



Y.O.U. STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2015



Welcome.

OUR ORGANIZATION

Y.O.U. (Youth Organizations Umbrella, Inc.) is a non-profit organization that provides holistic services – from afterschool enrichment and mentoring to clinical counseling and crisis intervention – to ensure that out-of-school time is safe, healthy, and productive. Since our founding in 1971, we have empowered more than 18,000 youth to realize their full potential.

OUR PLAN

This strategic plan comes at a pivotal moment in our organization’s history and represents the culmination of an intentional, structured, and comprehensive learning process for Y.O.U. After 40 years, Y.O.U.’s founder and executive director, Don Baker, retired in 2011 and a new leader from outside the organization succeeded him. We harnessed this moment to deeply examine our practices, leveraging the input of more than 200 stakeholders, including outside experts, youth, parents, teachers, social workers, principals, and a broad cross-section of Y.O.U. staff and board. The strategic plan that follows embraces a bold vision for why we exist, what we do, and how we transform the lives of youth and their families.



We address the
opportunity gap.

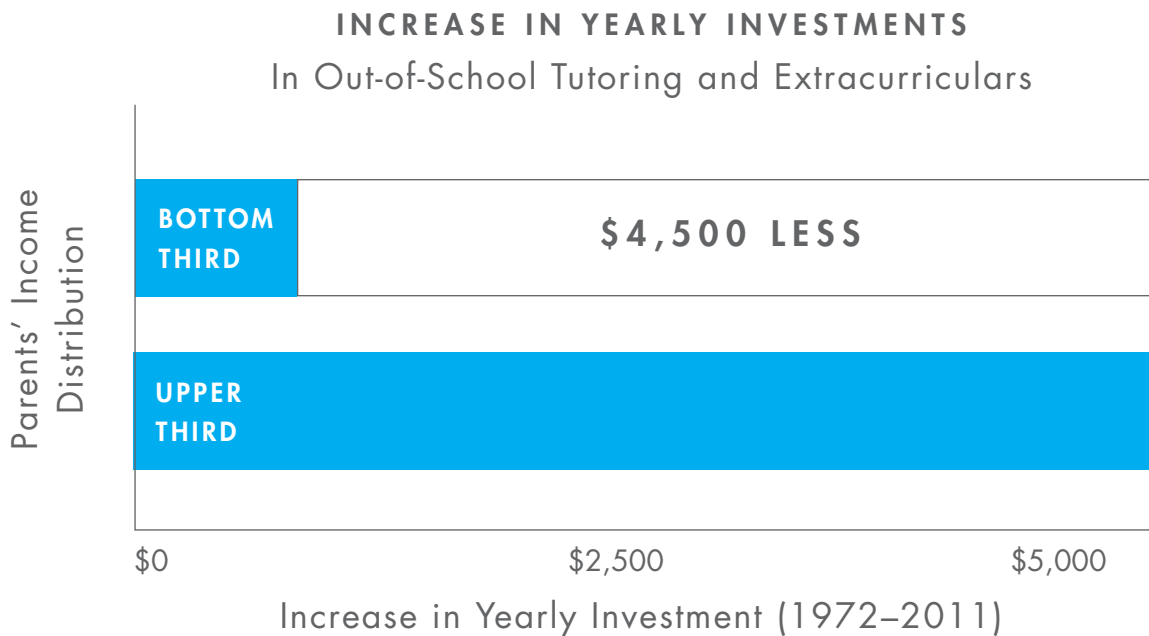
We help build safe,
thriving communities.

On school days, the hours between
3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are the peak hours
for juvenile crime and experimentation
with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex.

We are pioneers in transforming the
most dangerous hours in the lives of
youth into the most empowering hours.

A GROWING GAP

The opportunity gap is widening. Since 1972, parents in the upper third of income distribution have increased their yearly investments in out-of-school tutoring and extracurriculars by over \$5,000 (adjusted for inflation) while parents in the bottom third have increased their yearly investments by less than \$500 due to financial constraints.



