

Youth Development Executives of King County

2020 – 2023 Strategic Directions

9/25/2020 Final Approved



Strategic Planning Background

In fall 2019 – winter 2020, YDEKC undertook an iterative strategic planning process, engaging with our members, our advisory committees (Advisory Board; Advocacy Committee; Whole Child, Whole Day Steering Committee) and interviewed partner organizations to help us to refine our mission, our approach, and the strategic directions we will pursue over the next few years. As we were completing the strategic planning process, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, allowing us to test out some of our assumptions about our future; then in late May and into June we heard the resounding call for stepping into an Antiracist future that ensures Black Lives Matter and centers the voices and needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Now, in the summer of 2020 we are looking forward to embarking on the next decade of our journey to ensure young people thrive. This document refines our identity, clarifies our beliefs, and lays out our intentions – our strategic directions – for the next several years.

YDEKC Identity Statement

Tagline:

Thriving leaders. Thriving organizations. Thriving youth.

Mission:

YDEKC connects, strengthens and amplifies the leaders of youth serving organizations so that all Black, Indigenous and youth of color thrive.

Who We Are:

YDEKC is a diverse coalition of youth-serving community based and nonprofit organizations across King County. With a focus on equity, our members embrace a youth development approach to support BIPOC young people to reach the future they envision. Our members partner with schools, communities, and families, to ensure every young person has what they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

YDEKC strives to center antiracist policies and practices in our work to ensure that leaders at every organizational level have opportunities to strengthen their skills and peer networks to advance along their own pathway. We also work to strengthen the youth development field through advocacy and awareness raising of the critical work that our sector does to build the ecosystem of supports young people need to thrive.

Geographic Focus:

Our work is focused on supporting young people — especially children and youth of color — in King County, Washington, and in partnership with mission-aligned partners across the region, state and country.

We are committed to Antiracism and Racial Equity:

Racial equity is a result of antiracist policies, practices, and actions. We are committed to building a society where race is not a predictor of one's success. We must address racism and racial inequities in our own organizations and institutions while also working for the policies, programs, and systems in other sectors that will lead to optimum outcomes for all. Racial equity work addresses root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. As a coalition of youth- serving organizations working to support young people to thrive, we must be explicit and committed to centering Black, Indigenous and People of Color in our programs and activities – the leaders among us, and the young people we serve.

We Believe in a Youth Development Approach:

Applying a youth development approach improves experiences for young people in all types of youth programs from expanded learning and afterschool programs to behavioral health to supporting young people experiencing homelessness. The tenets of a youth development approach also improve experiences for adults. We strive to apply this approach in our own programming and offerings to our members, internally with our own staff team, and encourage our members to do the same. Based on a synthesis of decades of youth development field building, we define a youth development approach as one that:

- Creates identity-safe learning spaces, that value diversity and ensure both physical and psychological safety. (*"I can thrive because I can be me here and I feel safe."*)
- Centers positive and supportive relationships. (*"I can thrive because I have a trusted adult to go to, no matter what."*)
- Promotes a sense of belonging for all participants and honors their communities, backgrounds, and stories. (*"I can thrive because I belong here and feel valued because of who I am."*)
- Provides opportunities for skill building that are engaging, challenging, and responsive to a youth's strengths, needs, and interests. (*"I can thrive because I am being met where I am and given the tools to build from there."*)
- Encourages the agency of participants through voice, choice, and leadership opportunities. (*"I can thrive because my ideas matter and I can be a leader."*)

Our Learning Approach:

Thriving organizations are continually learning. YDEKC's work focuses on relationships and learning in community with peers, sharing from experience and gaining support from others doing similar work. We intentionally bring together people that are diverse in terms of race and other aspects of our identities and who have different lived experiences and perspectives. Building on our youth development approach and what we know about adult learning, we provide:

- **Interactive & Engaging Programming:** Whether in person or virtual, we encourage collaborative learning by creating a welcoming space, building community, facilitating small and large group discussion, and incorporating hands-on activities and opportunities for participants to apply their learning whenever possible.
- **Highlighting Bright Spots:** Regardless of whether the learning experience is geared towards a cross-sector audience or solely our members, we seek to highlight and elevate the diversity of local practices, people, and organizations that are part of our membership.
- **Tools & Resources:** We share practical, adaptable tools from our toolkits and community resources through multiple channels: newsletters, online library, social media, webinars, and in-person convenings. Participants strengthen their programs, organizations, and partnerships by applying recommended practices, how-to checklists, planning documents, and more. This responds to the various learning styles and access needs of our members.
- **Adaptive Skill Building:** Our activities provide support for the less-technical side of youth-focused nonprofit leadership including strengthening partnerships, deepening awareness and action around racial equity and advocating for your mission. We actively partner with other capacity builders that support IT, fiscal management and development, legal, and other technical skills to ensure organizations can thrive.

What We Do:

Our programmatic strategies for 2020 – 2023 will build on YDEKC's past successes and competitive advantages, ensuring program direction aligns with member interests and field-level needs and opportunities.

1. **We advocate for durable, equitable and sustainable funding for the youth development sector.** Thriving organizations are fully funded to ensure living wage jobs for their employees, sufficient and updated infrastructure (space, technology, and materials), and the full cost of doing business as a not-for-profit. We advocate to ensure a diverse range of youth-serving nonprofits have the infrastructure and resources needed to provide high quality, identity affirming, strengths-based supports for young people.

How do we advocate?

- We engage members in determining our annual policy agenda.
- We inform and catalyze our members and the broader community to take action on priority issues.
- We represent member interests at various coalition tables and directly to public officials and other decision makers.

2. We build trust and collaboration between organizations and across sectors. Thriving organizations collaborate with others to support more seamless and supportive experiences for young people, contributing to the ecosystem of supports that children and youth need.

How do we build trust and partnerships?

- We convene and participate in cross-sector collaboratives to support better integration and alignment of equity-focused efforts.
- We offer trainings and tools around building more authentic partnerships between youth-serving organizations and schools.
- We connect organizations and leaders to one another to build a community of leaders who feel supported, seen, and inspired.

3. We support social and emotional well-being for adults and the young people they serve. Thriving organizations create a sense of well-being and belonging, a culture of respect, and room for innovation and creativity for their staff members so that they can provide the same for the young people they serve.

How do we support social and emotional well-being?

- We offer affinity groups and communities of practice that integrate strategies that support social and emotional well-being and racial equity.
- We provide trainings, convenings, and symposia that highlight and connect organizations and leaders doing the work to build whole child, whole day ecosystems and amplify these stories through social media.
- We participate in cross-sector workgroups focused on the implementation of social and emotional learning in K-12 and other youth-focused systems.

4. We are led by our members, and support them to be led by the people they serve. Thriving organizations are led by the people they serve, recognizing that the people closest to an issue can imagine the best possibilities and pathways forward.

How do we do this?

- Our Advisory Board and Committees are made up of our members — diverse leaders of our membership organizations — who guide our strategies and ensure we are representing the breadth of our membership.
- We support our members to learn from one another in engaging with young people and ensuring that young people have voice and leadership opportunities within their organizations.
- We work in partnership with our members to activate the young people they serve in informing needed policy changes.

Next Steps:

Specific operating plans within each of our strategic directions will be created over the next months as we continue to seek the resources and partnerships necessary to implement our plans, shift operations as needed, and amplify work that is already well aligned with our intentions and clarified strategic directions.