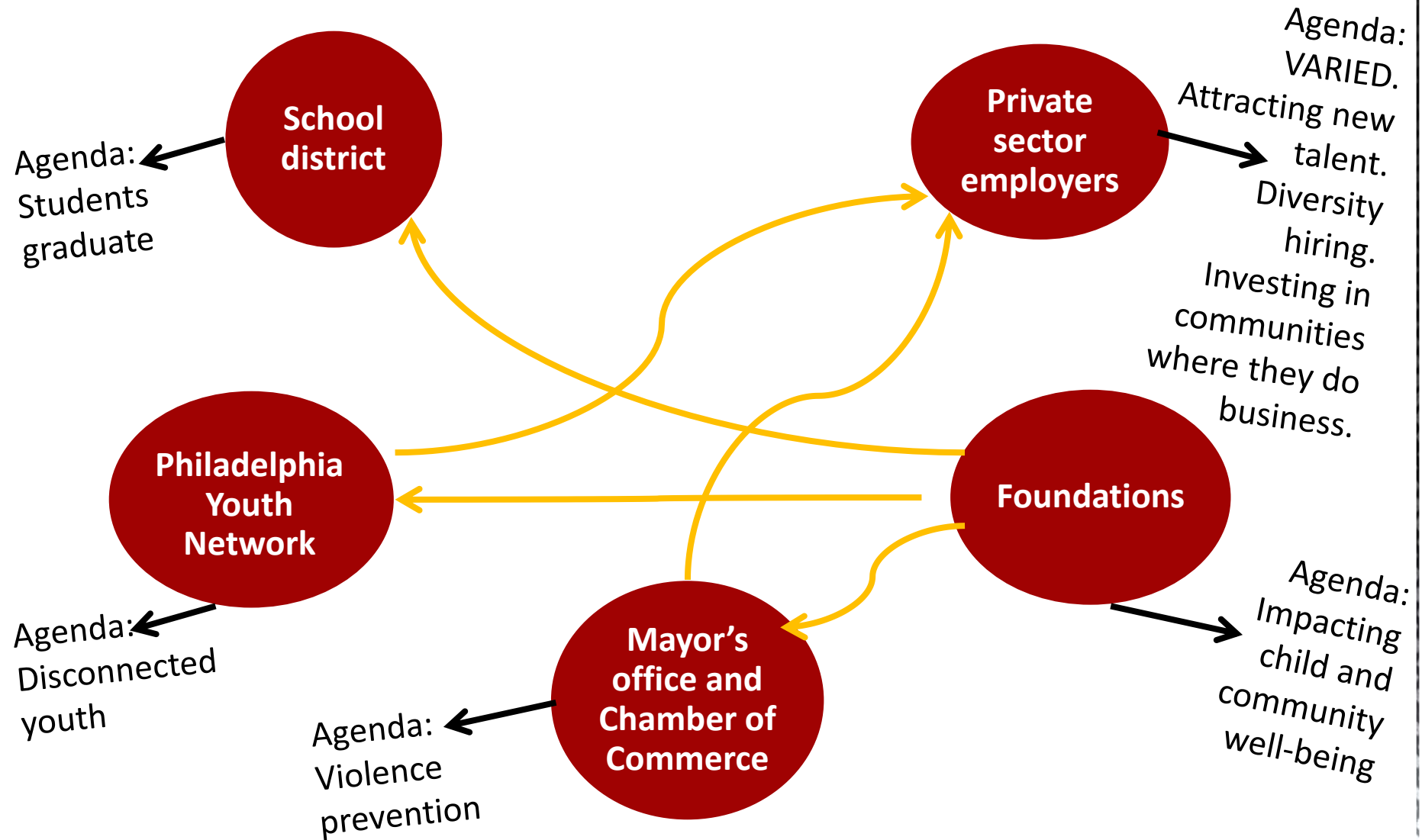**One program cannot do it all**.

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

Case Study: WorkReady Philadelphia

Case Study: WorkReady Philadelphia

Common Agenda: to connect young people to the workforce

Common Progress Measures: # of youth rejected by summer jobs program who are engaged in school and work.

Backbone org: PYN is single point of entry for all youth and employers.

Case Study #2: College Promise

1. ## Start with data

   Large numbers of youth becoming disconnected after high school.

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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Break!

See you in 15 minutes.

Activity: Part One

For the next half-hour, consider the following questions as they relate to your jurisdiction:

What do we know?

WHAT are your subpopulations? How many youth in your community are between the ages of 16 and 24? Each year, how many young people

- Age out of the foster care system?

- Fail to graduate from high school?

- Return to the community from juvenile and adult correctional facilities?

- Are served in shelters or temporary housing?

Are there **other unique challenges** facing young people or your labor market?

WHEN are youth getting disconnected? What proportion of (a) middle students never make the transition to high school; (b) students who enter the 9th grade graduate from high school four years later; and (c) high school graduates go on to some form of post-secondary education?

WHERE can you find disconnected youth? Are most dropouts, court-involved youth, and foster care youth concentrated in specific neighborhoods or high schools?

Thinking about disconnected youth that you serve, **what are the primary barriers** to work and school?

Activity: Part Two

For the next half-hour, consider the following questions as they relate to your jurisdiction:

What do we have to build on?

What opportunities exist for disconnected youth to reconnect to school, work, and caring adults? Are there enough options to meet the current need? What might you expand?

To what extent have key stakeholders come together to develop a shared vision and plan for helping disconnected youth? **Who are the stakeholders already at the table and who should be at the table?**

Do stakeholders working with disconnected youth regularly share information and coordinate their efforts? **What else could they do? Who could you connect?**