The result is dramatic: by the time youth reach high school, when extracurriculars become freely available, there is a huge activity gap – where wealthier kids are more than twice as likely to participate in sports, theater and other enrichment. This is a dramatic change from the 1970s when participation was roughly equal across income levels. While out-of-school time used to be a great equalizer – bringing youth of all incomes together on the same team – now it is increasingly a dividing line in our community.

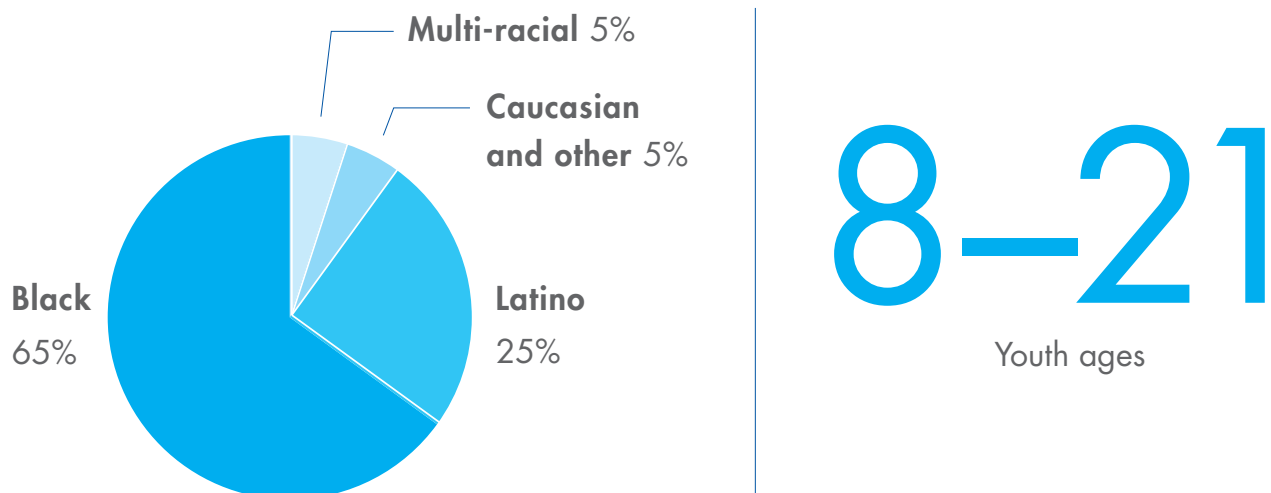
Youth who are school age spend 80% of their waking hours outside of school. All the research says that what happens to kids during this time is the most important factor in determining their success—in school and in life. We know that in a community like ours, families come from very different means and so youth have very different access to opportunities during this time.

A BOLD ANSWER

Y.O.U. has embraced a bold vision, building on our founding principles while confronting the challenges that face the youth of our community today. Y.O.U. seeks to address the opportunity gap that exists for youth in racially and economically diverse communities. We believe that a community is responsible for making sure all children have the chance to thrive: to learn, to feel safe both physically and emotionally, and to be mentored by caring adults. By providing holistic support for these youth academically, socially, and emotionally, we seek to ensure they have the opportunity to realize their full potential.

OUR PRIMARY POPULATION

Our primary population is socially and economically disadvantaged youth ages 8 to 21.



The youth we serve have unlimited potential. But they often confront barriers to that potential, including academic underperformance, social disenfranchisement, family discord, compromised physical and emotional safety, mental health and behavioral challenges, and the traumatic stress of poverty.

We believe that a community is responsible for making sure all children have the chance to thrive: to learn, to feel safe both physically and emotionally, and to be mentored by caring adults.



Y.O.U. Today.

Based on an extensive evaluation of our programs, we believe our current success relies on three core characteristics of our program model:

1. HOLISTIC

Our program is holistic, celebrating each child's unique strengths and providing services from afterschool programming to mental health counseling to address each child's unique challenges.

2. INTEGRATED

Our model approaches interventions through meaningful integration with the school, the home environment, and the services provided by our community partners.

