



My Brother's Keeper  
Community & Stakeholder  
Planning Process:  
Initial Recommendations

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I N S T I T U T E



My Brother's Keeper Community & Stakeholder Planning Process:  
Initial Recommendations

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Authors' Note, Acknowledgement, and Disclaimer

This report and set of recommendations was prepared at the request of the Sprout Fund on behalf of My Brother's Keeper, a partnership between the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, and multiple community partners from across the region. The Heinz Endowments generously funded the project. The goal was to identify gaps in out-of-school youth programming, attributes of ideal programmatic activities that achieve MBK's stated goals, existing resources that could be marshalled for this effort, and local and national best practices that are suitable for replication or scaling.

This report contains the findings of an intensive youth-led community engagement process across Allegheny County described herein. The summaries and conclusions reflect the findings of this process. The opinions or points of view expressed represent a consensus of the authors and are presented for informational purposes to expand the conversations around improving out-of-school experiences and opportunities for the targeted population. Opinions and recommendations do not necessarily represent or constitute approval, adoption or endorsement by My Brother's Keeper, the Heinz Endowments, or the facilitators of the respective sessions.

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UrbanKind Institute is a research driven think and do tank dedicated to advancing practices, policies, and programs that are kind to urban people and environments.

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## Community & Stakeholder Planning Process: Initial Recommendations

In the fall of 2016, UrbanKind Institute facilitated conversations among and between young men, service providers, and others about out-of-school programming. This included seven public planning sessions in venues across Allegheny County. This report details the process and participation of those meetings, captures major and recurring themes that arose, and offers a set of recommendations to guide the Sprout Fund and others in supporting programs that seek to close the opportunity gap for youth in Pittsburgh.

### Community & Stakeholder Planning Process

In October and November of 2016, UrbanKind Institute facilitated seven meetings in locations across Allegheny County. The first three meetings (Phase 1) took place in McKeesport, Larimer (East End), and Sheridan (West Side). Between eight and 15 young men took part in each session. Service providers, parents, funders, community members, and others sat as “witnesses” to these discussions and had the opportunity for input and questioning. The idea was that the witnesses were there to see, listen, and learn from the participating young men. UrbanKind Institute then recruited a cohort of nine young men from the participants of these sessions. We trained the young men and gave each of them a stipend to facilitate the next three meetings (Phase 2) and keep a journal of their experience.

During the Phase 2 meetings in Knoxville (Hilltop) and Wilksburg, the young men had the chance to lead small group discussions with service providers about challenges, successes, and the use of technology in their programming and

outreach. At the Phase 2 meeting in Perry Hilltop (North Side), a program officer from the Buhl Foundation led a roundtable discussion with eight young men to recap what they discussed and learned in earlier sessions. The program officer also talked with the young men about the role of philanthropy and the challenging decisions that a program officer must consider when recommending programs for funding. The final meeting, the report out to the community, was held in Crawford Roberts in the Hill District. This session featured a panel discussion that included the nine young facilitators speaking in front of an audience of about 35 service providers, community members, and funders. One of the youth facilitators led the panel. The event concluded with a broader discussion and question & answer session with the audience.

Throughout the community and stakeholder planning process, participants were recruited through word-of-mouth, telephone, email, Facebook, and, to a lesser extent, flyers. UrbanKind staff filmed and photographed the events and took notes. We designed a one-page questionnaire, which service providers completed in Phase 2. We composed brief summaries of the events after viewing the footage, notes, and questionnaires (when applicable). The summaries and questionnaires are included in the Appendix. More details on event dates, locations, and participants are also available in the Appendix.

### Results

UrbanKind Institute identified several major and recurring themes that arose from the discussions, particularly as they relate to needs and gaps in out-of-school youth

programming, as well as to best practices and attributes of ideal programmatic activities that achieve the goals of the My Brother's Keeper Initiative (MBK).

### Needs and Gaps in Out-of-School Programming

The young men were clear about the need for better mentorship, more hands-on learning, a wider variety of program offerings, and exposure to life skills training. The participants agreed that they would like to see more young men to whom they can relate, socially and culturally, engaged as mentors and leaders of programs. They emphasized an interest in programming that offers action-oriented, hands-on experiences, including those that allow them to affect change in their own neighborhoods/cities. They expressed a desire to (possibly) receive recognition for their work. They would like to see more diversity in the programs, especially offerings in creative expression, and visual and graphic arts. They would also like opportunities to learn practical skills that they are not taught elsewhere, such as budgeting, tying a tie, changing a tire, and building a website, to name a few.

The young men were critical of traditional methods of program design and recruitment. The typical process of program design lacks the crucial elements of relationship-building and listening to young men first. The participants sought an approach that allows youth to express themselves and their needs rather than ideas/activities being imposed on them. Their thoughts on recruitment and advertising reiterate the importance of relationship-building. They described flyers as ineffective and thought that widespread use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat), texts, emails, or in-person invitations *from other young*

*people* would be a more effective way of advertising programs and opportunities. They also recognized that using social media as a recruitment or program information strategy is not without its challenges; the person posting or sharing the information must be popular enough to have a dense network of followers and credible to youth. The young men also said that sharing success stories might encourage participation.

In their conversations with youth, service providers described funding as their greatest challenge to offering better programs. Many of the service providers recognize that they could better serve youth if they collaborated with organizations that offered complimentary services, but they believe that current funding structures and RFPs tend to encourage competition and not collaboration. Additionally, small community-based organizations (CBOs) have a difficult time securing funding to pursue long-term goals. They are usually overwhelmed by running current programs and are not able to expand their organizational capacity to pursue other funds or invest in program quality improvement. Long-term funding is also problematic. On the one hand, CBOs are encouraged to focus on a narrow mission of service and discouraged from "chasing money" to run programs that fall outside of their mission or that lie outside of their area of expertise. On the other hand, funders' priorities change, forcing service providers to adapt or go under.

