

SOUTHERN NEVADA'S OPPORTUNITY YOUTH COALITION

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



**DISRUPTING
THE DISCONNECTED
YOUTH PIPELINE**

OCTOBER 31, 2025



A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

At Workforce Connections, we believe every young person in Southern Nevada deserves a fair chance to build a meaningful future – one defined by opportunity, dignity, and hope. This Strategic Action Planning Report represents more than an initiative; it's a shared commitment to reimagine what's possible for the thousands of young people who are currently disconnected with school and work.

Over 47,000 Opportunity Youth live in Nevada – nearly four out of five right here in Southern Nevada. Behind these numbers are young people with immense talent, resilience, and potential. Their current disconnection is not the result of individual failure, but of systemic barriers that limit access to education, employment, and essential supports. Addressing these barriers is not just a moral imperative – it's an economic one. When our youth thrive, then so does the entire region.

This planning report lays the foundation for a new era of collaboration. Through systems alignment, equity-driven access, capacity building, and shared data accountability, we are building a unified regional approach that connects youth to pathways of success. Together with our coalition partners across education, workforce, community-based organizations, and local government, we will scale proven solutions and create a support system where no young person falls through the cracks.

Our goal is ambitious: to ensure that every Opportunity Youth in Southern Nevada has a pathway to education, career, and purpose. We are grateful to our partners – including New Ways to Work, the Opportunity Youth Coalition, and our many agency collaborators – whose leadership and dedication make this work possible.

By holding ourselves accountable to measurable outcomes and amplifying youth voices, we are redefining what it means to serve our community. The future of Southern Nevada depends on the opportunities we create today – and through this planning report, we are ensuring that our young people have every chance to succeed.

Together, we are building bridges of opportunity – for every young person, in every neighborhood.

JAIME CRUZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



WORKFORCE
CONNECTIONS

A MESSAGE TO OUR PARTNERS

Dear Partners & Allies:

New Ways to Work is extremely proud and fortunate to assist in this strategic planning process and final action plan. This comprehensive document culminates work by Southern Nevada community leaders, educational advocates, business leaders, and young people themselves.

The region is fortunate to have so many caring and visionary people who willingly invest their best thoughts, valuable time, and personal efforts to propel the local economic and educational opportunities for all young people. Special thanks to the leadership of Workforce Connections, especially Executive Director Jaime Cruz and his leadership team, Irene Bustamante-Adams, Dr. Ricardo Villalobos, Cecil Fielder, and all the support from staff. Special thanks to Dr. Tiffany Garner-Tyler, Yali Lincroft, Marjorie Parker, and the team of consultants who provided leadership, insight, and resources to the Opportunity Youth Coalition.

This document is a call to action for those who want to see all young people connected to educational, employment, and support opportunities. It also could not be possible without the support of all the agencies listed below who have contributed to making this possible.

Acceleration Academy
AmeriCorps iFoster
Applied Behavior Analysis Institute
Chicanos Por La Causa, Inc., Nevada
Children's Advocacy Alliance
City of Boulder City
City of Henderson
City of Las Vegas
City of North Las Vegas
Clark County
Clark County School District
College of Southern Nevada Division
of Workforce & Economic Development
Communities In Schools of Nevada
EmployNV
FosterKinShip
Foundation for Recovery
Gas Station Studios
Goodwill of Southern Nevada
Guinn Center
Help of Southern Nevada
Henderson Libraries
Hirschi Companies
HopeLink of Southern Nevada
JBM Strategic Partners, LLC
Jeremiah Program
Jobs for Nevada's Graduates
JobsFirstNYC
Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada
Mind - U
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Nevada Army National Guard
Nevada Contractors Association/AGC of Las Vegas
Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Department of Employment, Training, & Rehabilitation -
Vocational Rehabilitation
Nevada Division of Social Services
Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development
Nevada Health & Human Services
Nevada Partners, Inc.
Nevada System of Higher Education
New Ways to Work, Inc
North Las Vegas Library District
Social Impact Consultants
Southern Nevada Building Trades Union
Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority
Tech Impact
The Blooming Bistro
The Center Las Vegas
The Chef Jeff Project
The Library District Las Vegas-Clark County
There is No Hero in Heroin Foundation
U.S. Navy
University of Nevada Las Vegas
Vegas PBS
Walter S. Johnson Foundation
Workforce Connections


ROBERT SAINZ
PRESIDENT &
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEW WAYS TO WORK





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Opportunity Youth Coalition (OYC) is a major systems-level effort led by Workforce Connections (WC), the Local Workforce Development Board for Southern Nevada, and over 30 key partners aimed at reconnecting youth ages 16 to 24 who are not in school or working. This population – often referred to as “Opportunity Youth” – faces persistent structural barriers that prevent full participation in education, training, and employment systems. In Clark County alone, almost 37,000 youth were disconnected (American Community Survey, 2023), representing a relatively high disconnection rate (14.8%). Through a collaborative effort, the OYC was launched to address this crisis through coordinated, equity-focused, and long-term systems change.

This Strategic Action Plan, developed in partnership with New Ways to Work (New Ways), captures the progress made to date and offers a draft framework to guide the initiative’s implementation moving forward. It synthesizes foundational work by WC and its partners, reflects insights gathered through coalition development, youth engagement, and strategic planning sessions, and outlines a roadmap to align systems and resources for greater impact. The plan is intended to evolve, with final decisions and refinements to be implemented by the coalition leadership team.

Initial groundwork for the OYC began in 2022 with catalytic support from New Ways, and the local leadership of the region’s workforce development system partners. Subsequent investment in a planning grant by the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, followed by additional investment from state’s Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation (DETR) and philanthropic partners, has allowed the partnership to grow organically from the initial five partners to over 30 community partners. This cross-sector coalition has invested in community outreach, development of a community shared vision, community networking, data infrastructure, youth and community listening sessions, and the implementation of the ATLAS referral and tracking platform. A shared pledge and a set of working groups helped establish the foundation for collective action.

In 2025, the OYC engaged New Ways to lead the strategic planning process to formalize its strategic direction. This effort involved synthesizing extensive background materials, facilitating a full-day strategy session with WC and Opportunity Youth Coalition (OYC) leadership, staff, and key coalition partners – including Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner, Dr. Lisa Morris Hibbler, and Grant McCandless – and developing an initial draft framework to guide the next phase of the initiative. That session also led to the proposed creation of a high-leverage partnership between WC, Nevada Vocational Rehabilitation (NVR), and the Clark County School District to embed four vocational rehabilitation programs at two high-need education sites.

The strategic planning process surfaced key operational insights. WC is uniquely positioned not only as a funder or coordinator, but as a regional systems integrator capable of bridging policy silos, aligning investments, and facilitating culture change. The initiative's early strengths include narrative power, cross-sector convening ability, internal capacity, and rapid resource leverage – transforming an initial \$100,000 seed grant into over \$1.2 million in aligned public and philanthropic funds. The report also presents an overview of the current Opportunity Youth (OY) landscape in Southern Nevada. Data analysis shows that disconnection is geographically concentrated and disproportionately affects youth of color and those from lower-income households. These realities underscore the urgency – and potential impact – of a strategic response like the OYC.

The potential impact is not hypothetical. Economic modeling confirms the magnitude of that potential. According to projections from the Nevada Office of Workforce Innovation, reconnecting just 22,000 of Clark County's OY by 2030 could generate \$9.5 billion in GDP growth, create 15,000 new jobs, and save more than \$3 billion in public costs. These gains would come primarily through expanded labor force participation, reduced public service dependency, and stronger local spending. The OYC Strategic Action Plan offers a roadmap to realize this return by systematically dismantling barriers to youth engagement in education and employment.

At the heart of this report is a draft strategic framework organized around four proposed pillars: Systems Alignment and Integration; Equity and Access; Capacity Building and Sustainability; and Data, Narrative, and Accountability. Each pillar is accompanied by goals and draft objectives that the OYC can further refine and adopt. The framework positions the initiative to move from planning into implementation with a clear structure and shared vision.

Ultimately, the OYC Strategic Action Plan is not a static document but a dynamic blueprint for systems change. It affirms the need for OYC and WC's role as a regional leader in serving OY and lays the foundation for a long-term, collaborative effort to build pathways to education, employment, and economic mobility. Through this initiative, Southern Nevada has the opportunity to transform how it supports its most vulnerable youth – and in doing so, strengthen the future of the region as a whole. Realizing this vision would not only improve lives but also yield measurable returns in the form of economic growth, expanded employment, and long-term public savings.



SECTION I: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Opportunity Youth Coalition (OYC) is a major systems-level effort originally initiated and managed by Workforce Connections (WC), the Southern Nevada Local Workforce Development Board, to address the persistent and urgent challenge of youth disconnection in the region. At its core, the OYC is designed to build an integrated, equitable, and coordinated ecosystem that reconnects youth ages 16 to 24 – often referred to as “Opportunity Youth” – to education, training, employment, and long-term pathways for personal and economic stability. This section provides critical background on the regional context, the origins and early development of the initiative, and the rationale for the development of a formal Strategic Action Plan to guide its implementation and sustainability.

The Southern Nevada region – served by WC and encompassing the counties of Clark, Nye, Lincoln, and Esmeralda – is home to some of the most dynamic economic and population trends in the western United States. The Las Vegas metropolitan area in particular has seen sustained population growth and sectoral expansion in areas such as tourism, logistics, construction, and healthcare. Despite this growth, the region also faces deeply entrenched structural barriers that leave thousands of young people disconnected from the very systems designed to support their advancement. According to regional labor market studies and disconnection rate analyses – most notably the 2023 “30k by 2030” research study commissioned by Nevada’s Office of Workforce Innovation (OWINN) and conducted by Social Impact Consultants and WC – over 42,000 youth in Clark County alone are neither in school nor working.

Disconnection at this scale has profound economic and social consequences. Youth who are disconnected from both education and the workforce face increased risk of housing instability, mental health challenges, justice involvement, and generational poverty. For the region as a whole, the costs are similarly stark: Social Impact Consultants’ economic modeling estimates that reconnecting just 22,000 of these young people by 2030 could result in \$11.9 billion in GDP growth, \$3.7 billion in public savings, and \$400 million in new sales tax revenue. These figures underscore what WC and its partners have recognized for some time – that addressing youth disconnection is not just a moral imperative, but a strategic and economic one.



INITIATIVE ORIGINS AND SYSTEMS FOUNDATIONS

The OYC evolved in response to this challenge. Initial planning and investments began in 2022 and continued into 2023, catalyzed by an early \$100,000 grant from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation (WSJF). WC leveraged this initial investment into a broader initiative with support from state-level Governor's Reserve funds, additional WSJF contributions, and a \$40,000 research grant to support modeling and impact analysis. These early investments laid the groundwork for a cross-sector coalition, known initially as the Disconnected Youth Initiative Coalition (DYIC), that has since grown to include over 30 organizational partners spanning workforce, education, child welfare, housing, justice, postsecondary institutions, managed care organizations, philanthropy, and youth-serving nonprofits.

The coalition, under WC's leadership, developed a foundational framework that included shared goals, a partner pledge, and the formation of issue-specific working groups. Coalition meetings created space for youth voice, data sharing, and early alignment on the structural issues contributing to disconnection. Youth themselves participated through listening sessions, surveys, and panels, helping surface critical themes related to access, trust, navigation, and real-world preparation. These early efforts emphasized that the solution to disconnection cannot be programmatic alone – it must be structural, intentional, and anchored in shared responsibility.

Early in the initiative, the coalition also established a unifying vision statement: “To empower youth on their journey to success.” This vision helped ground the work in a shared purpose and served as a touchstone for alignment across partners, systems, and planning efforts. Alongside this vision, the initiative set an ambitious target: to reduce the number of opportunity youth in Southern Nevada by 50% over five years – from an estimated baseline of 42,000 to 21,000 by 2030. These foundational commitments have shaped the strategic intent of the OYC and continue to inform its long-term objectives, performance expectations, and approach to collective impact.

In parallel with the formation of the coalition, WC began investing in infrastructure designed to support long-term systems alignment. This included the development of the ATLAS partner portal – a centralized, digital platform intended to serve as both a referral hub and a tool for performance tracking – and a data dashboard to visualize youth engagement and outcomes. While both systems were still in early development stages as of mid-2024, they reflect WC’s broader commitment to data transparency, shared accountability, and operational infrastructure as central pillars of the initiative, positioning it for replication and broader alignment.

