



YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES IN NASHVILLE

Information brief on youth development and opportunities in Nashville based on the report on Youth Career Exploration and Alignment Report released in May 2023

Metro Context

The past 15 years have been instrumental across various administrations in Nashville and Davidson County for building high quality systems and opportunities for young people in Nashville to access development and employment opportunities.

The Child and Youth Master Plan adopted by Mayor Dean's administration and created with wide community support in 2010 provides a holistic approach to child and youth outcomes (14 total) and includes multiple strategies in achieving those. This document centers children and youth by addressing rights to education, health, safety and family environment, as well as access to key services and opportunities that ensure well-being, proper development and high-quality life for all children and youth. While many of the goals and strategies of the plan have been met or are no longer timely, the vision and values it lays out is still relevant and still guides common work for young people across Nashville.

Since then, a number of initiatives have been set up to address the above. Most of them have been operating as public private partnerships to leverage community resources and build cohesion around shared goals and outcomes for children and youth.

Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) is one of the initiatives started by the Dean administration in 2009 and one of the strategies included in the Child and Youth Master Plan (objective 12.5). With an initial investment of \$400,000 from the Metro government, NAZA was built to coordinate after school programming and resources across the city in partnership with the school district, mayor's office, the library system and non-profits. Today, NAZA has grown into \$5.5M **citywide out-of-school time system**, a public-private partnership that funds high quality after school and summer programs for over 2500 youths per year. Over 20,000 young people in Nashville have benefited from this investment and had access to free and quality programs where they received academic support, positive relationship building, learned skills for success, have been exposed to post-secondary and career opportunities. NAZA's work have touched several other outcomes from the child and youth master plan.

Beginning in the Purcell Administration, the division of the Mayor's Office tasked with workforce development for all ages known as the Nashville Career Advancement Center began providing city-funded youth employment opportunities in addition to administering federal workforce dollars for young adults. In 2016, Mayor Megan Berry announced her vision of scaling youth employment opportunities to 10,000 youth. This vision grew out of a citywide conversation with young people and other stakeholders led by now Juvenile Court Clerk Lonnell Matthews on youth violence. Mayor Barry's administration created the Opportunity NOW initiative, administered through the Nashville Career Advancement Center, as a sweeping step forward in comprehensive, work-related out of school time offerings for the young people of Nashville. Opportunity NOW provided access to tens of thousands of private employment opportunities and directly employed over 7500 young people between 2017-2020. As the **city's system for youth careers and employment**, a public-private partnership supporting the Child and Youth Master Plan objective 3.2. Opportunity NOW (ON) offered systemic approaches and a unified platform to connect young people with employers by supporting training, onboarding, coaching and financial literacy. During those 4 years, ON directly connected young people age 14-24 to employment opportunities across sectors and helped them build important employability skills such as goal setting, responsibility, time management, decision-making, commitment, communication, teamwork, etc. ON

was moved to the Metro Action Commission during mayor Cooper's administration and renamed into Power Youth. Currently, PY facilitates the employment of about 800 youth annually.

Metro Nashville schools have been providing after school and youth employment programs mostly funded through federal grants. MNPS has piloted a work-based learning program for about 200 young people and is committed to expanding the opportunity to all eligible students in the district.

Metro Parks, Metro Arts and other departments have been actively involved in providing high quality youth development and employment opportunities both through after school and youth development programs in partnership with NAZA and Opportunity NOW (currently Power Youth/Metro Action Commission).

In addition, Nashville's rich tapestry of nonprofit groups also have been providing both after school and summer programs of varying sizes and scales throughout the city. Many of these nonprofits as well as Metro staff running youth-serving programming benefit from the youth worker professional development and quality improvement trainings and initiatives that NAZA provides as part of its commitment to quality improvement and professional action of the youth-development field in Nashville.

In 2020-2023, under mayor Cooper's administration, a group of public-private partners (over 25 leaders) came together under the leadership of Council Member Thom Druffel to create a business plan for youth career exploration and alignment, and opportunities to advocate for expansion of the those for young people.

The Current State of Youth Initiatives in the City

Recognizing that the city has positioned itself well in supporting multiple initiatives that target young people of different ages, we acknowledge that these initiatives operate under different Metro departments/commissions. The city has exceptional expertise in youth development and youth employment that can mobilize more resources and help scale the existing initiatives.

Currently, the following are the estimated number of youths that benefit from the publicly funded programs within Metro departments¹:

¹ Please note that Metro Parks and Metro Arts data is not included in this and may duplicate some of these numbers where programs are offered in partnership with NAZA and MAC

Summary of current youth development/employment agency functions by age group:

	10-14	15-18	19-24	Age Group	10-14	15-18	19-24	
Coordination	NAZA	MNPS Power Youth	Power Youth	Power Youth		850		850
Administration	NAZA	MNPS Power Youth	Power Youth	MNPS		200		200
Case Management		MNPS Power Youth	Power Youth	NAZA	2,500			2,500

Davidson County youth employment data from Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

Age Range	Population	Source
Ages 10-14	38572	Census
Ages 15-24	88657	Census
Employment		
16-19	38.6%	Census
20-24	72.6%	Census

Considerations for the Future

Given that:

- the city of Nashville has initiated and sustained several youth initiatives over past 15 years,
- the city enjoys great interest from its private partners and community members to support young people,
- Nashville has a strong and diversified economic base with a wide range of robust and thriving industry sectors including health care, technology, hospitality, manufacturing, logistics, and skilled trades,
- holistic approach to youth development is a priority for the city as per the Child and Youth Master Plan,
- there are many nonprofit and other community organizations that provide learning, development and employment opportunities for young people,
- there are many other sources that support education and youth development in the city,

The city government understands the importance of continuity and consistency of the youth development and youth career exploration and employment initiatives;

The city government acknowledges that the city has built a youth systems that need to be sustained and expanded to increase equitable access for youth;

² Note that NAZA-funded programs are afterschool programs and not youth employment, but focus skill building and career exploration activities for middle school youth.

³ Please note that number of employed youth through MAC includes only the number that have been placed to work through the city program. Many young people are employed directly by employers. Refer to Chamber data above for better understanding.

The city government acknowledges that a landscape analysis would be helpful to understand the true demand and supply for youth employment opportunities in the city.

The city government acknowledges the need for an improved governance and coordination of all public and private initiatives to maximize the access and outcomes for youth.