Service providers also reported that programs are not always easy to get to in terms of transportation, nor found in places where youth feel comfortable and safe. Few programs offer transportation and public transportation is expensive and inefficient. Additionally, the perception of violence in

some areas of the city discourages participation from youth from outside of the area.

Lastly, most of the young men had a limited understanding of STEM education or digital badges. Many service providers use social media for outreach and to highlight accomplishments, but providers vary in the extent to which they incorporate digital, information, and/or advanced electronic technologies in their programming. CBOs are in the best position and are the most likely to be able to provide the relationships and mentoring opportunities that the process revealed as important to success. Yet, few CBOs have personnel with the skillsets and technical backgrounds to offer programs that provide experiences with emerging digital and information technologies. Even larger and well-funded tech programs rarely offered the type of ongoing programming that was necessary (1) to build the types of personal relationships that the young men desired and (2) to offer an in-depth tech experience that provided enough exposure for the participants to develop skills and interests. Two exceptions include 1Hood Media and Steeltown Entertainment Project's Youth and Media programs. Others are less desirable because their terms (ten weeks, or a Summer Learn & Earn experience) only give exposure. Participants do not have enough time to build relationships with staff and learn enough about the technologies to decide which aspect of it they like.

#### Best Practices & Ideal Programmatic Activities

The young men and service providers alike offered insight into best practices and attributes of programmatic activities that achieve MBK's stated goals, all of which are suitable for replication or scaling.

Quality elements that promote long term success include:

- Partnerships with schools
- Consistency and care
- Clear expectations
- Peer and near-peer mentoring
- Accessibility
- Continuum of program services
- Year-round programming
- Opportunities to stay connected
- Hands-on activities with real world applications
- Youth input

While it is difficult to include each of these elements, the best programs have some combination of most of them.

#### Partnerships with schools

Schools host or serve as partners with many of the best programs. In addition to giving a sense of legitimacy, schools often offer secure spaces and transportation options. All three of these elements ranked high when we asked young men to describe desirable elements in program design. Still, excellent programs exist outside of formal school buildings.

#### Consistency and care

It is unlikely to be a surprise to anyone that youth participants want to feel like program staff care about them as individuals. We heard repeatedly that youth want relationships with caring and supportive adults. But relationships and trust take time to build, which is why participants want programs in which they can take part over several years and where there is little turnover of staff from year to year. Service providers echoed this sentiment when they said that programs that retain participants are spaces where kids feel loved and listened to, and where they feel a sense of belonging and stability.

### **Clear expectations**

Some participants suggested that youth are best served when program expectations are communicated and understood. Youth should know what is expected of them in terms of attendance and participation, for example. Youth should also know what a program can and cannot offer them (skills, experiences, etc.) so that they can make informed decisions about participation.

### **Peer and near-peer mentoring**

It is important to have someone to whom the participants can relate, socially and culturally, and preferably someone slightly older. Peer and near-peer mentoring offer an added benefit: when young people are responsible for another person's success in a program, they learn valuable lessons in leadership and other beneficial social and professional skills.

### **Accessibility**

Accessibility is crucial for success and consistent attendance. Accessibility typically refers to being easily reached, entered, or used by all potential participants. Beyond physical barriers to access that may include stairs or narrow entryways, programs must also be accessible via public transportation or geographically proximate to participants. Other barriers to accessibility include costs, registration requirements (e.g., residency, parental consent, school enrollment), and age limits.

### **Continuum of program services**

Program participants' needs are best met when programs can offer a continuum of services to choose from, go between, or grow into. For example, The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh's Tech U offers a suite of programs for middle through high school, allowing students to gain exposure, explore interests in digital technology fields, and

make professional connections through internships and site visits.

### **Year-round programming**

Some of the participants felt that programs should keep young people busy, safe, and "off the streets." Year-round programming is beneficial not just because of the potential for building long-term relationships with staff and other participants, but because it provides youth with something to do during the summer *and* after school during the rest of the year. Further, a year-round program can offer young people more in-depth learning experiences than a seasonal or temporary program.

### **Opportunity to stay connected**

When youth "age out" of a program, the program and the former participants miss an ideal skill-building and mentorship opportunity. By allowing youth to stay connected to a program over multiple years with increasing challenges and responsibilities, youth can continue to rely on those relationships, serve as mentors to young men just entering the program, and help to shape future programming.

### **Hands-on activities**

Programs that engage participants in hands-on, experiential learning are most attractive to the young men, many of whom felt that they learn best this way. Such learning would ideally focus on life skills and/or college and career preparation. The non-profit organization Omicelo Cares' DreamOn Festival is an excellent example of experiential learning. Youth participants plan, organize, and run an annual two-day music and ice cream festival in Market Square. Students learn to apply business and organizational skills to make profits and help their community.

## Youth Input

Young men seek to be more engaged in program design and to have opportunities to shape programs based on what they need and find relevant. Instead of a “one-size-fits all” approach to program design, some youth participants advocated for more personalization, including elements like developing individual goals, meeting youth where they are, or engaging in an assessment process when youth begin a new program.

## Recommendations

Based on the information generated during the MBK Community & Stakeholder Planning Process, UrbanKind Institute suggests several recommendations for the Sprout Fund and others to consider as they work to narrow the opportunity gap for youth in Pittsburgh. The recommendations, detailed below, are: support mentorship efforts; support more effective program outreach; incorporate life skills and incentives into youth training; bridge the gap between technology and mentorship; and leverage existing resources.