The initiative’s influence is already extending beyond Southern Nevada. Engagement with Nevadaworks, the Northern Nevada WDB, reflects early interest in replicating aspects of the OYC approach. With just over 47,000 OY statewide, the initiative has the potential to inform a coordinated, statewide strategy grounded in local implementation and cross-regional learning.

Planning Support and the Role of New Ways

Recognizing both the progress to date and the challenges of transitioning from coalition-building to implementation, New Ways was engaged in 2024 to facilitate the development of a formal Strategic Action Plan for the OYC. While the initiative itself remains under WC’s leadership, the partnership with key leaders in the cities of Las Vegas & North Las Vegas, Clark County School District, Clark County, and numerous community-based organizations is instrumental for its initial success. The role of New Ways is to help distill the wide range of planning materials, partner inputs, and operational insights into a coherent framework that WC and its partners can refine and execute in this strategic planning process. This includes facilitating strategic conversations with WC leadership and staff, synthesizing findings from youth and partner engagement, and drafting a clear plan of action that aligns strategic intent with practical implementation steps.

One of the first key activities undertaken by New Ways was a full-day in-person session with WC leadership and staff. This session helped clarify internal and external perspectives on WC’s strengths, challenges, and readiness to move from design to action. It also surfaced critical implementation gaps, including the need for centralized navigation, clearer performance expectations, more robust youth-facing infrastructure, and aligned investment strategies. As a direct result of this session, a high-impact partnership was brokered between WC, NVR, and the Clark County School District (CCSD).

This partnership will soon be piloting four vocational rehabilitation programs – PAES Lab, Project Discovery, iAchieve, and summer internships – at CCSD's Adult Education Centers located at Desert Rose and the St. Louis campuses. The pilot not only represents a model of systems alignment and co-investment but also reflects WC's commitment to serving youth who are most at risk of disconnection through embedded, customized, and early-career interventions.

In addition to planning facilitation and partnership support, New Ways has provided technical assistance and capacity-building to strengthen WC's internal readiness and cross-system leadership. This has included strategic coaching, structured tools to guide implementation, and support for translating vision into operational steps. These efforts have helped position the OYC for growth – equipping WC and its partners with the foundation needed to sustain and scale the initiative over time.

Status of the Strategic Framework and Next Steps

As the OYC continues to take shape, it is important to emphasize that the strategic framework guiding its direction remains a draft initial version. New Ways has developed this version based on existing documents, coalition input, and observed field conditions, with the express purpose of giving WC a concrete starting point for review and decision-making. The ultimate framework – comprising goals, objectives, strategies, and metrics – will be defined and owned by WC. This process ensures that the plan reflects local leadership, buy-in, and adaptability, while still benefiting from technical assistance and systems facilitation.

The OYC Strategic Action Plan is thus not a static document, but an evolving roadmap designed to anchor a dynamic and long-term systems effort. It builds on the foundational work already completed, integrates insights from a wide range of partners, and lays the groundwork for scaling effective, equitable, and youth-centered solutions. The next sections of this report detail the planning process undertaken, the themes that emerged, the proposed framework, and the recommended next steps to sustain and scale the OYC across Southern Nevada.



SECTION II: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The development of the OYC Strategic Action Plan represents a deliberate and collaborative effort to translate the growing momentum behind the initiative into a clear roadmap for sustained, coordinated action. While the initiative itself had already made meaningful progress by mid-2025 – with active coalition engagement, successful resource development, and early programmatic innovations – there remained a need to consolidate strategic thinking, clarify shared goals, and build an operational framework to guide implementation and evaluation.

The goal of the planning process was not to reinvent the initiative but to sharpen its focus, build clarity around operational next steps, and position OYC for long-term success. To achieve this, the process undertaken is structured around three interrelated objectives: (1) synthesize and distill the work already completed, (2) engage WC staff and other OYC leadership in surfacing internal insights and organizational needs, and (3) lay the foundation for shared ownership and decision-making by producing a draft framework that WC could review, refine, and ultimately adopt as its own.

Inputs and Analysis

One of the first steps in the planning process was a thorough review and synthesis of the extensive documentation and materials already developed as part of the initiative. This included the Disconnected Youth Initiative (DYI) Coalition pledge, meeting agendas, internal strategy documents, funding proposals, youth engagement summaries, programmatic concept papers, data infrastructure outlines (such as the ATLAS portal), and the NPWR “30k by 2030” research studies. These materials reflected an impressive level of thought, commitment, and early systems design and provided a strong foundation for moving toward a cohesive action plan.

A PIVOTAL MOMENT: EVOLUTION OF THE INITIATIVE



Strategic Session with WC Leadership

Following this review, New Ways facilitated a full-day, in-person strategic session in Las Vegas with WC's leadership and staff, along with key partners from the City of Las Vegas, the NVR, and CCSD Adult Education. This session marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of the initiative. Its primary purpose was to engage WC stakeholders in identifying and articulating the organization's internal strengths, challenges, opportunities, and risks related to leading and implementing the OYC. It also served to deepen alignment within WC around the initiative's purpose, scale, and long-term vision. Through facilitated exercises, SWOT analysis, structured goal development, and open dialogue, the session enabled WC staff and executives to coalesce around a clearer understanding of the internal capacities they bring to the initiative, the structural barriers they face, and the steps required to move from high-level strategy to sustained, systems-level impact.

A key outcome of this session was the surfacing of several operational themes that would go on to shape the draft strategic framework. Among these were the recognition that WC's role is not simply to fund or coordinate services, but to act as a true systems integrator – a regional backbone entity capable of aligning cross-sector efforts, influencing policy, and stewarding long-term culture change. WC's strengths in convening, narrative shaping, and strategic funding were highlighted as key assets, while challenges related to internal bandwidth, the need for more formalized partner coordination structures, and gaps in public-facing infrastructure (e.g., asset maps, navigators) were also identified.

Cross-System Partnership Development

The session also catalyzed a major systems-level breakthrough: the facilitation of a new partnership between WC, the NVR, and the Clark County School District (CCSD). WC and its partners initiated a joint strategy to embed vocational rehabilitation services at two critical education sites – CCSD's Adult Education centers at Desert Rose and St. Louis campuses. This partnership will pilot four NVR programs: PAES Lab, Project Discovery, iAchieve, and summer internships. These programs aim to support students at high risk of disconnection through hands-on career exposure, skills development, and wraparound supports – all co-located within the students' existing school environments.

This strategy is intentionally responsive to the intersectional nature of youth disconnection in Southern Nevada – including the disproportionate representation of youth with disabilities and special needs. By embedding support directly into schools serving high-need populations, the partnership reflects a tailored, place-based approach to reducing barriers to participation.

Workforce Connections has committed to deepening its presence and service delivery at these campuses, while CCSD is providing classroom space and program integration. This collaboration is emblematic of the OYC's systems-level orientation: cross-agency investment, early intervention, and high-accountability service delivery aimed at improving education and employment outcomes for youth most likely to fall through the cracks.

Synthesis of Broader Engagement and Framework Drafting

Parallel to the in-person session and partnership development, New Ways worked closely with WC to synthesize findings from a variety of additional engagement efforts. These included youth listening sessions, partner surveys, previous coalition discussions, and internal planning efforts. Common threads emerged across these inputs, including the urgent need for centralized navigation and tracking systems, the desire for more intentional and equitable outreach, and a consensus that the initiative must go beyond compliance-based service delivery to build a truly integrated and youth-centered ecosystem.

Partner Survey on Goals and Objectives

As a final step in the strategic planning process, Workforce Connections administered a brief survey to Opportunity Youth Coalition partners to gather input on proposed goals and objectives for each of the four strategic pillars. Respondents were asked to suggest one or two key goals per pillar, as well as two to three specific and measurable objectives for each goal. This input surfaced a wide range of priorities – including youth navigation, employer engagement, peer mentoring, and system accountability – and emphasized the importance of data transparency and tailored programming for underserved communities. These responses informed the refinement of the strategic framework, ensuring that it reflects not only systems-level insight but also the on-the-ground experiences and perspectives of coalition partners.

Strategic Positioning of the OYC

The strategic planning process has also emphasized the importance of positioning the OYC as a long-term, field-building effort rather than a time-limited program. This orientation is reflected in the design of key planning tools, such as the performance scorecard, and in ongoing conversations with funders, system partners, and public agencies.

These efforts have also been supported by the intentional use of flexible and blended funding – such as grant awards from Nevada's Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation, philanthropic grants, and nontraditional interagency investments – that serve as proof points for how regulatory flexibility can be leveraged to reduce youth disconnection.

WC is increasingly recognized as the regional convener for OY – and with that role comes the responsibility to build infrastructure, policy alignment, and sustainable practices that extend beyond grant cycles or pilot programs. In this context, the OYC should also be understood as a regional economic strategy. By reducing youth disconnection, the initiative expands Southern Nevada's labor force, enhances long-term earning potential, and reduces reliance on public systems. These macroeconomic benefits underscore why the OYC must be sustained beyond individual funding cycles or demonstration efforts – its success directly supports the region's economic vitality and fiscal health.

In sum, the strategic planning process for the OYC has built upon strong momentum, existing stakeholder alignment, and early programmatic innovation. Through facilitation, synthesis, and structured analysis, New Ways has supported WC in clarifying its role, surfacing internal priorities, initiating high-value partnerships, and developing a preliminary roadmap for action. The next sections of this report will detail the specific themes and findings that emerged from these efforts, describe the components of the draft strategic framework, and lay out a set of concrete recommendations for advancing the initiative's goals in the months and years ahead.





SECTION III: FOUNDATIONAL STRENGTHS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The OYC builds upon a foundation of strategic positioning, local expertise, and early accomplishments that reflect both the commitment of WC and the collaborative capacity of its growing network of partners. As the lead entity, WC has demonstrated a unique ability to convene, align, and catalyze action across systems in Southern Nevada. While the work of reconnecting youth to education and employment is inherently complex and long-term, the progress made to date positions WC to guide the region into a new phase of coordinated and sustainable action.

One of WC's greatest assets is its organizational maturity and credibility as the local workforce development board and the executive leadership. With statutory authority under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), WC has long served as the connective tissue between employers, education and training providers, public agencies, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Its role in the OYC, however, extends beyond that of a traditional funder or program administrator. As surfaced during the strategic planning process, WC is emerging as a regional systems integrator – an entity capable of bridging gaps between institutions, advancing shared metrics, and fostering a collective investment in the long-term success of OY.

Internal Strengths and Convening Power

This role is supported by several internal organizational strengths. First, WC's leadership and staff bring a deep well of experience and commitment to the work. During the facilitated SWOT analysis session, WC's team was widely recognized for its clarity of purpose, strategic discipline, and willingness to confront systemic barriers. Staff demonstrated not only technical knowledge of workforce systems and policies, but also a sincere desire to elevate equity, youth voice, and innovation as core pillars of the OYC. In this context, WC's capacity to convene and coordinate is not merely procedural – it is relational and grounded in trust.

Second, WC has developed a powerful narrative about why OY matter, and why Southern Nevada must take bold steps to serve them. This narrative has helped attract funding, build community support, and frame youth disconnection as a solvable systems challenge rather than an individual failure. WC's communications have emphasized the economic, social, and civic costs of disconnection while uplifting the contributions that OY make when connected to meaningful pathways. This narrative power is not just a communications asset; it is a strategic tool that has helped unify partners and legitimize the work in policy and funding spaces.

Third, WC's fluency in navigating city, county, and state governments has allowed it to advance cross-system partnerships that few organizations could facilitate. The successful development of the collaborative pilot with NVR and the Clark County School District (CCSD) is a case in point. This partnership, launched in late 2024 with support from WC, CCSD, and NVR, will bring four evidence-based vocational rehabilitation programs (PAES Lab, Project Discovery, iAchieve, and summer internships) at CCSD's Adult Education centers at Desert Rose and St. Louis campuses. The model reflects a co-invested approach to early intervention and wraparound services for youth most at risk of long-term disconnection. WC's ability to help broker and sustain such a partnership – drawing on strategic relationships, aligned incentives, and operational follow-through – reflects a core organizational competency.

