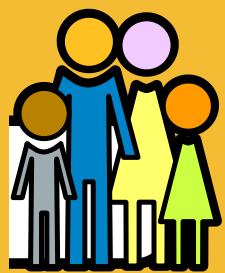


# HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUNG ADULTS

## AYPF STUDY TOUR "AHA" MOMENTS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

These key takeaways were developed from a closing activity in which participants were asked to write down their highlights from the study tour



### THEME 1: YOUTH VOICE



"The most impactful for me was when "Papa" received his piece of art that said Legacy. It was so incredibly powerful to see him and think about all he's done to improve as a father, worker, etc."

"Youth voice + innovation and starting small."

"When we listen to youth's voice coupled with best practices and research we tend to get the best results or success for that individual. The data has to be used in an intentional way to help."



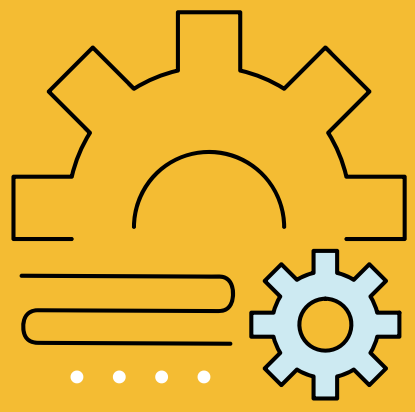
"What clicked while visiting all the programs was how the youth's own ideas shaped the direction of the program and was a big part of the success they all had. As a policymaker, it's hard to be humble and think about the best ideas actually coming from the very people you are trying to serve when they aren't able to lift themselves up. I think it's a new component of true empowerment for me."

"Just in the discussion we had, the similar theme of how important a holistic approach is to get youth more involved in policy seeing as our biases or overcompensation of what we think we know might not be the best or most informed decision."



"Policymakers are supposed to be a voice for the people they serve, and the concept of youth voice in policy will be a new lens."

"Increasing awareness about what works for young people by hearing from youth themselves."



# THEME 2: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES + ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS



"Workforce opportunities, apprenticeship programs, and successful wraparounds are key components of programs. The more youth can be the drivers."



"2Gen Childcare Center and Mentors/Peer Mentorship."



"Hearing UTEC describe how an in-depth knowledge of the Lowell/Haverhill/Lawrence community is integral to their success."



"Social enterprises providing a product that can be marketed to businesses, which would provide incentives and jobs etc."



"Skill development is key! It enables choice, freedom, independence, self-reliance, and control."



"Earned income. Kids need some money in their pockets."



"Transitional Coaches/Street Workers [at UTEC]."



"Sparking youth creativity through arts."



"Social enterprises and supports."



"Transition Coaches and youth/family voice."



# THEME 3: SYSTEMIC BARRIERS



.....  
“After the Rigged game\*, I realized how difficult it was to imagine a world where every choice could lead you astray—made me recognize my privilege.”  
.....



.....  
“What are the systems that are getting in the way? And how can federal legislation move them closer together?”  
.....



.....  
“During the game when we were challenged to recognize the enormous talents, gifts, and skills youth we are talking about have.”  
.....



.....  
"A moment that spoke to me was when Blanca shared her story about the hardships faced after aging out of foster care, and how she leveraged that story to advance legislative change in Rhode Island."  
.....



.....  
"Give communities the flexibility and autonomy to pursue solutions that work for them—lessen federal dictating in these spaces."  
.....

## \*ABOUT THE RIGGED GAME

Derived from real stories shared by actual students, “Rigged” is a choose-your-own-adventure-style game designed to represent the impossible tradeoffs that pit these young people's dreams, desires, and responsibilities against the wants and needs of the various adults placed in their lives to support them through difficult transitions.

"Rigged" illustrates the various challenges students experience daily and underscores the need for coherent and comprehensive systems that empower students to advocate for themselves and give the adults in their lives the resources they need to serve them well.

# ACTION STEPS

Participants committed to strengthening their work by completing the following upon their return:



**“Looking forward to working with all these staffers on child welfare issues, after experiencing this trip or seeing how different models or programs work for different populations. How we can translate that and scale it to work on federal level, but take into account the different needs of the community.”**



**“Creating a council on how do we get authentic youth and family voice.”**



**“Follow up with Tito from UTEC to get a better idea of how TC’s (transitional coaches) are structured and function to support young people.”**



**“I’m going back asking questions on what are we doing from a state level to impact racial disparity. How intentional are we with continuum of care?”**



**“Sharing the work of the American Youth Policy Forum.”**



**“Provide tools and examples to add practicality to policy decisions.”**



**“Grounding all of my thinking in the real stories and experiences of these youth. Considering how my policy ideas and actions will trickle down to help (or harm) the people we met.”**



**“Center youth voice/voices of those who are impacted in policy decisions.”**



**“Find ways to facilitate more JJ/Ed collaborations by sharing best practices.”**



**“When I go back to DC, I commit to connecting with [state] leaders in the foster care and juvenile justice spaces and connecting them with leaders we met on this trip. I don’t think [the state my member represents] raised the foster care age yet.”**



**“Partner with AYPF to do a study tour.”**



**“Continue to connect youth and family voice to policy.”**



**“Incorporate support services (ie: career counseling) into larger reauthorization bill.”**



**“Push youth voice locally.”**