### Support Mentorship Efforts

We recommend that programs receive more support in their efforts to develop and retain mentors for participants. While recognizing that the demand for mentors for youth will always exceed the supply of willing mentors, our challenge is to reconsider the pool of mentors. As described above, young men value and seek mentoring relationships, especially other young men to whom they can relate, socially and culturally. Funders should recognize mentorship as fundamental to the success of any program, not just those that are focused solely on mentoring. To that end, funders could:

- Offer stipends to existing programs to provide financial incentives for former or older participants to serve as regular mentors
- Challenge current and potential grantees to work with existing mentoring organizations to develop new models of in-program mentorship

### Support More Effective Program Outreach

We recommend that programs be supported and encouraged in their efforts to improve outreach, which includes engagement and recruitment. Service providers need to move away from traditional methods like flyers, and toward more youth-friendly approaches like social media, text messaging, emails, and peer-to-peer invitations. They need to take advantage of schools and libraries as places to engage in meaningful outreach and recruitment, not just places to post flyers. To strengthen outreach efforts funders could:

- Require applicants to describe their approach and process of outreach and recruitment
- Consider outreach methods as a factor in proposal selection
- Fund “youth councils” to advise existing and developing programs on their outreach (among other things), if the program has the capacity to continue using suggested methods

### Incorporate Life Skills and Incentives into Youth Training

We recommend that youth training incorporates life skills and incentives. Many of the young men expressed an interest in learning a variety of life skills that are not typically taught at school, anything from fixing a tire to short and long-term budgeting. Additionally, several participants said that financial incentives are the most

successful way to get youth to participate in training programs. To make youth training programs more relevant and attractive, funders can:

- Support hands-on life skills workshops at existing organizations
- Offer catalytic grants to new organizations that seek to teach life-skills
- Support training programs that offer financial incentives for participants or provide enough funds to programs that wish to offer incentives

### Bridge the Gap between Technology and Mentorship

As previously described, organizations and programs that are most able to provide the mentoring relationships that youth seek are not always the same as those most able to offer ongoing opportunities in digital information and technology, etc. Thinking about technology and mentorship in tandem raises questions about the benefits and attractiveness (to youth) of short-term technology programs. Funders can help bridge the gap between technology and mentorship if they:

- Support better mentoring in programs that are strong in technology programming
- Boost the technology capacity and offerings of existing programs where youth trust and relate to staff
- Support year-round programming, which can achieve stronger relationships *and* more in-depth learning

### Leverage Existing Resources

We recommend that funders work with local organizations to close the accessibility gap to top-notch STEAM opportunities in

programs offered by local universities and museums. In addition to programs for middle and high school students like Project SEED at Duquesne University, Investing Now at the University of Pittsburgh, Penn State's Summer Experience in Earth and Mineral Sciences (SEEMS), and the programs of the Gelfand Center at Carnegie Mellon University, the Carnegie Museums and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts provide a wide range of intensive and high quality learning experiences. Still, these programs are inaccessible to MBK's target population. Costs, space limitations, transportation, promotions/ marketing, and relationships with community organizations and schools act as barriers to participation. To leverage the relationships that some CBOs have with youth to make connections with high-quality and high-impact STEAM programs, funders could:

- Establish a fund for scholarships to students from families with low incomes to attend enrichment courses and programs offered by local universities and museums
- Support the creation of a resource position that could serve as added capacity in service of several organizations. This person could work to connect youth participants to external programs
- Support a network of inter-neighborhood activities bus transportation for program participants

## Conclusions

One of the strongest themes arising from the MBK Community & Stakeholder Planning Process was the crucial role of mentorship in youth programming. It appears that even the most relevant, well-funded programs, including those programs

on digital information and technology, will not succeed in reaching young men or keeping participants if the youth cannot relate to or trust the staff, or if the recruitment consists only of an impersonal flyer. The challenge for the Sprout Fund and others will be to support this relationship-building while at the same time addressing the demand for programmatic content that provides relevant training and life skills education.

Going forward, the Sprout Fund and other funders will be most successful in helping to close the opportunity gap for youth in the region if we work to better understand additional challenges that are related but outside of the scope of this engagement. Two questions remain.

1. How do we understand the role of quality in a program and how do we promote quality improvements?

Programs are iterative and provide opportunities for learning; they should be subjected to a quality improvement process. It seems that much of philanthropy's approach has been to "throw money" at the problem. This has not worked. New funding strategies should connect quality improvement assessments with investments in targeted solutions with evidence-based outcomes.

2. How do we target funding to areas of the Pittsburgh region where youth are?

Some neighborhoods have more to offer youth than others. Particularly in neighborhoods in the east, there are more program spaces than there are youth. In

other areas, like the south hilltop neighborhoods, there are few programs and few options for youth. Additionally, our region's demographics continue to change. Many African-Americans are moving out of the city and into outlying areas where homes are more affordable. These areas are far removed from frequent public transportation and many social services. Understanding existing offerings and lack thereof—particularly for catalytic grant-making—could help to improve outcomes in those neighborhoods that are underserved.

Another way to approach the concept of "underserved" is to think about the special needs and circumstances of new immigrants in the Pittsburgh region. Populations from Central America, East Africa, and South Central Asia are growing in the region. They bring language and cultural barriers to a city that is notoriously hostile and un-welcoming to non-European populations. Are current programs reaching young men in these populations? And what special challenges that these groups face might act as barriers to MBK goals?

Finally, the young men who took part in the MBK process enjoyed the experience of working together, sharing ideas, and becoming facilitators. They are eager to keep working together and build on the momentum that was clear at the final report out event. Their group and others like them are well-prepared to advise and offer input on existing and developing programs geared toward young men.