Early Wins and Leveraged Investment

These internal strengths have enabled WC to secure critical early wins for the OYC. Perhaps most notably, WC successfully leveraged a \$100,000 seed grant from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation into over \$3 million in additional public and philanthropic investment. This includes more than \$562,000 from the NV DETR and renewed funding from WSJF of \$400,000, an initial \$50,000 Investment by JobsFirst NYC, as well as a \$40,000 research grant from the Nevada Office of Workforce Innovation (GOWINN) to support the development of the “30k by 2030” impact modeling study. This level of leveraged investment reflects both confidence in WC's stewardship and belief in the initiative's strategic value. Few regions have been able to parlay relatively modest seed funding into a multi-million-dollar, cross-sector initiative in such a short time span.

Coalition Development and Youth Engagement

Another foundational achievement is the formation and maturation of the OY coalition, formerly known as the Disconnected Youth Initiative Coalition (DYIC). Since its inception, the coalition has grown from approximately 5 to more than 30 organizations, reflecting strong buy-in from public agencies, nonprofits, and educational institutions. Coalition members have signed a shared pledge, participated in working groups, and contributed to the ongoing refinement of the initiative's goals. This level of coalition development is critical not only for implementation but for ensuring long-term sustainability and shared accountability.

The coalition structure has also provided a venue for elevating youth voice. WC has sponsored multiple youth listening sessions, incorporated youth as panelists in coalition meetings, and solicited input through surveys and targeted engagement. Youth participants have helped identify core barriers to success – such as post-graduation drop-off, lack of access to navigation supports, and challenges with transportation and basic needs – as well as opportunities for greater relevance and responsiveness in programming. These insights have directly informed both the strategic framework and the operational design of the initiative’s next phase.

Infrastructure Development and Community Awareness

On the infrastructure front, WC has also begun building the digital and operational systems needed to support cross-sector coordination. This includes the ongoing development of the ATLAS portal, a shared data and referral system that will allow partners to coordinate service delivery, track engagement, and identify gaps in real time. A performance dashboard is also under development to visualize disconnection trends, program outcomes, and service coverage across the region. While these systems are still being tested and implemented, their existence reflects WC’s commitment to embedding data-driven decision-making into the DNA of the initiative.

In addition to formal systems, WC has made important strides in elevating community awareness of the issue. The 2023 “Disconnected Youth Summit,” hosted by WC in partnership with community organizations and funders, brought together stakeholders from across the region to hear directly from youth, learn about best practices, and coalesce around shared action. Such convenings have played a vital role in shifting the narrative and building urgency around disconnection as a regional priority.

Collectively, these foundational strengths and achievements demonstrate that the OYC is not an abstract aspiration but a grounded, strategically aligned initiative with growing infrastructure, a defined leadership structure, and clear early momentum. WC’s role as lead convener, systems integrator, and funder provides a solid platform for long-term impact. The combination of coalition development, systems alignment, narrative power, and concrete programmatic wins positions the initiative to move from planning into implementation with a high degree of credibility and strategic clarity.

As the initiative progresses, these foundational elements will serve not only as building blocks for future success, but also as early proof points of what is possible when a region aligns around shared purpose, elevates community voice, and commits to long-term systems change. The next section explores the current landscape for OY in Southern Nevada, including the demographic, systemic, and geographic factors that will shape the work ahead.



SECTION IV: UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY YOUTH POPULATION IN SOUTHERN NEVADA

A comprehensive understanding of Southern Nevada’s OY population is essential to designing and implementing an effective, data-informed strategic action plan. While the term “Opportunity Youth” broadly refers to young people aged 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor working, this population is far from monolithic. As of 2023, there were just over 47,000 OY across the state of Nevada, and approximately 78% of them resided in Southern Nevada.

Disconnection exists on a continuum, and the root causes are often complex, intersecting with race, geography, age, educational attainment, disability, poverty, and family responsibilities. This section presents key data trends that describe the scope, composition, and challenges of the OY population across Southern Nevada. These findings reinforce the importance of localized, equity-centered approaches and provide a foundation for the goals and strategies outlined later in this report.

Youth Disconnection in Southern Nevada

From 2019 to 2023, the number of OY in Southern Nevada declined from 38,062 to 36,983 – a modest reduction of about 3%. During the same period, the region’s disconnection rate fell from a high of 18.4% in 2020 (during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic) to 14.8% in 2023. Although this downward trend marks progress, the 2023 rate remains above pre-pandemic levels, indicating that recovery has been uneven and incomplete.

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Southern Nevada has consistently accounted for the overwhelming majority of the state’s OY, ranging from 76% to 82% of Nevada’s total OY population over the five-year period. This concentration reflects both the region’s population size and the structural barriers many youth continue to face, particularly in communities impacted by poverty, housing instability, and limited access to education or employment pathways. Many OY are also connected to other public systems – including special education, child welfare, juvenile justice, and behavioral health – or face additional barriers such as transportation gaps, limited English proficiency, and caregiving responsibilities. These overlapping factors often compound disconnection and require coordinated, equity-centered solutions.

These patterns point to a dual reality: measurable improvement in recent years, yet persistent and concentrated disconnection. The scale and consistency of Southern Nevada’s OY population make it the logical and necessary focal point for any statewide reengagement strategy.

Figure 1. Southern Nevada Opportunity Youth Counts and Rates (2019-23)



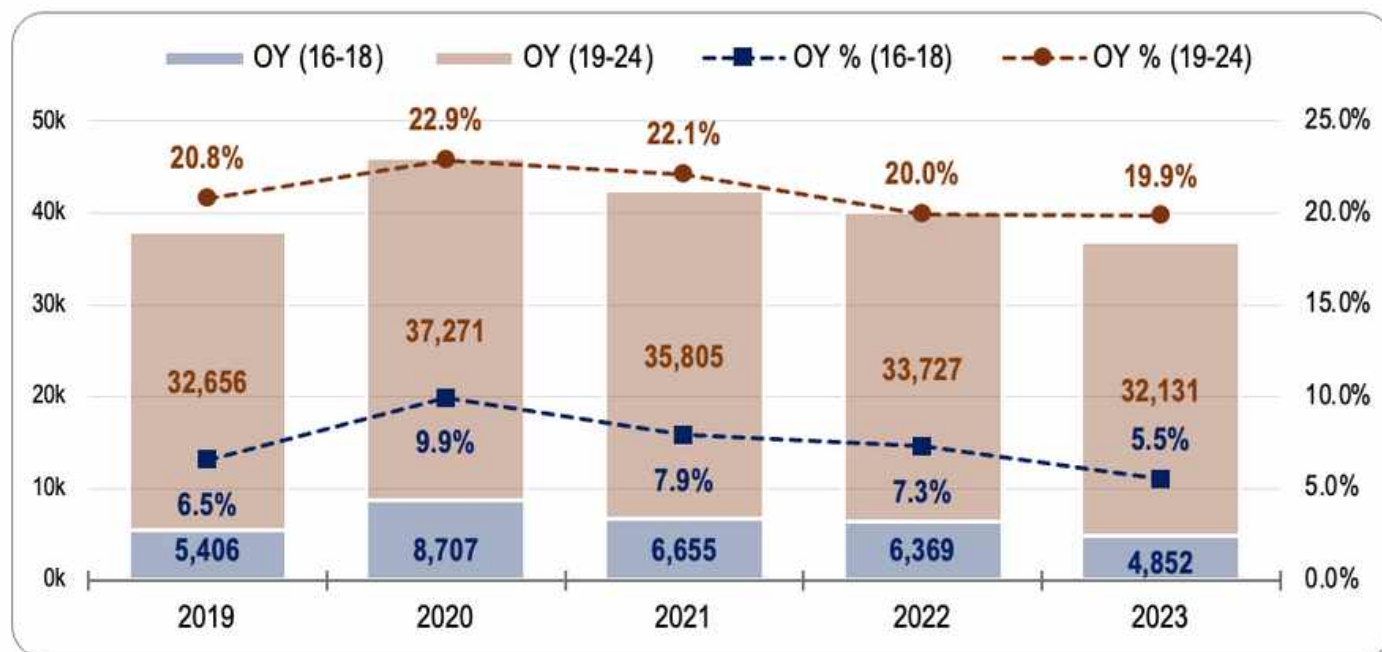
Although the total number and rate of OY in Southern Nevada declined modestly between 2019 and 2023, the persistence of disconnection across key age groups pointed to deeper structural challenges. A closer examination of OY by age revealed that disconnection did not affect all young people equally – and that certain transition points in the 16-24 age span were particularly vulnerable.

While examining disconnection rates by single year of age reveals important variation across the 16-24 spectrum, broader patterns emerge when grouping youth into developmental stages. In particular, the contrast between teens (ages 16-18) and young adults (ages 19-24) offers a clearer view of when and how disconnection tends to take hold. The following analysis compares these two groups to assess trends over time and better understand where targeted strategies may be most needed.

Comparison by Age Group: 16-18 and 19-24

A persistent age-based disparity in youth disconnection was evident over time. Young adults experienced disconnection at nearly twice the rate of their teen peers (Figure 2). While disconnection among younger teens declined markedly after 2021, rates for young adults remained largely unchanged. This pattern reflects the shifting institutional landscape as youth age – older youth were less likely to remain connected to school systems and faced more significant barriers to reengagement. These findings highlight the need for age-specific strategies: early prevention must begin during high school, while effective reengagement for older youth requires addressing deeper structural issues such as labor market exclusion, economic insecurity, and limited pathways to postsecondary education or training.

Figure 2. Disconnection Counts and Rates by Age Group (16-24: ACS 2019-23)



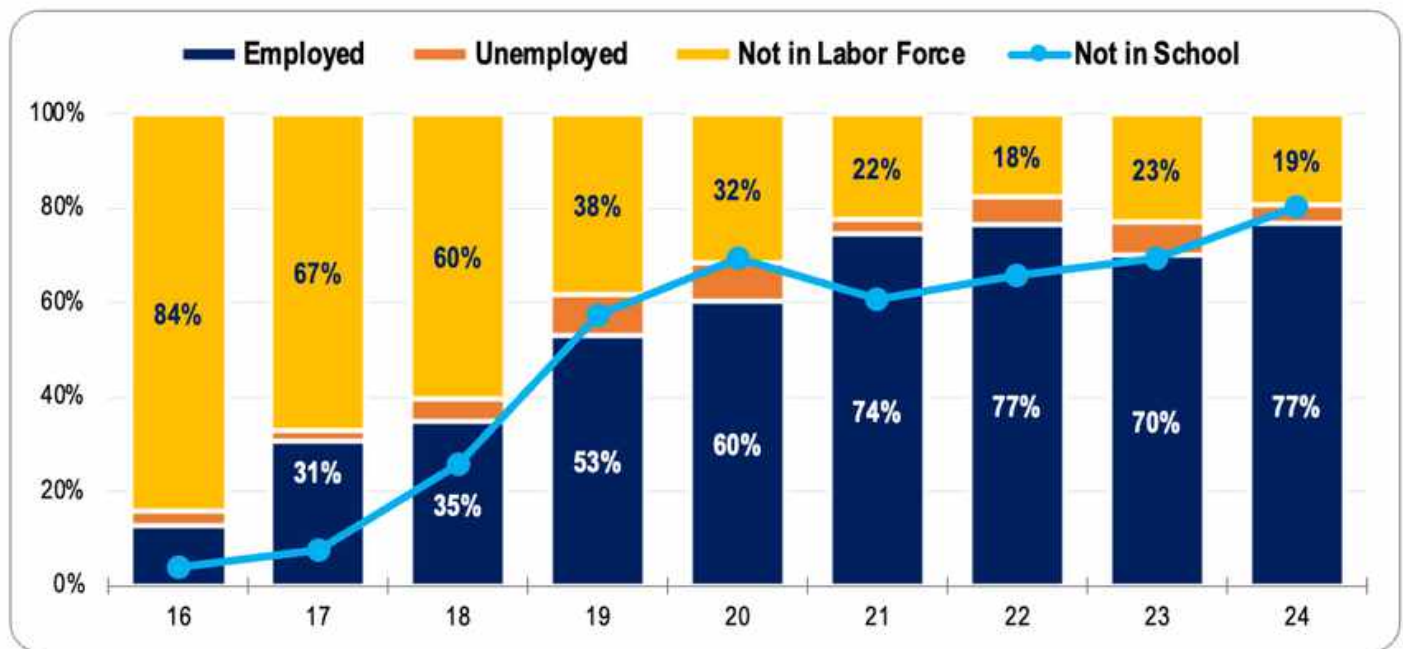
Employment and Enrollment Trajectories by Age

Building on the age group comparison in Figure 3, the next data snapshot focuses on how employment and school enrollment evolved across the full 16-24 age range.

