

2022–2025
STRATEGIC PLAN

DEAR FRIENDS,

It is an honor and a joy to share Youth & Opportunity United's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

During the unprecedented period of living and serving youth and families through a pandemic, Y.O.U. continued to look forward and plan. We are an organization that was poised to respond to the dual crises of a global health pandemic and heightened attention to our country's deep and long-standing racial injustices. Y.O.U.'s holistic approach, responsive nature, school partnerships, commitment to centering those who have been marginalized, and mental health services put us in just the right position to support youth during such challenging times.

While we have been reminded over the past few years that we cannot predict the future, Y.O.U. also has been reminded of our ability to make a powerful impact in our community. Thanks to the deep and abiding investments of our committed supporters, Y.O.U. is poised to both deepen and widen our impact in the coming years. This plan sets the path for Y.O.U. to build this future on a foundation of 50 years of service to youth in our community. Y.O.U. intends to further step into our role as a youth services leader. We commit to sharing our

impact with our stakeholders and ensuring our program models are sustainable and ready for growth.

Our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan was built on a strong foundation of staff input and stakeholder engagement. It began with the development of our Theory of Change, which details the problem Y.O.U. is working to address, our specific strategies and activities, and the ways we expect youth to develop and grow from participating in our programs and services. Our planning did not change who we are. It did, however, allow us to re-articulate and affirm our work for the current times—and for the future. As we always have, we will need the support of our dedicated community to make our work and impact in the future possible.

On behalf of the thousands of youth Y.O.U. will serve under the guidance of this plan, we thank you for your investment in Y.O.U. and our future.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Letitia Mann".

Letitia Mann

President, Board of Directors

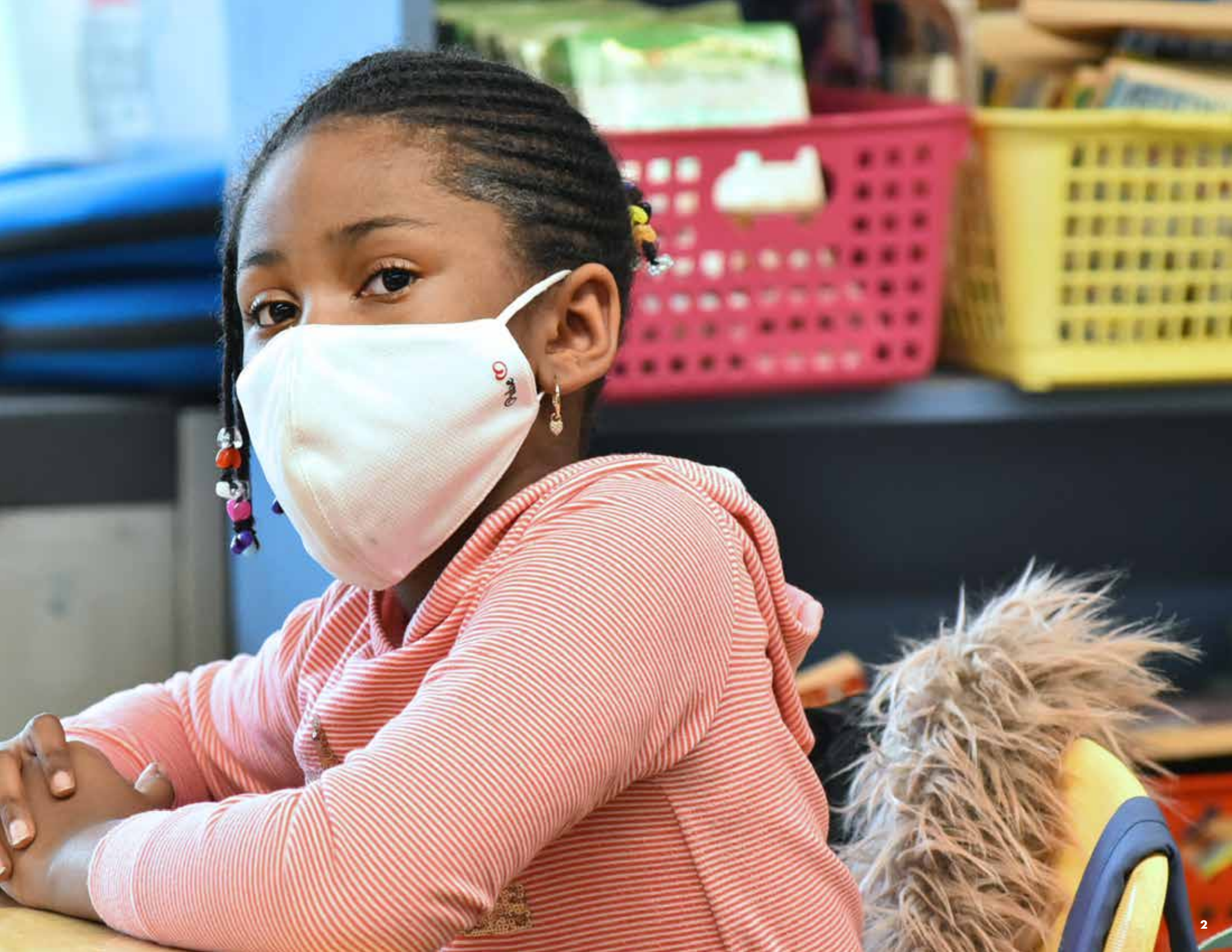


A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C. Lynch".