## Appendix

### Event Details

	Location	Address	Date and Time
<b>Phase 1</b>	McKeesport Area HS (McKeesport)	1960 Eden Park Blvd. McKeesport, PA 15132	Monday, October 17, 2016 5:30-7:45pm
	Kingsley Association (Larimer)	6435 Frankstown Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15206	Monday October 24, 2016 5:30pm-7:45pm
	Trinity AME Zion Church (Sheridan)	3105 Allendale St. Pittsburgh, PA 15204	Wednesday, October 26, 2016 5:30pm-7:45pm
<b>Phase 2</b>	St Paul AME Church (Knoxville)	400 Orchard Pl. Pittsburgh, PA 15210	Tuesday, November 1, 2016 5:30pm-7:45pm
	The Pittsburgh Project (Perry Hilltop)	208 Charles St. Pittsburgh, PA 15214	Monday, November 7, 2016 5:30 pm-7:45 pm
	Hosanna House (Wilkinsburg)	807 Wallace Ave. Pittsburgh PA 15221	Thursday, November 10, 2016 5:30pm-7:45pm
Report out/ Feedback meeting	Jeron X. Grayson Community Center (Hill District)	1852 Enoch St. Pittsburgh, PA 15219	Monday, November 14, 2016 5:30pm-7:45pm

## Registrants and Participants

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization/Neighborhood</b>	<b>Registration Type (Onsite or Online)</b>	<b>Participated (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Youth/Adult</b>
1.	Aerion Abney	POISE Foundation	Onsite	Yes	Adult
2.	Amber Farr	Buhl Foundation	Online	Yes	Adult
3.	Amonte Turner	Student (West End)	Onsite	Yes	Youth
4.	Andre Samuel	Citizens Science Lab	Onsite	Yes	Adult
5.	Ani Martinez	Sprout Fund	Online	Yes	Adult
6.	Arielle Evans	Sprout Fund	Online	Yes	Adult
7.	Armani Davis	Pittsburgh Promise	Onsite	Yes	Adult
8.	Asante Turner	Student (West End)	Onsite	Yes	Youth
9.	Averi Lee	Student (Job corps)	Onsite	Yes	Youth
10.	Bob Jones	Brothers and Sisters Emerging	Onsite	Yes	Adult
11.	Brady Fehr	Youth with a Mission	Onsite	Yes	Adult
12.	Camden Yandel	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	Online	Yes*	Adult
13.	Christian Nowlin	South Hilltop Men's Group	Onsite	Yes	Adult
14.	Da'Shawn Smith	Student (Woodland Hills)	Online	Yes	Youth
15.	Deondray Grier	Student (West End)	Onsite	Yes	Youth
16.	DeVonn Madden	Shadow Student Athletes	Onsite	Yes	Adult
17.	Donavan Kelley	Student (McKeesport)	Online	Yes	Youth
18.	Garth Taylor	Brothers and Sisters Emerging	Online	Yes	Adult
19.	Gavin White	Gtech	Onsite	Yes	Adult
20.	Gui Colon	Highland Park	Online	Yes	Youth
21.	Guist Waller	Student	Online	Yes	Youth
22.	James Brown	YMCA	Online	Yes**	Adult
23.	James Hayden	Wilkinsburg	Onsite	Yes	Adult
24.	Janera Solomon	Kelly Strayhorn Theatre	Online	Yes	Adult
25.	Jasiri X	1Hood Media	Onsite	Yes*	Adult
26.	Jeannette Griggs	Parent	Onsite	Yes	Adult
27.	Jeffrey Nash	Small Seeds	Online	Yes	Adult
28.	Jmar Bey	South Hilltop Men's Group	Onsite	Yes	Adult
29.	Jnuru Goodwin	Youth with a Mission	Onsite	Yes	Yes
30.	Jonathan Mendez	Student (Brookline)	Online	Yes	Youth
31.	Jordan Howard	Student (Wilkinsburg)	Online	No	Youth
32.	Josiah Gilliam	Homewood Children's Village	Online	Yes	Adult
33.	K Lynn Jones	Parent	Online	No	Adult

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization/Neighborhood</b>	<b>Registration Type (Onsite or Online)</b>	<b>Participated (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Youth/Adult</b>
34.	Keifer Glantz-Estrada	Highland Park	Online	Yes	Youth
35.	Keith Cash	Pittsburgh Fire Department	Onsite	Yes	Adult
36.	Kevin Alton	The Way Organization	Onsite	Yes	Adult
37.	Khadija Diggs	Office of the Governor	Onsite	Yes	Adult
38.	Khalif Ali	Pittsburgh Foundation	Online	Yes	Adult
39.	Knowledge Hudson	East Liberty	Onsite	Yes	Adult
40.	Kyle Lapp	Student (West End)	Onsite	Yes	Youth
41.	Lenny Kistler	Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board	Online	Yes	Adult
42.	Luis Mendez	Student (Brookline)	Online	Yes	Youth
43.	Lukas Kelley	Student (McKeesport)	Online	Yes	Youth
44.	Mac Howinson	Sprout Fund	Onsite	Yes	Adult
45.	Malachi Quarles	Student (West End)	Onsite	Yes	Youth
46.	Malcolm Hudson	Parent	Online	Yes	Adult
47.	Malique Anderson	Student	Online		Youth
48.	Mark Williams	Pittsburgh Public Schools	Onsite	Yes	Adult
49.	Mary Esther Van Shura	County Executive's Office	Onsite	Yes	Adult
50.	Maximillian Dennison	DADS	Onsite	Yes	Adult
51.	Michael Smith	Student (West End)	Onsite	Yes	Youth
52.	Michael Yonas	Pittsburgh Foundation	Onsite	Yes	Adult
53.	Miguel Johnson	Student (West End)	Online	Yes	Youth
54.	Molly Taleb	Job Corps	Onsite	Yes	Adult
55.	Pablo Molina	Student (Beechview)	Online	Yes	Youth
56.	Paradise Grey	1Hood	Onsite	Yes*	Adult
57.	Paris Crawford	Student (West Mifflin)	Online	Yes	Youth
58.	Patricia Monticello Kievlan	Sprout Fund	Online		Adult
59.	Paul Willem	Job Corps	Onsite	Yes	Adult
60.	Prince Jarbo	Student	Onsite	Yes	Youth
61.	Quincy Jones	Beltzhoover Neighborhood Council	Online	No	Adult
62.	Quincy Kofi-Swanson	The Door Campaign	Onsite	Yes	Adult
63.	Raymont Connor	Beltzhoover Civic Association	Onsite	Yes	Adult
64.	Raymont Connor Jr.	YouthPlaces (Hilltop)	Online	Yes	Youth
65.	Ricco Brown	Beltzhoover Community Council	Online	Yes	Adult
66.	Rich Carrington	Voices Against Violence	Onsite	Yes	Adult