Employment rates increased steadily with age – rising from just 13% at age 16 to 77% by age 24. Conversely, the share of youth not in the labor force dropped sharply over the same period, from 84% to under 20%, reflecting the expected shift from school-based dependence to workforce participation. At the same time, however, the share of youth not enrolled in school rose dramatically – from just 4% at age 16 to over 80% by age 24.

These opposing trends reaffirm a central challenge: while most older youth were engaged in the labor market, they were increasingly disconnected from education and training. This pattern highlights the need for reengagement strategies, work-based learning, and postsecondary alternatives that align with the lived realities of OY.

Figure 3. Employment and Education Status by Age (All Youth; 16-24; ACS 2023)



While age and employment status help explain patterns of youth disconnection, disparities by race and ethnicity reveal additional layers of inequity that must be addressed.

Disparities by Race and Ethnicity

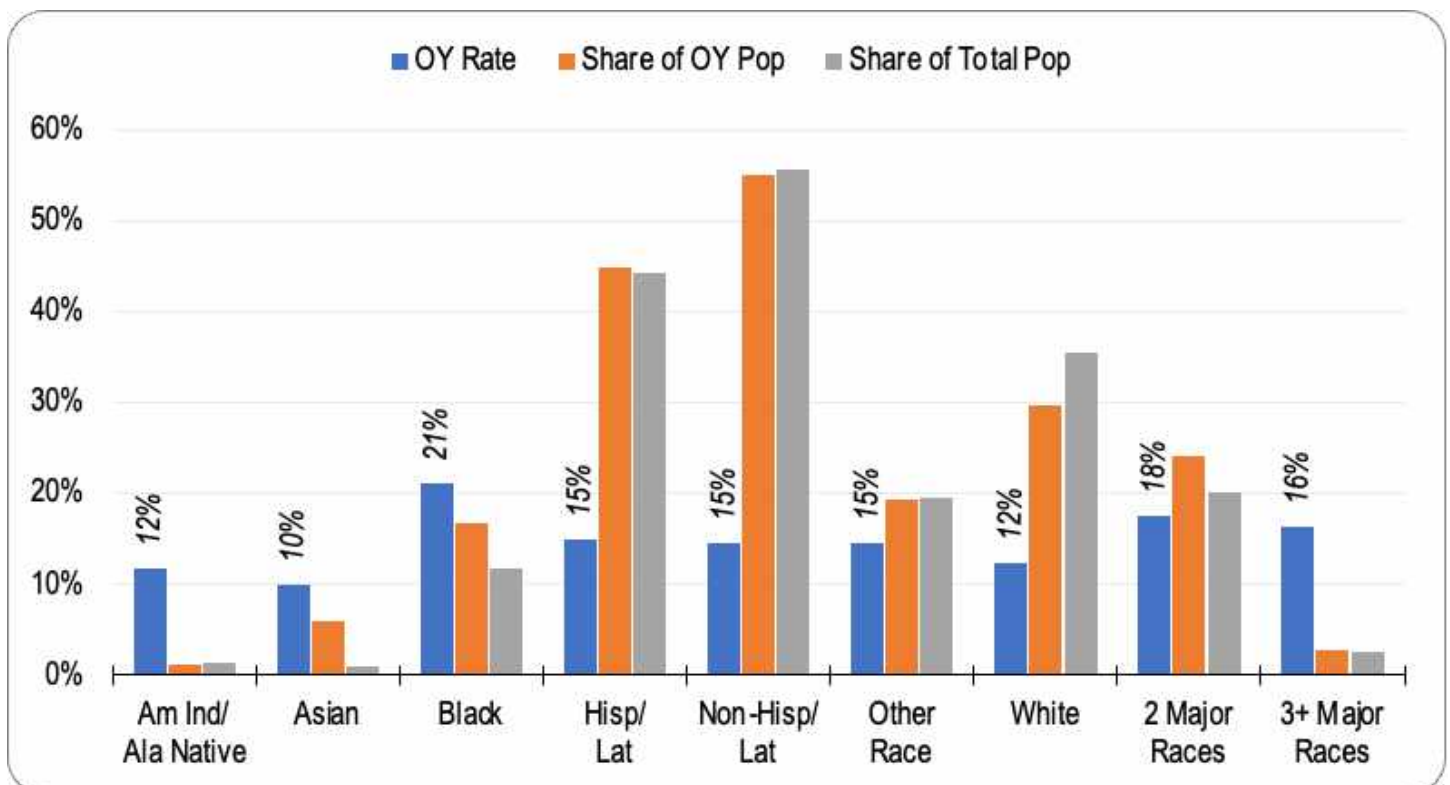
Disconnection rates varied markedly by race and ethnicity, highlighting stark disparities in who is most affected. Black youth had the highest disconnection rate at 21%, making up 17% of OY despite comprising just 12% of the youth population. Youth identifying with two major races also showed elevated disconnection (18%) and were overrepresented among OY (24%) relative to their 20% share of the total youth population.

Other subgroups – such as youth identifying with three or more races (16%) or classified as “Other Race” (15%) – also had above-average rates. In contrast, White and American Indian/Alaska Native youth had lower disconnection rates at 12%, though the latter group’s small population share (1%) limits generalization.

Chinese and Japanese youth had near-zero disconnection, though these estimates should be interpreted cautiously due to small sample sizes. Meanwhile, Hispanic/Latino and non-Hispanic/Latino youth both had disconnection rates of 15%. However, the demographic scale differed: Hispanic/Latino youth accounted for 45% of all OY, closely aligning with their 44% share of the youth population.

Together, these patterns underscore the need for focused, equity-informed interventions – especially for Black and multiracial youth – within any region-wide strategy to reduce disconnection.

Figure 4. Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Opportunity Youth Rates and Representation in Southern Nevada (2023)



While disconnection rates revealed which youth populations are most affected, educational attainment patterns help illuminate why some groups may face greater barriers to reengagement. Understanding how academic milestones vary by race and ethnicity offers additional insight into the structural inequities that shape OY outcomes.

Educational Attainment of Opportunity Young Adults by Race and Ethnicity

Among 19-24-year-old OY in Southern Nevada, the vast majority had not advanced beyond a high school diploma or equivalent, though outcomes varied significantly across racial and ethnic groups. Educational vulnerability was most acute among American Indian/Alaska Native youth: 100% of OY in this group had not earned a high school diploma. Youth who identified as “Other Race” and multiracial (especially those identifying with two or more major races) also showed disproportionately high rates of incomplete secondary education.

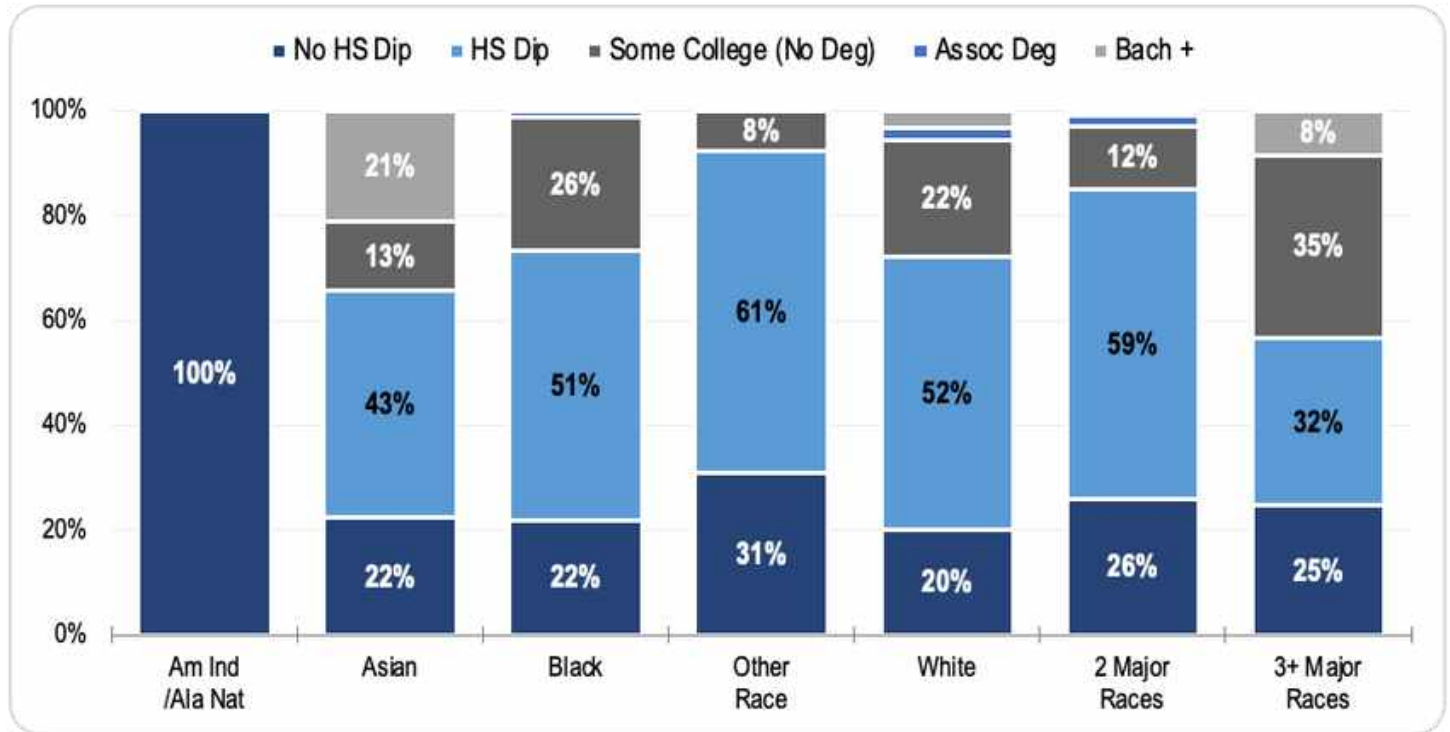
In contrast, White OY were somewhat more likely to have progressed beyond high school – 22% had completed some college, and 5% had earned either an associate or bachelor’s degree. Multiracial youth identifying with three or more major races stood out, with 35% having attended some college and 8% attaining at least a bachelor’s degree – the highest among all subgroups.

Asian OY displayed a widespread in outcomes. While 22% had not completed high school, 21% held a bachelor’s degree or higher, indicating a stark divide between low- and high-attaining youth within the group. Black youth, meanwhile, had a strong presence in the “some college” category (26%) and solid high school completion (51%) but showed minimal levels of postsecondary credentialing.

These disparities highlight the need for differentiated reengagement strategies tailored to each group’s starting point. For youth without a high school diploma, foundational academic pathways must remain a core focus. For those with some college but no degree, re-enrollment and completion programs could yield meaningful returns. And for youth with low rates of postsecondary access, expanded bridges to certificate, apprenticeship, or degree pathways will be essential to achieving long-term equity.



Figure 5. Opportunity Young Adult Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity (Ages 19-24)



Beyond cross-sectional differences, it is equally important to consider how educational attainment has evolved over time for opportunity young adults overall. A five-year view highlights shifting trends in high school completion and postsecondary access – critical indicators for planning targeted interventions and tracking progress.

Educational Attainment of Opportunity Young Adults – Five-Year Trend

Among OY ages 19-24 in Southern Nevada, educational attainment levels between 2019 and 2023 reflected persistent challenges and modest year-to-year shifts. The share of young adults without a high school diploma rose from 19% in 2019 to a high of 28% in 2022, before slightly improving to 25% in 2023. Although this decline is a positive signal, the rate remains elevated relative to pre-pandemic levels.