Craig Lynch

Chief Executive Officer





OUR JOURNEY

2020

○ MARCH

**COVID shutdown;
virtual programs
and services
begin**

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM REIMAGINING

EQUITY CONSULTANCY

**Craig Lynch
begins as
Y.O.U.'s 4th
CEO**

○ JULY

High School Program Reimagining with Corey Winchester Spring 2019

Y.O.U.'s High School Team engaged in a process under the guidance of Evanston Township High School teacher, Golden Apple Winner, and Northwestern Learning Sciences PhD student Corey Winchester to create program design principles based on core values. These principles and values became a core element of Y.O.U.'s Theory of Change.

Equity Consultancy with Onward

Fall 2019–Spring 2021

Y.O.U. engaged with the equity organization Onward to conduct an organization-wide assessment; recommend organizational changes to advance equity within programming, culture, staff, and board; deliver customized learning experiences and coaching; and support change implementation. These intersectional diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist principles are central to our Theory of Change and Strategic Plan.



Theory of Change Development Fall 2020–Winter 2021

Y.O.U.'s Theory of Change was developed through a participatory process with Y.O.U. staff members from across the organization. Staff worked together to clarify, articulate, and build consensus around program goals and anticipated outcomes. This process was designed and led by consultant Eric Brown, a program evaluator and PhD candidate at Northwestern's School of Education and Social Policy. Y.O.U.'s Theory of Change played a foundational role in strategic planning, specifically the fundamental clarifications of our mission, vision, and values.

Strategic Planning Spring–Fall 2021

Y.O.U. engaged Open Door Advisors to create a plan to guide the organization into our next era. Planning engaged staff, board members, and stakeholders from across the community (funders, donors, partners, schools, and municipal leaders). Strategic discussions and goal-setting sessions generated year-by-year goals and action plans across four strategic imperatives and corresponding key tactics.

CORE VALUES



RELATIONSHIPS

We seek to build trust, forge authentic connections, and operate in the spirit of true collaboration, partnership, and community.



CREATIVITY

We center and strive for organizational and individual lifelong learning and growth, innovation, aspiration, and curiosity.



BELONGING

We affirm every person's individuality and humanity, taking an intersectional approach to anti-racism and honoring all identities in ways that advance inclusion, equity, and justice.



JOY

We embrace optimism, hope, and celebration as fundamental tenets of and fuel for our work.





Y.O.U.'s mission is to promote the agency, success, and well-being of young people and their families through identity-affirming relationships, expanded learning opportunities, and resources to meet emerging needs.

CORE BELIEF

We at Y.O.U. believe that all young people deserve opportunities and spaces that embrace their whole being and support them in defining and achieving their goals.

VISION

Y.O.U. envisions a future where all structures and systems support young people in designing their own paths to success and bringing about the changes they want to see in the world.

OUR APPROACH

Y.O.U. provides academic support, social-emotional learning, and enrichments through afterschool and full-day summer programs to youth in grades 2-12 at our community's high-need schools.

We also provide community-based mental health services, including case management, counseling, and street outreach. All programs and services are at no cost to families.



Y.O.U.'S THEORY OF CHANGE

THE PROBLEM

Systemic and structural inequities lead to disproportionate access, which in turn leads to disparities in opportunity, resources, and spaces that promote well-being and success.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Y.O.U. envisions a future where all structures and systems support young people in designing their own paths to success and bringing about the changes they want to see in the world.



WE SERVE YOUTH

Centering historically marginalized and underrepresented communities.



WITH THESE STRATEGIES

- Identity-affirming relationships
- Expanded learning opportunities
- Resources to meet emerging needs



AND THESE ACTIVITIES

Academic, social, and emotional support through Out-of-School Time Programs and Community-Based Services



THIS LEADS TO

- Agency
- Social supports
- Well-being
- Social-emotional development
- Collaboration
- Life skills



STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

#1



Serve as a community hub and youth service leader through deep community relationships



OUR GOALS

Leverage Y.O.U. resources to connect community leaders and community members with each other to maximize impact

Deepen key partnerships and position Y.O.U. as a community thought leader

Convene stakeholders and strengthen ambassadors for Y.O.U.'s mission and youth needs

Measure and share Y.O.U.'s powerful impact through rigorous evaluation and broad communication



OUR GOALS

Expand community awareness and support by sharing Y.O.U.'s essential outcomes and stories of success

Infuse Our Theory of Change's system of measurement to demonstrate program efficacy and foster data-driven decision-making

Amplify program impact within present and expanded program areas

#2

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES



STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

#3



Encourage growth to further meet youth needs through a sustainable infrastructure



OUR GOALS

Optimize program focus and impact through rigorous, equitable, youth-advised measurements and evaluation

Respond to areas for expansion alongside youth and their families in the community

Accelerate creative opportunities for professional development and growth with an equity focus

Deliver high-impact programs through a culture of inclusion and transparency



OUR GOALS

Build youth development leaders who work collectively, communicate organizationally, and center youth and families

Continue to center relational and structural aspects of inclusion, equity, and belonging amongst all aspects of Y.O.U. programming and operations

Nurture and develop staff who promote and pioneer best practices

#4

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES



— AT OUR BEST, Y.O.U. IS...



A **bridge to success** for young people, particularly those historically marginalized as a result of structural racism and inequitable distribution of resources and services

A **community leader** and connector for equitable youth development



A **professional growth and development center** for staff committed to youth

Y.O.U. WILL...



Keep young people at the
center of everything

Focus on what we do well –
measure that and **do more
of it**



Understand staff as the
organization's **most critical
resource**

STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE

Coni Benitez
Abigail Butkus
Marty Cless
David Hill
Jennifer Simpson Leigh
Craig Lynch
Letitia Mann
Esmeralda Rodriguez
Clarence Weaver
Em Wilder
Aisya Williamson
Y.O.U. Youth Advisory Council

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTANT

Open Door Advisors

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**denotes 2020-2021 board
members who also engaged in
strategic planning*