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization/Neighborhood</b>	<b>Registration Type (Onsite or Online)</b>	<b>Participated (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Youth/ Adult</b>
67.	Rick Bigelow	Arlington	Onsite	Yes	Adult
68.	Rickie Wallace	Auberle	Onsite	Yes	Adult
69.	Rob Benz	Representative Jake Wheatley's Office	Onsite	Yes	Adult
70.	Robert Burns		Online		
71.	Robert M. Jones Jr		Online	Yes*	Adult
72.	Robert Ware	Penn State Extension and Outreach	Onsite	Yes	Adult
73.	Rodney Pollard		Online	No	Adult
74.	Ron Garland	Operation Save One	Online	Yes	Adult
75.	Sarah Kim	Landforce	Onsite	Yes	Adult
76.	Shad Henderson	Neighborhood Allies	Onsite	Yes	Adult
77.	Shak Kelsey	Student (West End)	Onsite	Yes	Youth
78.	Shannon Williams	Ceasefire PA	Onsite	Yes	Adult
79.	Shunnechia Baker	University of Pittsburgh Student	Online	Yes	Adult
80.	Sunanna Chand	Remake Learning	Online	Yes**	Adult
81.	Tacumba Turner	Gtech/ Sheridan	Online	Yes	Youth
82.	Taili Thompson	Youth Opportunity Development	Onsite	Yes	Adult
83.	Tammy Brown	Youth Places (Wilkinsburg)	Online	No	Adult
84.	Terence Johnson-Hart	Student (Sheraden)	Online	Yes	Youth
85.	Terrell Daniels	Isaiah Project	Onsite	Yes	Adult
86.	Tiffany Kim	Landforce	Online	Yes	Adult
87.	Timothy Rump	Job Corps	Onsite	Yes	Adult
88.	Tom Akiva	University of Pittsburgh	Online	Yes*	Adult
89.	Vanessa Garcia	Auberle	Online	Yes*	Adult
90.	Virgil Esc	Youth with a Mission	Onsite	Yes	Yes
91.	Yamir Nelson	Wilkinsburg	Online	Yes	Youth
92.	Zacchaeus Peterson	West Side	Online	Yes	Youth

\*Interviewed via phone

\*\*Participated onsite and interviewed via phone

## Service Provider Questionnaire

Speaking from your own experience, what are the three most important elements of a successful youth program?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Complete the following two sentences.

Kids return to our programs because . . .

The biggest challenge in retaining kids for our organization is . . .

What kinds of digital and/or information technology do you incorporate into your programs?

## Service Provider Phone Interview Questions

The youth facilitators designed the phone interview facilitation script with the aid of Dr. Bey.

“Hello Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Dr. Bey told us that he has been in touch with you about the purpose and importance of this phone call. Thank you for making the time to speak with me. I am \_\_\_\_\_ I go to \_\_\_\_\_ School and I live \_\_\_\_\_. I am interested in working on this project because \_\_\_\_\_.”

1. Can we begin by you telling me a little about yourself and your organization? Talk about your organizations goals and mission.”
  - a. Follow-up question: “What distinguishes your program from others in the area? What is different about yours?”
2. “What are some characteristics of a great youth program?” (keep pushing for more attributes. Try to – get a nice list)
  - a. Follow-up question – “From this list – what would you say are the top three most important characteristics of an excellent youth program?”
  - b. “Why are these things important?”
3. “Describe one of your more successful programs. Talk about the goal of the program and how it fits in with your organization’s mission.”
  - a. Follow-up question: “What do you think it is about that program that makes it successful? Why do the kids come back?”
4. “Does your program incorporate digital, information and/or advanced electronic technologies?”
  - a. Follow-up questions: If no, “why not?” If yes, “what sort of technologies do you use and how do the participants respond to it?”
5. How do you connect success and outcomes in programs to long-term success with your participants?
  - a. Follow-up question – “How does your program connect participants with real life goals like careers, family, and community responsibilities?”
6. “Let’s talk about your program design process. Think about the successful program that you mentioned before – How did that program come about? What things do you have to consider when designing a program?”
  - a. Follow-up question: “Are youth ever included in the design process? How or why not?”
7. “Okay –now let’s talk about how you can get better. Tell me about some ideas that would make your program better. Things that you could do, that others could do for you or in general – give me some things that would make your program better. Whatever it is – and don’t say money - instead – tell me what you would do, if you had access to more funds. What are three improvements that you could make for your program?”
8. “What about your community outreach and engagement? What does that look like? How do you keep people in the community aware of what you are doing?”
  - a. Follow-up question: “What are some areas you feel you can improve on outreach?”

## Phase 1: My Brother's Keeper Community & Stakeholder Planning Process

### McKeesport Summary

Nine young men ranging from ages 15 to 24 participated in UrbanKind Institute's first My Brother's Keeper (MBK) discussion, which took place on October 17, 2016 at the McKeesport Area High School. This summary presents themes, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations expressed during the discussion as they relate to needs and gaps in out-of-school youth programming, ideal programmatic activities that achieve MBK goals, existing resources, and best practices.