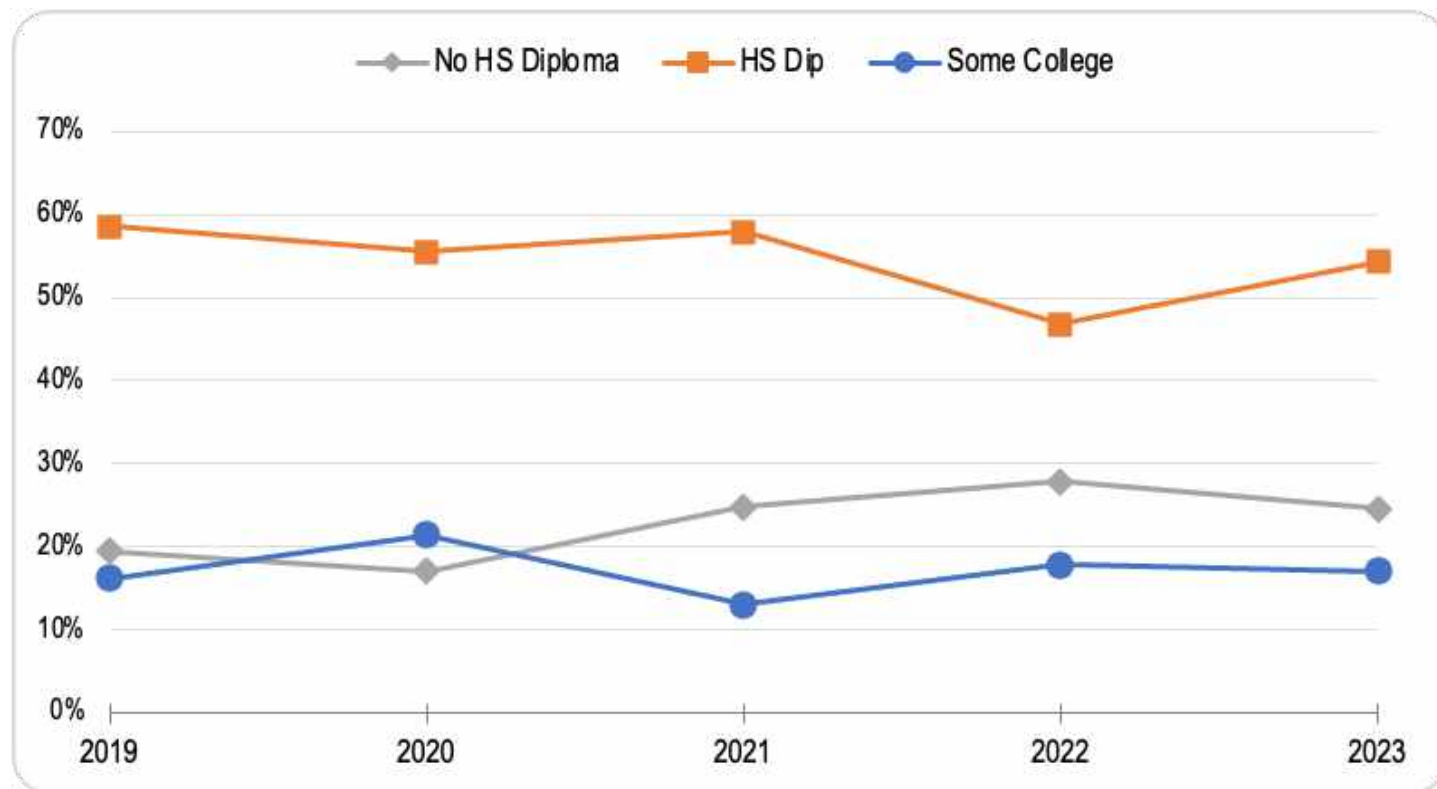
Most OY in this age group held a high school diploma, which consistently represented the largest educational category over the five-year period. While 59% of OY ages 19-24 had a diploma in 2019, that share dropped to 47% in 2022 before climbing back to 54% in 2023. This fluctuation may reflect disruptions in high school completion and delayed credentialing during the pandemic.

A smaller segment of this population had some college experience but no degree. This group ranged from 13% to 21% of OY over the five-year period, with a peak in 2020. The share fell in the years that followed, suggesting that while some young adults are able to access postsecondary education, many leave without a credential – highlighting the need for greater postsecondary retention and re-engagement strategies.

These findings underscore the importance of tiered approaches to reconnecting opportunity young adults (ages 19-24) to education and training. A substantial share lacks even a high school diploma, while others need targeted support to reenter or complete college-level education. Addressing both ends of this spectrum is critical for improving long-term economic mobility among this population.

This skills and credentialing gap has broader implications for the regional economy. Many of Nevada’s fastest-growing occupations – particularly in sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and clean energy – require postsecondary credentials, certifications, or prior technical experience. Most OY in Southern Nevada, however, lack access to these pathways. The result is a widening skills mismatch: even as high-growth jobs go unfilled, thousands of young adults remain disconnected from training and career opportunities, constraining both individual mobility and the region’s ability to fully capitalize on its job growth potential.

Figure 6. Opportunity Young Adult Educational Attainment by Year (2019-2023; ages 19-24)



Following the educational disparities explored above, another set of critical indicators highlights the broader social and economic barriers facing OY in Southern Nevada. When compared to their connected peers, OY faced stark disadvantages across multiple domains that directly impact long-term stability and upward mobility.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BARRIERS FACING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Employment disparities were particularly striking. Just 31% of OY ages 19-24 had worked in the past 12 months, compared to 91% of their connected peers. Even more concerning, 21% of OY had either never worked or had not worked in the past five years – a share seven times higher than that of non-OY. This extended detachment from the labor market limits both income and skill development and increases the risk of long-term economic marginalization.

Educational attainment also revealed substantial gaps. Over half (54%) of OY had no education beyond a high school diploma, compared to 41% of non-OY. Conversely, just 5% of OY had attained a bachelor's degree or higher – less than one-third the rate of their connected counterparts (17%). These disparities underscore structural barriers to postsecondary access and advancement, particularly for youth already facing economic and social hardship.

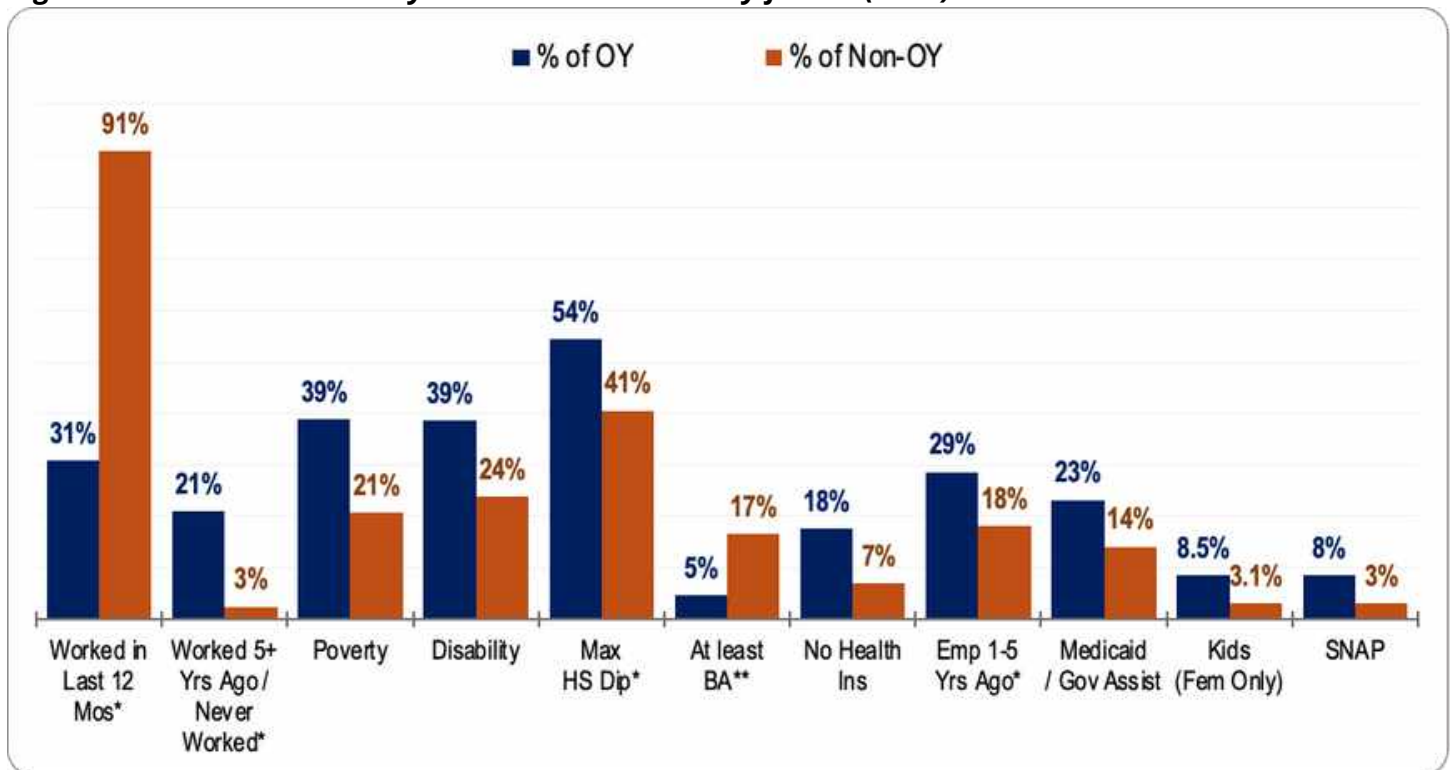
The effects of disconnection were further reflected in economic well-being. Nearly 40% of OY lived in poverty, compared to 21% of non-OY. Similarly, 39% of OY reported having a disability, relative to 24% of connected youth. These overlapping conditions compound the challenges many OY face in reconnecting to education or the workforce.

Caregiving responsibilities also play a role. Among young women ages 19-24, approximately 9% of OY were parenting, nearly three times the rate of non-OY women (3%). Early parenthood often creates additional logistical and financial constraints, further limiting access to school or employment opportunities without targeted supports like childcare, transportation, or flexible training schedules.

Disconnection was also associated with limited access to healthcare and a greater reliance on public assistance. Nearly one in five OY (18%) lacked health insurance, compared to just 7% of their peers, and 23% were enrolled in Medicaid or similar programs, versus 14% of non-OY. A smaller but still significant share of OY (8%) accessed food assistance through “the” Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), compared to 3% of connected youth. These disparities have informed both the strategic priorities of the initiative and its outreach strategy. Key agencies connected to public health and social services – such as Medicaid providers and benefits navigators – are now engaged coalition partners, helping to co-design solutions tailored to these realities.

Together, these data paint a clear picture: OY in Southern Nevada face a complex web of challenges that restrict access to opportunity and hinder economic mobility. Addressing these barriers will require more than programmatic offerings – it will demand a robust ecosystem of wraparound supports, cross-system collaboration, and equity-driven interventions that address root causes of disconnection.

Figure 7. Barriers to Stability and Economic Mobility for OY (2023)



Note: *19-24-yr-olds only; **21-24-yr-olds only

While individual, systemic, and structural barriers all shape youth disconnection, geography plays a critical role in determining both exposure to risk and access to support. OY are not evenly distributed across Southern Nevada. Instead, they are concentrated in specific neighborhoods and communities – many of which face compounding challenges such as poverty, underinvestment, and limited transportation infrastructure. These spatial patterns point to the need for targeted, place-based interventions that meet youth where they are.

Geographic Concentration of Opportunity Youth in Southern Nevada

To examine the geography of disconnection, this analysis uses Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) – statistical regions defined by the U.S. Census Bureau that each contain a minimum population of 100,000. While PUMAs are not administrative boundaries, they serve as practical proxies for neighborhoods or clusters of communities within large urban areas. In Southern Nevada, PUMAs help disaggregate the Las Vegas metropolitan area into subregions such as North Las Vegas, Paradise, Henderson, and Spring Valley, offering a more granular view of where OY are most concentrated.

The data reveal sharp geographic disparities. In 2023, the highest disconnection rates were found in southeast and south-central Las Vegas (20.7% and 20.1%, respectively), Greater North Las Vegas (19.1%), and the Mesquite/Sunrise Manor/Moapa Valley area (20.1%). Collectively, these four subregions accounted for more than 45% of all OY in Southern Nevada, despite comprising just over one-third of the region's 16-24-year-old population. These areas – characterized by high poverty rates, limited public transportation, and constrained access to youth services – represent clear priority zones for intervention.

Other subregions, such as Paradise (Northwest) and Winchester (17.4%) and Northwest Las Vegas Valley (15.0%), also had elevated disconnection rates and sizable OY populations. In contrast, areas like Henderson (East and West) and Spring Valley (East and West) had much lower disconnection rates – ranging from 7.7% to 11.7% – and collectively accounted for less than 15% of the region's disconnected youth.