3. CULTURALLY COMPETENT

Our model recognizes the unique social and cultural challenges confronting minority youth, and our direct service staff reflects the diversity of the families we serve.

With these three features, we have made a deep and positive impact on the youth we serve. Among youth who actively participated in Y.O.U.'s afterschool and mentorship programs in 2012:

- 95% improved their coping and resilience (according to clinical evaluations).
- 91% enhanced their social skills (according to clinical evaluations).
- 90% enjoy better family relationships (according to clinical evaluations).
- 71% improved their grade point average (according to school reports).

Note: Academic data comes directly from our school partners and includes grades, ISAT scores and disciplinary records; social and emotional data is based on clinical evaluations using the nationally recognized Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI).

RECENT RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE

2011

Y.O.U. receives a two-year grant from United Way of Metropolitan Chicago (UWMC) for implementing the Community School model in our middle school programs. UWMC bases its decision on its best-practice Education Investment Plan.

2012

Y.O.U. is the only agency on the North Shore to be selected by the Corporation for National and Community Service as a new host site for AmeriCorps fellows.

2013

Y.O.U. is awarded the Education Impact Award by United Way of Metropolitan Chicago (UWMC). Y.O.U. is the single recipient of the award (out of hundreds of agencies in the region) because of its holistic and transformative impact on youth and families.

Y.O.U. is competitively selected by Invest For Kids (IFK) for its cost-effective impact. Y.O.U. is the first north suburban agency to receive the award in IFK's history.

Y.O.U. receives the Philanthropy Award for "Best Human Services – Family, Youth and Child" from Make It Better magazine for "utilizing innovative practices to make an impact."



Y.O.U.

Moving

Forward.

Y.O.U. MOVING FORWARD

As we look to the future, we seek to grow in six distinct ways:

1. SERVING MORE YOUTH

We currently serve only one in four youth in our community who need our services, translating to three of four children not receiving the services they need. We seek to grow our service capacity by 300 youth over the next three years.

2. EXPANDING TO SKOKIE

We seek to expand our services to youth in Skokie. Like Evanston, Skokie is a racially and economically diverse community that is challenged by an opportunity gap. Moreover, our careful analysis and conversations with key stakeholders persuaded us that Skokie's schools and government are eager to partner with us in holistic youth development.

3. EMPOWERING PARENTS

We have deep relationships with the parents of the youth we serve, and we seek to leverage these relationships for greater impact by adding more parental learning opportunities and support services. We ultimately seek to empower our parents with the tools to support their child's development and to be their child's best advocate in our schools.

4. DEVELOPING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

We seek to continue pioneering the Community School model, transforming schools into hubs of coordinated programs, services, and resources for families. As the convener in developing Community Schools, Y.O.U. is better able to meet the emerging needs of youth and their families by supporting integration of academics, services, supports and opportunities that lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.