Participants described several existing out-of-school resources, including places for youth to socialize, play video games or sports, and volunteer. Specific examples included:

- Boy Scouts Adventure Club (in Lock Haven, PA), which exposes young men to new places and experiences
- The Neighborhood Learning Alliance at Westinghouse, which provides local volunteering and community service opportunities
- The Community Empowerment Association at the United Methodist Church in McKeesport - This program is a branch of the Community Empowerment Association in Homewood and engages in learning about history and ancestry.

None of the out-of-school programs mentioned were specifically geared toward STEM education and, notably, only some of the participants were familiar with STEM in general. Similarly, few participants were familiar with digital badges or understood how they work.

When asked to critique existing programs, participants agreed that they would like to see more young people engaged as mentors and leaders of programs, as they can better relate to young men and would be more inclined to listen to advice from peers. Additionally, the participants are interested in programs that involve one-on-one or small group learning/engagement that allows youth to express themselves and their needs rather than ideas/activities being imposed on them. They also emphasized the need for more action-oriented, hands-on experiences, including ones that allow them to affect change in their own neighborhoods/cities, and possibly receive recognition for their work. An additional critique had to do with traditional methods of outreach and recruitment, such as flyers; the participants described them as ineffective. The participants believe that widespread use of social media, texts, emails, or in-person invitations from other teens would be an effective way of informing them about programs and opportunities.

Participants offered several suggestions for areas of programming that they would like to see, including:

- Travel
- Literature/arts with a focus on creative expression
- Policy/civic engagement education

- Financial literacy, especially regarding short and long term saving, and withholdings like social security
- Public speaking or debate
- College preparation

Many of the young men agreed with the need for programming focused on preparation for education past high school, specifically the college application/financial aid process and the importance of high school grades.

Some participants observed that youth in other communities and schools benefitted from having access to a greater variety of resources/programs at younger ages. Youth without these benefits were at a disadvantage when finally, able to participate in a sport or other activity in their own communities/schools. Similarly, one young man described the availability of art and music production programs, but that they were hard to get to in terms of location. Note that a McKeesport Area High School student described in-school programs that address some of these gaps, including opportunities to learn about forensic science and participate in debate team, as well as a “real-life project” in which students were randomly assigned careers/incomes and engaged in budgeting activities. Still there were no opportunities outside of school to reinforce the opportunities offered by the school district.

### **Larimer Summary**

UrbanKind Institute’s second My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) discussion took place on October 24, 2016 at the Kingsley Association Center in Larimer. The event was a facilitated group conversation among 20 people, including eight young men, four of whom took part in the first discussion, representatives from the governor’s office, nonprofits, and funders. Among more than 20 young men who pre-registered for the event, only seven attended, suggesting that outreach and ensuring participation have been a challenge. The conversation at times veered from the specifics of out-of-school programming, but shed light on the fact that improving services for young men of color is complicated.

After UrbanKind gave a summary of the first discussion, one of the participants asked the young men to clarify what they saw as the main shortcomings of existing programs. They reiterated that young men are often not listened to, but told what to do, and that they would be more receptive to young people/peers as mentors, outreach staff, etc. The group went on to discuss at more length the importance of “the messenger.” Some posited that young men might find older men acting as “father figures” demeaning because the young men have experiences/identify as the “man of the household” in their own families. Another submitted, with nods of agreement from the others, that young men’s strained relationships with their own fathers made it sometimes difficult to accept direction from fatherly figures. Others thought that young adults who were closer to their age simply “get it” in a way that older ones do not. When asked what the downside to the peer-as-mentor

model is, participants said that other young people may not want to act as mentors, or may not know how. They usually do not have the life experiences to give good advice.

Additional critiques of existing resources were offered as well: lack of adequate funding and transportation. In the City of Pittsburgh, transportation among segmented neighborhoods is a problem, and one participant from the non-profit sector expressed concerns about safety in the downtown area, which is easily accessible. Moreover, neighborhood boundaries can deter young men from taking advantage of activities/amenities not in their own neighborhoods.

UrbanKind encouraged the men in their late teens/early 20s to engage the three younger men in the conversation to prove their point of how they could be effective as mentors. One high school student talked about losing friends to violence and drugs and making better choices himself after a series of expulsions. Several young men agreed that expulsion does not make sense in every situation, and that it is particularly unwarranted as a punishment for fighting.

Some participants suggested that engaging young men as mentors might be achieved by seeking out volunteers or by compensating them for their time. It is worth noting that the four returning participants are all members of Pittsburgh's Job Corps and spoke highly of the program. One young man credits the program with instilling in him the importance of education and learning a trade, a value that he sees himself and the other Corps members as now being able to pass on in their own families. The conversation also touched on some new areas of interest for out-of-school programming, including: training in car or aircraft mechanic work; video game programming; and entrepreneurship training.

### **Sheraden Summary**

UrbanKind Institute's third My Brother's Keeper (MBK) discussion took place on October 26, 2016 at the Trinity AME Zion Church in Sheraden. At this event, 15 young men took part in a four-round World Café style facilitation led by four UrbanKind facilitators, to share thoughts on out-of-school programming. The following summarizes their thoughts on existing resources, needs and gaps, and their desires in the design and content of future programs.

The young men offered several critiques of existing programs. Those from Sheraden saw the library, pool, and gyms as the only safe places for out-of-school activities; there is no recreation center in the community. As in earlier discussions, participants commented on current methods of outreach and advertising, existing mentorship structures, and a top-down process of program design that lacks the critical elements of relationship-building and listening to young men first. Also, consistent with earlier discussions, the participants were not familiar with STEM education or digital badges, but thought that greater exposure would build interest.