These patterns reinforce the importance of aligning OY strategies with geographic realities. High-disconnection neighborhoods often face overlapping service gaps, and without targeted investments, youth in these areas risk being left behind. A region-wide approach to reconnecting youth must be grounded in local context, with cross-sector resources and supports directed toward the communities where disconnection is most pervasive.

This geographic concentration also underscores the strategic value of municipal involvement. The engagement of the Cities of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson, Boulder City, and Clark County with active EmployNV Hubs in the OYC has enabled more responsive, neighborhood-level planning and resource alignment – ensuring that local government plays a central role in addressing the structural drivers of youth disconnection.

Figure 7. Barriers to Stability and Economic Mobility for OY (2023)

PUMA	OY	TOTAL (16-24)	OY Rate	Share of OY
Greater N Las Vegas	5,405	28,225	19.1%	15%
Mesquite, Sunrise Manor (North), Moapa Valley, & Nellis AFB	4,400	21,884	20.1%	12%
Las Vegas (SE)	3,702	17,896	20.7%	10%
Las Vegas (S Central)	3,519	17,546	20.1%	10%
Paradise (NW) & Winchester	3,015	17,307	17.4%	8%
NW Las Vegas Valley	2,467	16,428	15.0%	7%
Las Vegas (NE) & N Las Vegas (Outer)	2,237	17,328	12.9%	6%
Whitney, Sunrise Manor (South) & Paradise (NE)	2,088	18,054	11.6%	6%
Paradise (South) & Enterprise	2,037	17,715	11.5%	6%
Las Vegas (SW)	1,850	15,927	11.6%	5%
Henderson (East) & Boulder	1,561	20,167	7.7%	4%
Spring Valley (West)	1,437	12,241	11.7%	4%
Henderson (Central South)	1,406	9,930	14.2%	4%
Spring Valley (East)	1,140	10,373	11.0%	3%
Henderson (West)	719	9,281	7.7%	2%
Overall	36,983	250,302	14.8%	100%

Implications for Strategy

This demographic and socioeconomic profile of OY in Southern Nevada provides essential context for shaping an effective Strategic Action Plan. The data reveal a complex and layered picture: most OY are over the age of 18, many confront overlapping barriers to education and employment, and a large proportion reside in neighborhoods with concentrated disadvantage. Disconnection is not evenly distributed – it is stratified by age, race, geography, and socioeconomic status.

Despite a modest decline in disconnection rates since the pandemic, the overall scale of the challenge remains substantial. Racial and ethnic disparities persist, with Black and multiracial youth disproportionately represented among the disconnected. Geographic data underscore how certain areas – especially within North Las Vegas and South Central Las Vegas – are home to far higher rates of disconnection than others. These patterns reflect structural inequities that cannot be addressed through isolated programs or generic interventions.



The findings point to the need for a multi-pronged, equity-centered strategy that integrates targeted outreach, tailored programming, and robust cross-system coordination. Interventions must be customized for distinct subgroups – whether youth without a high school diploma, young mothers, youth with disabilities, or those with limited work experience – and must be concentrated in the communities most affected. At the same time, efforts should address structural conditions that limit access to opportunity, including gaps in transportation, mental health supports, postsecondary access, and workforce pathways.

Ultimately, the OYC must be designed for the reality of who OY are – not an abstract or uniform population, but a diverse group shaped by systemic exclusion. Grounding the Strategic Action Plan in this demographic evidence ensures that the work is both targeted and responsive. Understanding the scope and contours of youth disconnection is not only foundational – it is a strategic imperative.

While the preceding data and engagement findings provide critical context, the OYC's strength lies in its forward-looking strategy. The next section outlines a draft framework designed to translate insight into action, with clear priorities, implementation goals, and roles for partners across the region.



SECTION V: KEY THEMES FROM ENGAGEMENT AND STRATEGY SESSIONS

The development of the OYC Strategic Action Plan has been guided not only by data and systems mapping, but also by the insights, experiences, and observations of those most directly involved in and affected by youth disconnection in Southern Nevada. This includes WC leadership and staff, cross-sector partners, community-based organizations, and, critically, OY themselves.

Through the facilitated strategy session led by New Ways, internal assessments, stakeholder documents, and past coalition engagements, a set of core themes has emerged that directly inform the strategic direction of the initiative.

These themes reflect both the strengths to build upon and the structural challenges that must be addressed if the region is to make lasting progress in reducing youth disconnection. They also illustrate the critical importance of implementation infrastructure – systems, processes, and roles – that can translate vision into action.

➡ **WC's Role as Systems Integrator Requires Dedicated Capacity**

- Stakeholders widely agreed that WC is well positioned to lead regional alignment on OYC, but this role requires more than coordination – it demands internal capacity, infrastructure, and daily project management. Several emphasized the need for a dedicated team or intermediary to lead implementation and maintain momentum: “Someone has to wake up every day thinking about this work.”

➡ **Youth Voice Must Shape System Design**

- Youth engagement efforts have surfaced consistent themes: transitions like high school exit are vulnerable periods, basic needs often go unmet, and services are either inaccessible or mistrusted. Systems must invest in both navigational supports and stronger relational trust with youth to be effective.

➡ **Public Narrative Remains Underdeveloped**

- Although WC has elevated youth disconnection as a priority, the broader public still misunderstands it as a personal issue rather than a systemic failure. Without a strong public narrative that names root causes – such as housing, justice involvement, or place-based inequity – the initiative risks being perceived as programmatic rather than transformational.

➡ **Service Fragmentation Undermines Outcomes**

- While WC is building the ATLAS platform and a dashboard, shared metrics and system interoperability remain limited. A culture of impact-focused data use – beyond compliance – is needed. Successful implementation will require training, trust, and sustained investment in data capacity.

➡ **CBO Capacity Is Uneven Across the Ecosystem**

- Southern Nevada's youth-serving organizations vary in funding, infrastructure, and specialization. Some are well-resourced; others are stretched thin. A coordinated approach to capacity building – including shared training and sustainable funding – is critical to strengthen the field overall.

➡ **Disconnection Is Intergenerational and Geographic**

- Youth engagement efforts have surfaced consistent themes: transitions like high school exit are vulnerable periods, basic needs often go unmet, and services are either inaccessible or mistrusted. Systems must invest in both navigational supports and stronger relational trust with youth to be effective.

➡ **Drop-Off after Age 18 is a System Gap**

- Support for youth drops significantly after age 18, when K-12-linked services end. Programs for 19-24-year-olds are limited and often restricted by eligibility rules. Stakeholders stressed the need for expanded services, more flexible eligibility, and better targeting of older youth.

➡ **Data Systems and Shared Metrics Are Still Developing**

- Stakeholders described a fragmented landscape with informal referrals, inconsistent eligibility, and poor data sharing. Youth often receive disconnected – or no – services depending on entry point. A centralized navigation system, powered by trusted navigators and technology, is needed to overcome this fragmentation.

➡ **Momentum Is Strong, but Requires Focus**

- There is broad enthusiasm for the initiative – fueled by cross-sector engagement and early wins – but stakeholders emphasized that momentum alone is insufficient. Disciplined execution, clear roles, and shared accountability are essential to convert energy into sustained systems change.



From Themes to Strategy

The themes that emerged through the engagement process offer more than insight – they serve as design principles for the Strategic Action Plan. These themes illuminate the disconnect between existing systems and the realities facing Opportunity Youth. They underscore the need for coordination, trust, and sustained investment in capacity building. Most importantly, they reinforce the imperative to build an integrated ecosystem – not just programs – that can support young people in navigating education, employment, and adulthood.

These findings directly informed the development of the strategic framework presented in the next section.



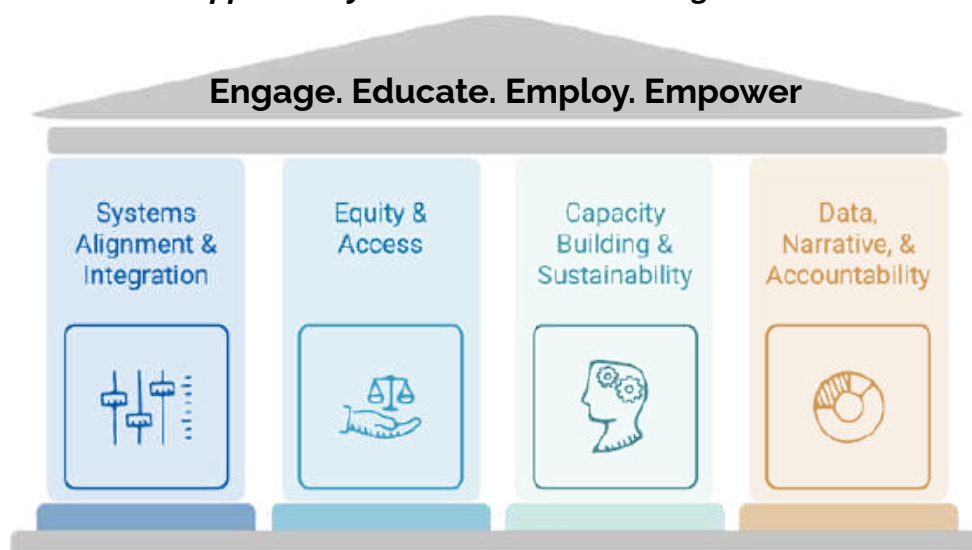
SECTION VI: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Opportunity Youth Coalition (OYC) Strategic Action Plan is anchored by a draft strategic framework designed to guide implementation, align stakeholder efforts, and establish a foundation for shared accountability. While New Ways to Work supported the development of this framework, it is rooted in Workforce Connections' vision and leadership – and reflects WC's commitment to building a more coordinated, equitable, and effective system for Opportunity Youth.

This version represents an initial draft intended to give shape and structure to WC's strategic priorities. The framework is offered as a starting point for internal review and refinement. The final version – including confirmed goals, objectives, implementation strategies, and success metrics – will be formally adopted and owned by Workforce Connections.

The draft framework is organized around four strategic pillars, each reflecting a core challenge, value, or opportunity identified throughout the initiative's development:

Figure 8. Southern Nevada's Opportunity Youth Coalition Strategic Pillars



Each pillar is grounded in a high-level goal and accompanied by a set of draft objectives that help translate strategic intent into action. Together, these components outline a preliminary roadmap for coordinated, cross-sector efforts to reduce youth disconnection across Southern Nevada. As the initiative evolves, these elements will be refined and finalized under the leadership of Workforce Connections.

Strategic Pillar 1: Systems Alignment & Integration

This pillar seeks to create a cohesive, region-wide ecosystem that breaks down systemic silos and strengthens the infrastructure that supports Opportunity Youth (OY). By aligning education, workforce, housing, behavioral health, and other critical systems, it enables youth to move seamlessly across programs and services without duplication, confusion, or unnecessary barriers. Sustained cross-sector collaboration, shared protocols, and a unified navigation experience are essential to ensuring youth are supported holistically across their journey to success.

Goal: Create an integrated and equitable ecosystem that connects Opportunity Youth to education, employment, and wraparound supports through aligned systems, streamlined referrals, and cross-sector accountability.

Updated Objectives:

- Establish and launch a unified regional referral and data-sharing system by 2026, with at least 10 participating agencies (education, workforce, and nonprofit) and standardized intake, eligibility, and tracking protocols.
- Ensure 75% of referrals made through the shared system result in successful service access by youth within 30 days, as measured by platform data by mid-2027.
- Conduct quarterly cross-sector implementation meetings to assess referral data, surface service gaps, and update collaborative strategies.
- Conduct an equity audit by March 2026 across at least 15 partners to identify and reduce structural barriers (e.g., transportation, language, childcare).
- By September 2026, implement barrier-reduction strategies that improve access for at least 150 youth, especially those from historically underserved communities.
- Formalize a cross-agency governance structure to oversee implementation, track progress, and guide shared decision-making, with rotating leadership and community representation.
- Sustain and scale the ATLAS partner portal as the regional digital backbone for OY navigation and partner coordination.

Rationale: Fragmented and siloed systems – across education, workforce, housing, justice, and health – often result in duplicated efforts, eligibility confusion, and youth falling through the cracks. Disconnection is not a youth failure; it is a systems failure. This pillar recognizes that systems must change before outcomes can. A coordinated, cross-sector approach – rooted in equity, shared accountability, and user-centered design – is foundational to reducing disconnection and ensuring that youth are connected to the right supports at the right time.