5. STREET OUTREACH

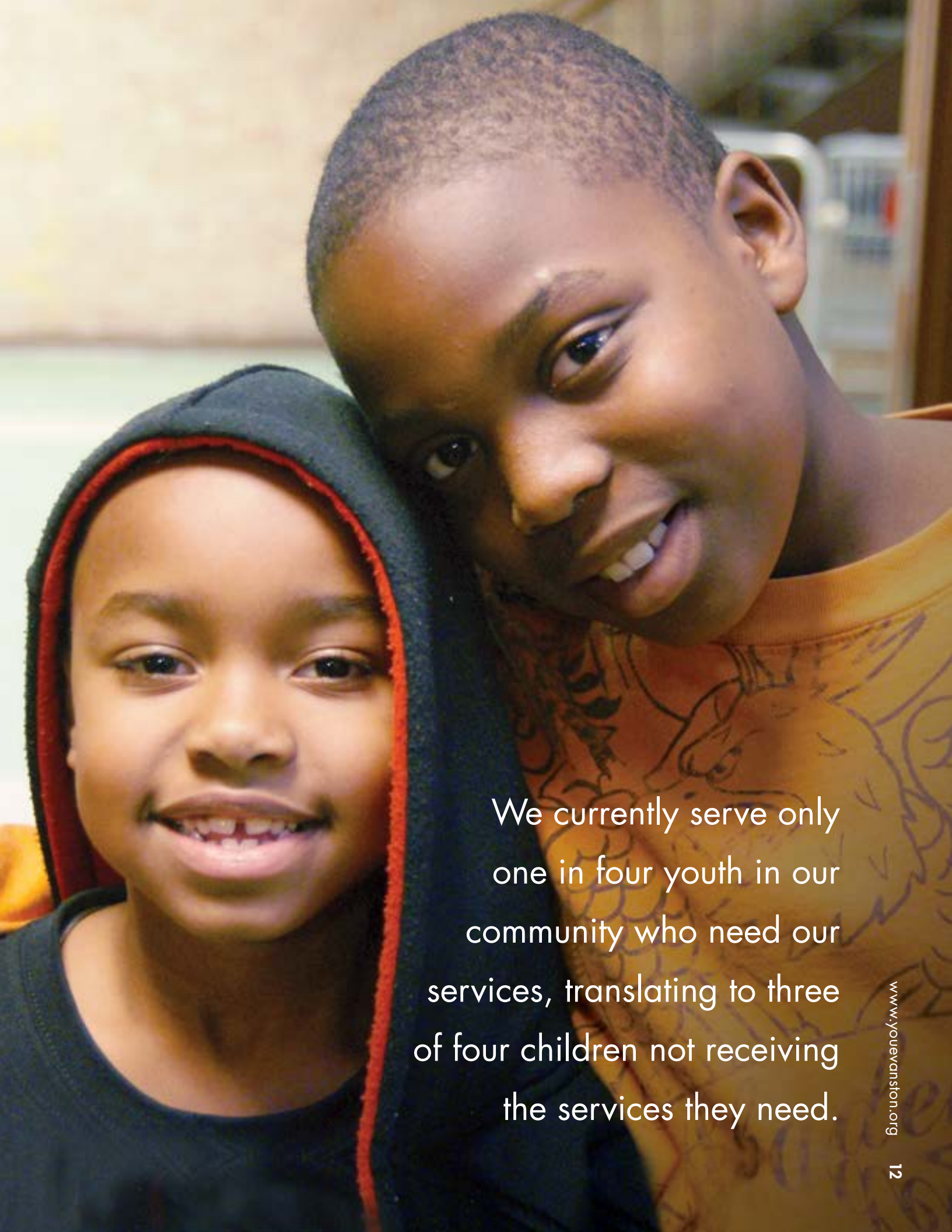
Too many young adults in our community are disconnected from education and employment. We seek to employ outreach workers who will re-engage these young adults and connect them with mentors, education, and employment, so that they can effectively leave the streets and build productive futures.

Y.O.U. MOVING FORWARD (CONT.)

6. EXPANDING LIFE SKILLS ENRICHMENT

We seek to grow our life skills curriculum, helping our youth to develop their leadership and decision-making skills and to become passionately excited about their own futures. Research consistently indicates that life skills development in youth prevents violence, enhances critical social-emotional development, and promotes academic success.

LIFE SKILLS AREA	Y.O.U.'S PLAN OF ACTION
Civic leadership and advocacy	We will engage youth around the nuances of social justice issues and their own empowerment.
Leadership development	We will continue to develop programs, like our Youth Entrepreneurship Summer (YES!) Camp, that provide youth with opportunities to grow as leaders.
Sexual education	We will implement a sexual health curriculum at all afterschool and summer sites and develop partnerships with health institutions, schools, and parents.
LGBTQQA support	We will develop curriculum and support groups to effectively support youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning and their allies.



We currently serve only one in four youth in our community who need our services, translating to three of four children not receiving the services they need.

“Our research suggests that promoting and nurturing positive characteristics during the teenage years is a promising way to improve long-term health and reduce risky behavior.

Organizations like Y.O.U. that take a positive, strengths-based approach to youth development are making a difference that can last a lifetime.”

Lindsay Till-Hoyt
Institute for Policy Research
Northwestern University