Participants expressed interest in such programmatic areas as:

- creating video games, apps, and robots
- creative arts like photography, animation, film, and graphic design
- business and finance (brokerage)
- life and social sciences
- comic books
- college and SAT preparation
- sports like baseball and soccer

Most participants had no opportunities to learn about technology such as computer programming or software design, but they would like to see hands-on and project-based learning that results in an actual product, perhaps for the benefit of their community. Some mentioned an interest in specific programs they have seen in other communities, such as Reading Warriors and Urban Impact.

Participants would like to see improvements in program design, outreach, and mentorship and made several suggestions toward that end. Before a program is advertised, staff could go on a “tour” to different schools and communities to educate youth on what the program involves. By developing relationships in the community first, interest among youth might be cultivated (and vetted) before a program begins. Participants suggested that if young people were included in the design process, they might feel safer and more comfortable participating in a program, inspire their peers to participate and become leaders, and build communities’ confidence in youth. Further, teachers and mentors can be better educated on programs, boosting awareness, and encouraging attendance. Some participants saw a disconnect between program staff and those they serve. There is a focus on “fixing” people or filling a need without taking the time to develop relationships/trust and understand where the young men are in their lives/struggles. They see a need for staff that they can talk to about life, school, and careers. Those mentors might be young community leaders or college students. One suggestion was that out-of-school programming could offer both fun activities and mentorship on practical skills like driving, tying a tie, changing a tire, and building a website, for example.

Finally, the participants suggested that ideal programs would be offered locally, in libraries, schools, or churches. During the school year, long hours in school might deter participation in activities that take place in school buildings. The repurposing of abandoned buildings as spaces for youth programs would be a good way to use existing community assets

## Phase 2: My Brother's Keeper Community & Stakeholder Planning Process

### Knoxville Event Summary

The fourth community meeting of UrbanKind Institute's My Brother's Keeper (MBK) discussion marked the kickoff of Phase 2: Input from Service Providers. Between the third and fourth event, ten of the youth who we recruited during Phase 1 participated in a daylong Saturday training. The fourth meeting event took place on November 1, 2016 at the St. Paul AME Church in Knoxville. At this event, 19 adults representing 17 service providers participated in a World Café style facilitation. Of the various facilitation styles that the youth facilitators learned, this was their favorite. They divided the service providers into four small discussion groups, each facilitated by two youth facilitators. Discussion topics included organizations' missions and programs, program improvement, and community engagement and outreach.

Based on their own experiences, service providers offered many characteristics of successful youth programs. Characteristics that came up multiple times included consistency in staff and in programming expectations, programs staffed by determined/empathetic people, well-funded, adaptable, accountable/effective, and needed/relevant. Others emphasized characteristics like: fun/interesting, incorporating spirituality/religion, community-based, involving parents, relationship building, personalized, and focused on the long term. Some suggested that a good program can: incorporate life skills; begin with young children; be research-based; connect youth to elders; and/or focus on achievement, workforce development, and college preparation. A strong theme that emerged was that kids return to programs because of strong relationships with staff/mentors. Programs that maintain participation seem to be spaces where kids feel loved, listened to, provided a sense of belonging, and stability.

Many service providers use social media for outreach, to highlight accomplishments and to celebrate the participants, but only some of them incorporate digital, information, and/or advanced electronic technologies in their programming. Those that do listed the following types of activities: video and digital editing, app development, visual, and musical production, coding, video game design, and 3D printing. One provider described the use of job and college apps, and another mentioned getting kids into a STEAM program.

Service providers suggested several areas for program improvement. Many expressed a desire for more volunteers, program staff, and collaboration (when effective), as well as community involvement in general (parents, kids, and organizations). Some thought they would benefit from more youth feedback in shaping and improving a program, stronger bonds between program staff and youth, and more male role models. Others need better funding and compensation and lighter workloads. (The challenge that service providers most often mentioned was a lack of consistent funding.) Some would like to see changes in the way programs are funded. For example, in some cases organizations would be more effective if collaborating, but funding sources do not always support collaboration. Lastly,

service providers acknowledged that community outreach and communication among programs could improve.

### **Perry Hilltop Summary**

UrbanKind Institute's fifth My Brother's Keeper (MBK) event took place on November 7, 2016 at the Pittsburgh Project in the North Side. The small roundtable discussion (eight young men, nearly all of them returning participants) was facilitated by a program officer from the Buhl Foundation. The discussion focused on the main ideas that the young men shared and learned in the earlier conversations with each other and service providers.

The participants began by explaining their interest in the MBK community and stakeholder planning process. Their reasons varied from an opportunity to meet new people and learn to a desire to improve programs for their communities and younger generations.

Participants mentioned several programs in which they have participated, including:

- Job Corps
- Youth to Youth
- Big Brothers
- Mock Trial
- Hazelwood Youth Media Justice Program

One young man mentioned that his family took advantage of housing services at Casa San Jose in Brookline. He and two others also participate in a program on Saturdays at the Brookline Recreation Center (where they receive help with homework, among other activities) as well as a program for Latino students at Brashear High School.

The participants shared with the facilitator their thoughts on ideal future programs. They repeated several ideas mentioned previously, such as learning real life skills, college application preparation, hands-on learning, mentorship by peers/young men, art/creative expression, and including youth in program design (through youth councils, perhaps). A few new ideas came out of this discussion as well. One young man would like to see more engagement between people of different ages (from elderly to adults to youth), especially when it comes to the environment and civic engagement. Others talked about making learning more fun, incorporating technology, and providing youth with skills for specific jobs through industry partnerships. One recurring theme was that programs should keep young people busy, safe, and "off the streets."