Partner Insights: Survey respondents emphasized the importance of centralized coordination across systems, with multiple stakeholders advocating for a shared case management platform and streamlined eligibility processes. Several called for real-time communication between providers and schools, workforce programs, and human services. The need for regional ownership of system integration was also elevated, with suggestions that Workforce Connections lead a multi-agency coalition dedicated to operationalizing shared data protocols and intake forms.

Strategic Pillar 2: Equity & Access

This pillar centers equity as a non-negotiable condition for systems change. Disconnection does not affect all youth equally – it is concentrated among communities historically marginalized by race, language, disability, geography, and income. By embedding equity in every layer of design and delivery, this pillar ensures that supports are accessible, culturally responsive, and tailored to the realities of those most impacted. Efforts will focus on addressing root causes of exclusion, reducing structural barriers, and elevating youth voice in the creation of solutions.

Goal: Ensure that all Opportunity Youth – especially those from historically underserved and marginalized communities – have equitable access to programs, supports, and systems that are responsive to their lived experiences and aspirations.

Updated Objectives:

- Conduct an equity audit across at least 15 partner organizations by March 2026 to identify disparities in access, participation, and outcomes by race, gender, zip code, and other key demographics.
- Expand peer-led outreach and programming in neighborhoods with high youth disconnection, reaching at least 1,000 youth annually by 2027.
- Recruit, train, and support at least 30 culturally responsive peer navigators and mentors by the end of 2026, with representation from OY-impacted communities.
- Implement barrier-reduction strategies (e.g., transit vouchers, childcare support, documentation assistance) that improve access for at least 500 OY annually.
- Develop and advocate for at least three policy changes at the district, county, or state level by 2027 that remove systemic barriers to education, employment, or housing access.
- Integrate inclusive program design practices that ensure services are welcoming and affirming to LGBTQ+ youth, youth with disabilities, and those parenting or system-involved.

Rationale: The causes of disconnection are deeply tied to systemic inequities. In Southern Nevada, Black, Latino, Indigenous, multiracial, and LGBTQ+ youth – as well as youth with disabilities, those parenting, or involved in foster care – experience disconnection at significantly higher rates. Equity is not a theme or buzzword; it is the foundation upon which meaningful, sustainable change must be built. This pillar moves beyond surface-level inclusion to ensure that equity is operationalized across outreach, programming, staffing, and policy.

Partner Insights: Equity was consistently highlighted as a core value. Respondents urged targeted outreach in historically underserved neighborhoods, including expanded investments in peer navigators who reflect youth lived experience. Several partners noted the importance of removing transportation and documentation barriers, especially for immigrant and justice-involved youth. Others emphasized that access should also include culturally responsive programming and multilingual services to reduce hidden barriers to engagement.

Strategic Pillar 3: Capacity Building & Sustainability

This pillar focuses on strengthening the collective capacity, sustainability, and alignment of OY-serving organizations across Southern Nevada. Achieving lasting impact will require more than scaling programs – it demands coordinated investment in people, infrastructure, and systems. Through technical assistance, training, shared tools, and collaborative funding strategies, this pillar ensures that partners have the resources and capabilities to deliver consistently high-quality, youth-centered services. It also emphasizes coalition-wide efforts to track performance, reduce duplication, and position organizations for long-term success.

Goal: Strengthen the organizational and systemic capacity of OY-serving partners to deliver high-quality services, reduce fragmentation, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

Updated Objectives:

- Establish a local intermediary or 501(c)(3) entity under the leadership of WC and JobsFirstUSA to coordinate implementation, funding alignment, and capacity-building functions.
- Provide technical assistance to youth-serving organizations on re-engagement, trauma-informed care, data management, and evidence-based workforce practices.
- Launch a shared resource hub with templates, intake/referral tools, and cross-system training modules, reaching 75% of OY-serving partners by 2026.
- Create a blended funding strategy that integrates WIOA, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), SNAP, CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T), and philanthropic investments to sustain OYC across political and budget cycles.
- Support smaller and emerging organizations through leadership development cohorts, capacity grants, and back-office supports.
- Build advocacy capacity across the coalition by:
 - Delivering at least 4 training sessions annually on policy engagement, legislative strategy, and effective communications
 - Offering technical assistance for policy research and stakeholder mapping
 - Equipping partners to elevate youth and community voices in state and local policymaking
- Develop a leadership pipeline to support professional growth and retention across youth-serving systems, with at least 30 mid-level staff completing leadership training by 2026.

Rationale: The success of the Opportunity Youth Coalition hinges on the strength of the ecosystem behind it. Many partners operate with limited bandwidth, competing priorities, or constrained access to sustainable funding. These challenges limit their ability to scale impact or deliver wraparound services consistently. At the same time, the systems that serve youth require better alignment, real-time data sharing, and shared accountability. This pillar addresses both fronts: investing in the organizations closest to youth and building a backbone infrastructure to support long-term, cross-sector coordination. Capacity building is not peripheral – it is the scaffolding that allows innovation, equity, and sustainability to take root.

Partner Insights: Respondents identified critical gaps in capacity for small and emerging organizations. Suggestions included providing fiscal sponsorship, administrative support, and training in trauma-informed youth development practices. Many advocated for a regional intermediary to offer shared back-office tools, capacity-building workshops, and coordinated TA across the coalition. Several respondents also elevated the need for leadership development to retain mid-career staff and sustain institutional knowledge.

Strategic Pillar 4: Data, Narrative, & Accountability

This pillar is rooted in the belief that better data and better stories lead to better outcomes. It promotes a shared culture of transparency, strategic learning, and mutual accountability across the Opportunity Youth ecosystem. By expanding real-time data systems, aligning partner reporting practices, and elevating youth voices through storytelling, this pillar helps drive smarter decision-making, more equitable resource allocation, and stronger public and political will. Data is not simply a compliance requirement – it is a tool for equity, a catalyst for change, and a foundation for trust.

Goal: Build a culture of shared measurement, compelling storytelling, and transparent accountability that strengthens systems, informs action, and advances Opportunity Youth outcomes across Southern Nevada.

Updated Objectives:

- Finalize and launch the regional Opportunity Youth dashboard to track disconnection rates, re-engagement, education and employment outcomes, and partner performance.
- Establish a common set of outcome metrics and reporting protocols across funded partners by 2026, with 90% adoption by 2027.
- Conduct quarterly data review sessions with partner organizations to identify gaps, adjust strategies, and highlight promising practices.
- Collect and publish at least 20 youth and family stories annually through videos, podcasts, or written profiles to celebrate progress and reduce stigma.
- Release an annual OYC outcomes report that combines quantitative results with qualitative narratives, beginning in 2026.
- Develop training for partners on ethical data collection, equity-focused measurement, and strategic communications.
- Use disaggregated data to identify disparities in program access and outcomes, with targeted action plans developed for at least three priority populations by 2027.

Rationale: Too often, disconnected youth remain invisible in systems designed to support them. Data on their experiences is scattered, underutilized, or inaccessible, while the stories that shape public understanding are often incomplete or stigmatizing. This pillar seeks to change that by embedding shared accountability mechanisms, unifying data efforts, and amplifying narratives that reflect the full humanity and resilience of Opportunity Youth. A coordinated data infrastructure and shared communication strategy can help ensure that decisions are evidence-based, equity-driven, and anchored in the lived experiences of the young people this initiative is designed to serve.

Partner Insights: Survey responses reinforced the importance of user-friendly data dashboards, shared reporting templates, and regular performance check-ins. Respondents stressed the need to go beyond compliance and use data to support learning and service improvement. Many also noted that stories from youth and frontline staff were essential to shifting public narratives, and recommended platforms (e.g., videos, town halls) to spotlight successes and amplify community voices.

Integration with Existing Work

This framework does not represent a departure from WC's existing direction – it builds upon it. Each pillar and objective draws from the themes surfaced in internal sessions, coalition meetings, and foundational documents such as the WSJF project narrative, OYC pledge, 30k by 2030 impact modeling study, and the WC-NVR-CCSD pilot concept paper.

Strategic Planning Milestones accomplished:

- Workforce Connections reviewed the draft framework to confirm or revise the strategic pillars, goals, and objectives.
- Stakeholder working groups were facilitated to expand on strategies and success indicators under each objective.
- The framework was finalized to guide implementation, performance monitoring, and funding decisions.

The next section of this report outlines specific recommendations for translating this strategic framework into coordinated, sustainable, and measurable action across the region.



SECTION VII: RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The development of the OYC Strategic Action Plan represents a pivotal step in advancing a unified regional response to youth disconnection in Southern Nevada. With a solid foundation of coalition engagement, early programmatic wins, and a draft strategic framework in place, WC is well positioned to move from planning to implementation. This section presents a set of actionable recommendations and key considerations to guide the next phase of the initiative. The recommendations focus on ensuring that implementation is structured, accountable, and aligned with the region’s long-term goals for equity, integration, and sustainability.

These recommendations are organized into five interrelated domains:



Leadership & Governance



Implementation Infrastructure



Programmatic Strategy



Data & Measurement



Communications & Public Narrative



Leadership & Governance

A durable governance structure is foundational to successful implementation. This domain focuses on clarifying leadership roles, ensuring inclusive representation, and building the strategic capacity needed to steward the initiative over time.

Recommendation: Establish a formal governance structure for the OYC that includes WC leadership, key public agency partners, and community-based organizations. This governance body should be responsible for strategic oversight, resource alignment, and progress monitoring.

Implementation Considerations:

- Clarify WC's role as the regional systems integrator and fiscal agent.
- Define core responsibilities and decision-making authority of the governance group.
- Include youth representation and ensure community-based organizations have a meaningful voice.
- Consider formalizing roles through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or shared accountability agreements.
- Clarify partner roles in policy advocacy, including:
 - WC as the lead convener and coordinator of advocacy strategy.
 - Public agencies (e.g., school districts, human services, vocational rehabilitation) as co-developers of policy priorities and messengers to their networks.
 - Community-based organizations and advocacy groups as storytellers, frontline experts, and amplifiers of advocacy messaging to policymakers.
 - Youth and family partners as active contributors to advocacy design and direct engagement efforts.

Rationale: As the initiative transitions into implementation, a more formal governance structure is needed to ensure accountability, transparency, and coordination. Informal collaboration has helped launch the initiative; sustaining it will require clear roles, shared authority, and consistent leadership engagement. As advocacy becomes a core function of the initiative, clearly defined roles across all stakeholder groups will be essential to maintain alignment, amplify impact, and ensure diverse voices are represented in policy discussions.



Strong day-to-day coordination and operational capacity are critical to driving momentum and managing complexity. This domain outlines the staffing, intermediary functions, and working group structures needed to support collaborative execution.

Recommendation: Invest in dedicated staff and operational infrastructure to manage and coordinate the day-to-day implementation of the Strategic Action Plan through the establishment of a 501(c)(3) organization

Implementation Considerations:

- Clarify WC's role as the regional systems integrator and fiscal agent.
- Define core responsibilities and decision-making authority of the governance group.
- Include youth representation and ensure community-based organizations have a meaningful voice.
- Consider formalizing roles through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or shared accountability agreements.
- Clarify partner roles in policy advocacy, including:

Rationale: As the initiative transitions into implementation, a more formal governance structure is needed to ensure accountability, transparency, and coordination. Informal collaboration has helped launch the initiative; sustaining it will require clear roles, shared authority, and consistent leadership engagement. As advocacy becomes a core function of the initiative, clearly defined roles across all stakeholder groups will be essential to maintain alignment, amplify impact, and ensure diverse voices are represented in policy discussions.



Programmatic
Strategy

Direct services and programmatic investments are the backbone of youth reconnection. This domain outlines targeted strategies to scale age-appropriate, barrier-responsive programming while embedding systems change through localized pilots and policy advocacy.

Recommendation: Expand and deepen programming for 19–24-year-olds while piloting localized, school- and neighborhood-based interventions for younger youth.

Implementation Considerations:

- Scale the WC-NVR-CCSD pilot across CCSD's Adult Education centers at Desert Rose and St. Louis campuses, while evaluating effectiveness.
- Embed youth navigators or outreach specialists in schools, justice systems, and workforce access points.
- Fund flexible, culturally responsive programming that addresses basic needs (e.g., transportation, food, childcare).
- Pilot targeted re-engagement campaigns tied to seasonal milestones (e.g., summer school, graduation, FAFSA deadlines).
- Track labor force participation and macroeconomic return metrics – such as estimated increases in workforce participation, regional GDP contribution, and avoided public costs – using NPWR projections and program-level tracking data.
- Establish a dedicated policy advocacy working group within the governance structure to identify and advance key policy priorities.
- Regularly host stakeholder and policymaker briefings focused on youth disconnection and system barriers, fostering informed dialogue and policy responsiveness.
- Develop and disseminate policy briefs and position papers outlining systemic barriers and evidence-based policy solutions aimed at reducing youth disconnection.

Rationale: Most OY in Southern Nevada are aged 19-24, yet this population is underserved in the current ecosystem. At the same time, there is an opportunity to prevent disconnection before it occurs by building stronger handoffs at age 17-18. Programming must be both age-specific and barrier-responsive. Additionally, explicit policy advocacy activities ensure systemic and sustainable support for youth reconnection efforts, addressing root barriers to equity and access at a structural level.



Data & Measurement

Real-time, transparent data is essential to accountability, learning, and continuous improvement. This domain emphasizes the importance of shared indicators, accessible dashboards, and measurement systems that capture both programmatic progress and broader economic impact.

Recommendation: Finalize and operationalize the initiative's performance measurement framework, with emphasis on shared metrics, data transparency, and continuous learning.

Implementation Considerations:

- Complete development of the ATLAS partner portal and associated intake/referral systems.
- Launch the regional performance dashboard, including both program-level and population-level indicators.
- Link the public-facing ATLAS dashboard with the Workforce Connections website to improve visibility and accessibility.
- Provide technical assistance to partners on data collection, use, and sharing.
- Develop a learning agenda to track implementation challenges and course correct as needed.
- Estimate and report the regional economic impact of youth reengagement – including aggregate wage gains, job creation, and public cost avoidance – using NPWR projections and validated outcome data.
- Incorporate advocacy-related metrics into the performance framework to track the effectiveness of policy engagement efforts. These may include:
 - Number of policy advocacy events or briefings held annually.
 - Number of policy recommendations adopted, or actions influenced.
 - Participation by elected officials, agency leads, or decision-makers in advocacy events.
 - Stakeholder feedback on the relevance and impact of OYC policy advocacy.

Rationale: Effective strategy requires actionable data. To that end, shared measurement must move beyond compliance and toward a culture of transparency, learning, and performance improvement. The ATLAS system and public dashboard will be essential tools but must be coupled with training and technical support. As the initiative's advocacy capacity expands, it will be equally important to track the influence and reach of policy activities to ensure they are advancing system-level change.



Communications
& Public Narrative

Shifting the public narrative around disconnection is key to building the political and cultural will for lasting change. This domain focuses on strategic storytelling, youth engagement, and advocacy communications that elevate lived experience and drive systems reform.

Recommendation: Invest in strategic communications that elevate the voices of OY, humanize the issue of disconnection, and build public and political will for long-term systems change.

Implementation Considerations:

- Develop and disseminate youth success stories across platforms and audiences.
- Hold regular public updates and briefings with elected officials, education leaders, and funders.
- Align messaging with regional equity goals and economic recovery priorities.
- Engage youth as ambassadors, speakers, and advisors in outreach efforts.
- Leverage communications as a policy advocacy tool, including:
 - Crafting and sharing issue briefs, infographics, and op-eds that highlight systemic barriers and needed reforms.
 - Equipping youth and partners with talking points and media training to effectively engage policymakers.
 - Coordinating advocacy campaigns or awareness weeks that amplify calls for policy change and public investment.

Rationale: Narrative power shapes policy, funding, and public engagement. As the initiative grows, a compelling and equity-centered narrative will be critical to securing long-term investment and support. OY must be seen not as a deficit but as a source of future regional vitality.

Cross-Cutting Considerations

In addition to the five recommendation domains above, several cross-cutting issues should be kept front and center during implementation:

- **Equity:** Each recommendation should be assessed through an equity lens. Are Black, Latino, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and parenting youth being served? Are services linguistically and culturally responsive?
- **Sustainability:** Where possible, braid funding from multiple sources – WIOA, TANF, NVR, local education agencies, philanthropy – to support long-term programming.
- **Youth Voice:** Youth must continue to shape the strategy – not only as recipients, but as co-designers and advocates
- **Pace:** Balancing urgency with discipline is key. The initiative must move swiftly enough to maintain momentum while ensuring quality and alignment.

The OYC has reached a defining moment. The groundwork has been laid. The coalition is growing. The partnerships are real. And the strategic direction is taking shape. The recommendations outlined here are designed to help WC and its partners move decisively from vision to action. With careful planning, committed leadership, and continued collaboration, Southern Nevada has the potential to become a national model for reconnecting youth and building equitable systems that support lifelong opportunity. The final section of this report presents a brief conclusion summarizing the path forward.



SECTION VIII: CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The OYC represents a bold and necessary response to one of Southern Nevada’s most urgent challenges: the persistent disconnection of thousands of young people from education and employment. While the region has made measurable progress in reducing disconnection since the height of the pandemic, the need for a coordinated, equity-driven, and data-informed strategy remains pressing. The development of this Strategic Action Plan reflects a collective recognition that OY are not a marginal concern, but a core population whose engagement is critical to the region’s economic vitality, social cohesion, and future workforce competitiveness.

Over the past year, WC has mobilized a diverse and growing network of partners – public agencies, school districts, postsecondary institutions, community-based organizations, funders, and youth advocates – to coalesce around a shared vision for change. Through coalition building, cross-sector engagement, strategic investment, and targeted pilot programs, WC has laid a strong foundation for systems-level impact. At the same time, the planning process facilitated by New Ways has helped distill that activity into a draft strategic framework that clarifies priorities, goals, and implementation pathways.

This Strategic Action Plan is not intended as a static document or a fixed roadmap. Rather, it is a dynamic framework – a tool to guide decision-making, structure collaboration, and drive accountability over time. It draws on multiple sources of evidence: demographic and economic data, youth voice, stakeholder insights, coalition planning, pilot experiences, and national best practices. The result is a comprehensive, regionally grounded, and forward-looking plan that identifies what must be done – and how to do it.

Key Takeaways:

- 1 Disconnection remains disproportionately concentrated among 19-24-year-olds, youth of color, and residents of historically underserved neighborhoods in S. Nevada.
- 2 The drivers of disconnection are structural and intersecting, requiring integrated and barrier-responsive strategies.
- 3 WC has successfully launched foundational efforts, including coalition-building, a VR-CCSD pilot, digital infrastructure, and funding alignment.
- 4 The initiative has entered a critical transition point: from early design and mobilization to structured implementation.
- 5 A clear governance structure, dedicated implementation capacity, shared measurement tools, and a strong public narrative will be essential to success.

Strategic Planning Milestone:

Workforce Connections and its leadership team reviewed the draft strategic framework included in this report and finalized the strategic pillars, goals, and objectives. The review process included input from internal staff, coalition members, and youth representatives.

Next Steps for WC and OYC Partners:

1. Formalize Governance and Implementation Structures: Establish a governance body and appoint or hire dedicated staff to lead the implementation of the OYC. Clarify roles and responsibilities across partner agencies and working groups to ensure coordination and follow through. Establish the 501(c)3 intermediary/funding collaborative.

2. Activate the Initial Implementation Phase: Launch priority activities aligned with the strategic framework, including:

- Full implementation of the WC-NVR-CCSD pilot at Desert Rose and St. Louis campuses
- Finalization and rollout of the ATLAS partner portal and public dashboard
- Expansion of outreach, navigation, and reengagement supports in high-disconnection areas

3.Sustain and Expand Stakeholder Engagement: Continue to grow the OYC coalition, with emphasis on including additional CBOs, employers, and youth-serving systems. Maintain regular coalition meetings, working groups, and public updates to sustain momentum and shared accountability.

4.Monitor Progress and Adapt Strategy: Use data, partner feedback, and implementation learning cycles to track progress and refine strategy. Establish short-, medium-, and long-term benchmarks tied to the plan's objectives.

Looking Ahead

The OYC reflects a deeper shift in how Southern Nevada defines and pursues workforce and education equity. It is not just about funding programs or offering services – it is about changing systems. It is about recognizing that disconnection is not a youth problem, but a system problem. And it is about ensuring that every young person in the region, regardless of their background, has a real chance at a connected and meaningful future.

With continued leadership from Workforce Connections, and sustained collaboration from its partners, the Opportunity Youth Coalition can deliver on that promise. The foundation has been laid. The strategy is emerging. The next chapter is one of action, accountability, and impact.



APPENDIX A. ADDITIONAL OY DATA

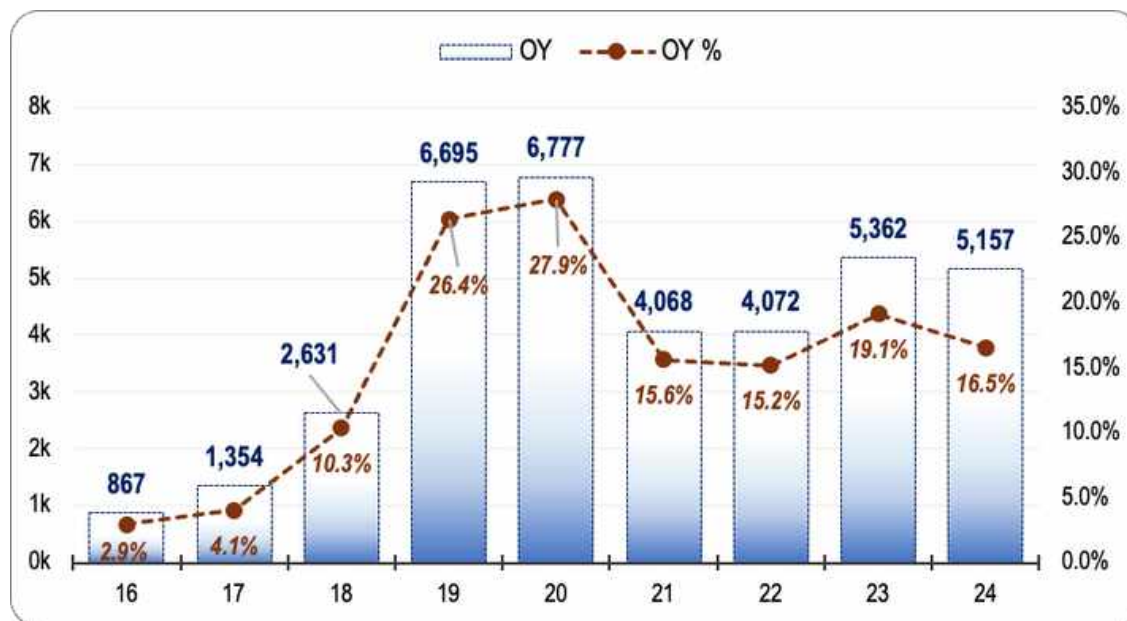
Age Breakdown of Opportunity Youth (2023 Snapshot)

Youth disconnection varied considerably by age. The share of OY was particularly high between ages 19 and 24, peaking at 27.9% at age 20 and 26.4% at age 19. These years marked a critical transition period when many young people should have been advancing into postsecondary education, job training, or the workforce. Instead, a substantial portion remained disconnected from both school and work.

While disconnection gradually declined after age 20, it remained high throughout early adulthood. At age 21, 15.6% of youth were neither in school nor at work, with comparable rates at ages 22 (15.2%) and 24 (16.5%). Notably, disconnection among 23-year-olds reached 19.1%, signaling that even by their early twenties, many young adults in Southern Nevada had not yet established a stable connection to employment or education systems.

Conversely, OY rates among 16- and 17-year-olds remained relatively low – 2.9% and 4.1%, respectively – reflecting both compulsory school attendance laws and the continued reach of K-12 institutions. The steep rise in disconnection beginning at age 18 (10.3%), however, highlights the vulnerability of youth at the point of high school exit, when systems of support often drop off. This spike served as a clear indicator that the transition from adolescence to adulthood represented one of the most precarious points for young people in Southern Nevada.

Disconnection by Age (2023)



While age provides one important lens for understanding OY, school enrollment and labor force status are the defining criteria. Analyzing these dynamics reveals the distinct challenges faced by youth at different stages of the transition to adulthood.

SOUTHERN NEVADA'S OPPORTUNITY YOUTH COALITION

STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING REPORT



**DISRUPTING
THE DISCONNECTED
YOUTH PIPELINE**



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