The young men also shared what they learned from service providers during the previous week's discussion. They learned that funding was the providers' greatest challenge and that current funding structures encourage competition among organizations, not collaboration. Additionally, service providers would like to see more participation from kids, parents, and the community in general. Some of the young men noted that even in the roundtable discussions, a few service providers insisted on imparting their own knowledge as opposed to listening and another was narrowly focused on religion. However, the participants thought that several of the service providers were doing great work and a few programs stood out: one that helps kids to use football as a path to college and scholarships, one that

will focus on relationships between children and their fathers, and one that hires young people to maintain and create recreational trails in Pittsburgh.

### **Wilkinsburg Summary**

UrbanKind Institute's sixth My Brother's Keeper (MBK) discussion took place on November 10, 2016 at the Hosanna House in Wilkinsburg. Although 23 service providers RSVP'd for the event, only three attended. Given the small number of participants, the providers and eight of the youth facilitators decided to pull what they learned from earlier events and pull the service providers who were in attendance into one group to discuss the organizations' missions and programs, how they incorporate technology and skill-building, and community engagement and outreach. Following the event, the young men agreed that it would be useful to reach out to the service providers who were unable to attend and to interview them (via phone). Of those twenty, the young men were successful in securing phone interviews with nine service providers. The following summarizes information generated during both the event and the phone interviews.

Service providers reported aiding youth in developing many life skills, such as: cooperation, media literacy, "soft skills," and social and cultural awareness. Many incorporate new technologies, ranging from design software to digital photography to music and film production. One service provider reported using digital work badges. Experiential learning and career assessments are two common approaches to preparing young people to apply skills to careers. Similar to responses from other service providers, the most commonly reported elements of a successful youth program were strong relationships/trust, youth engagement and input (not in program design), and relevance ("career pipeline" or "providing needed materials").

Service providers felt that youth return to their programs because they are fun and because of a bond with staff. Additionally, one provider cited financial incentives and opportunities to meet people working in an industry of interest as reasons for regular participation. As in earlier conversations, transportation and funding were mentioned as major challenges, as well as a lack of incentives (in this case for training) and facilities. Service providers typically recruit participants through word of mouth, flyers, and social media. Although they have no indication or way of verifying if any of these methods are effective. Finally, few service providers include youth in the design or outreach process for a program. Among those that do, approaches include group discussions, surveys/evaluations, and simply asking for youth input and incorporating it as best as possible given budgetary constraints.

## **My Brother's Keeper Community & Stakeholder Planning Process: Report Out/ Feedback Event Summary**

UrbanKind Institute's seventh and final My Brother's Keeper (MBK) discussion took place on November 14, 2016 at the Jeron X. Grayson Community Center in the Hill District in front of an audience of about 35 service providers, community members, and funders. Nine of the youth facilitators, who regularly participated in the MBK Planning Process, discussed youth programming and their takeaways from the previous six events. The event concluded with a broader discussion and Q&A with the audience.

As in previous discussions, the young men stressed that programs should be more personalized, use experiential/hands-on learning, involve youth in the creation and development stages, and create a culture of trust and care. They want to see greater use of technology, as well as creative expression/art; be exposed to new places and environments; learn life and career skills; have fun, including through sports; and relate to the people running the program. Further, programs should be easy to get to in terms of transportation, but also found in places where youth feel comfortable and safe (which may mean in their own neighborhoods but not others). One new idea was that of programs less targeted to specific age ranges, so that youth do not age out of a program that is still relevant. In their experience, young men return to programs for several reasons, including personal engagement and care, friendships with peers, interest, financial incentives, opportunities to meet people in industries they are interested in, and popularity of the program. They also raised a few new ideas about effective use of digital technology, such as meeting youth where they are at since they may have some fundamentals already and fully engaging with technology as opposed to just incorporating it. One panelist said that technology should be today's pencil; another liked the idea of students receiving their own computers to learn both technology and responsibility/ownership.

Based on their conversations with service providers, the young men learned that funding is the biggest challenge and that funders tend to encourage competition among organizations, not collaboration. They also learned about (and liked) the "transparency concept," meaning organizations should be open about what they can and cannot offer those they serve.

Fourteen service providers filled out a one-page survey at the event. According to those surveys, service providers face other challenges as well. Some of the most often-repeated challenges were: transportation, attendance, holding youth interest, getting youth to see long term benefits of a program, and outside influences.

Service providers also named many elements of a successful youth program. Most responses fell into three categories: 1) trusted and committed leadership; 2) youth involvement and relevance to their interests/needs/goals; and 3) clear expectations and accountability for a program and its participants. Most service providers felt that youth return to their programs because of relationships with staff based on trust and care. Many thought that youth also return when they find programs to be fun and relevant/meaningful. Finally, programs incorporate digital and/information technology to varying degrees. Many service providers reported using social media, computers, tablets, and 3D printers. Some incorporate technology through video games, photography, blogging, filmmaking, and

music production. Others use promethean boards, job boards, digital badges, and online certification programs. A few teach skills like CAD, coding, microscopy, or protein modeling.

The discussion and Q&A that followed the youth panel showed that audience members were impressed by the young men and interested in continuing the dialogue toward better programming. During the discussion, audience members raised ideas and questions about community-based training for youth, program expectations and quality, and reaching people not already engaged. In response to one question the young men described where they look for programs and which social media platforms are most effective in their experience. They said that schools are good places for advertising programs, but the outreach should go beyond flyers, perhaps through mentors or advisors. Word of mouth in spaces like churches or libraries can be effective. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat are also effective, especially if the outreach is done through other young people and people whose posts are frequently “liked” as well as “shared.” The young men also said that sharing success stories might encourage participation. In response to a question about program expectations, one panelist suggested focusing on goals for individuals as opposed to the organization as a whole, and another thought that interviewing youth when they enter a program could help to personalize expectations.