



Opportunities to Invest in Long-Term Social Capital for Our Youth

A Philanthropic Agenda

June, 2023

Developed through a participatory action research process



AUTHORS

This project was executed by the Catalysts for Change Participatory Action Research Team, which included:

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- Finally, special thanks to the individuals who participated in our survey and focus groups. The authors hope that we have accurately conveyed your feelings about social capital, relationships, and mentoring, as well as surfaced opportunities for how philanthropic funding can better support this work moving forward. We

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¹Note: In 2023, one member had to step away from the team due to work and life commitments.

Dear Colleagues,

The last 30 years have seen tremendous growth and diversification in the youth mentoring movement, evolving from a somewhat niche intervention to a highly developed and critical component of the work done in youth development programs, educational settings, career preparation experiences, and countless other social solutions aimed at promoting mental and physical health. The role of mentoring relationships in supporting positive outcomes for youth is powerful and well documented. Additionally, mentoring has been an important contributor to building social capital for young people, with recent research suggesting that mentors can not only provide social capital directly themselves but can also bring additional adults into the lives of youth and help them grow their full “webs of support” over time. The importance of this is highlighted in the recent U.S Surgeon General’s Advisory, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*, which noted that individuals with higher levels of social capital and communities with higher levels of social connection tend to experience greater economic prosperity, mental and physical health, civic engagement, and community safety.

Unfortunately, while talent and ability may be equally distributed across American youth, access to these crucial social connections and networks are not. As the mentoring field has expanded and programs work diligently to close this gap, MENTOR has often noted points of disconnection between those who fund mentoring and social capital building efforts and those who work in programs serving youth and communities who have been marginalized. MENTOR’s role as a movement builder is to note where there is misalignment and support both groups in finding solutions and common understanding.

To better understand the disconnects that exist, we enlisted the support of Community Wealth Partners to launch a Participatory Action Research (PAR) study. This study is unique because it was conducted by a diverse group of fourteen mentoring and youth development practitioners from across the country. Self-identified as the Catalysts for Change team, the leadership of these individuals reflects the heartbeat of the mentoring movement. Unquestionably, this research approach yielded the type of honest and open information that can help the philanthropic community and our movement better determine how to scale social capital for young people.

The study’s findings elevate how both public and private investors often bring lofty goals and expectations around the strength of a program’s outcomes and the scale of its impact (often without making adequate long-term investments), while local-level practitioners may be more focused on building trust with the community and young people they serve, filling immediate gaps, and offering real-time support in the wake of community trauma, violence, or disenfranchisement. As the research team reminds us, we cannot expect young people to mobilize a network they have not developed a relationship with, and relationships take time and intention to build. Yet, many mentoring and social capital building programs are operating year to year and doing as much as they can with limited, short-term resources, leaving little time to focus on more deliberative relationship building. A striking data point from the study’s survey showed that most funders want to invest in long-term positive changes (71%), yet none expected outcomes to take five to ten years. Instead, the majority of funders said they expected to see outcomes in just one to two years.

Drawing from their lived experiences and those of their peers, the Catalysts for Change team members share recommendations for how the funding community can re-examine longstanding practices and beliefs to engage in more equitable grantmaking that centers the needs and perspectives of programs, their staff, and the young people and families they serve. This report highlights many meaningful truths about the mentoring and youth development fields, the needs of practitioners and programs, and the ways we can keep building

equity and purpose into our social capital work for young people. We encourage readers to reflect on how they can support the social capital building of young people and how they can take action to address the disconnects noted within this report. If we give our field's dedicated and resourceful nonprofit leaders the sustained and equitable funding they need—and a chance to have their voices heard—we believe it will create the space for the innovation we all seek.

We offer our thanks to the Catalysts for Change team, Community Wealth Partners, and this report's funder, American Student Assistance. In the months and years ahead, MENTOR will build on this information to promote further dialogue, build connections, and grow shared understanding. But that journey begins with this report, and we hope that you find this information as valuable as we have.

Sincerely,



Jermaine Myrie
Chief Executive Officer
MENTOR

About Participatory Action Research:

Participatory Action Research or PAR brings people together to define for themselves what problems they face in their community, find solutions through talking with and gathering data from their peers, and then implementing those solutions through strategic and informed actions. It's a model of community organizing that builds the capacity of people on the front-line of a problem to take leadership in creating the change they want.¹

Why Community Wealth Partners Values This Approach:

By Walter Howell and Idalia Fernandez, Community Wealth Partners

At Community Wealth Partners, we believe in a world in which all people have what they need to fully live into their potential. We see the astounding strength and resilience of each leader we work with. Our greatest purpose and joy is to lead processes, like PAR, that fully center and uplift community leaders to drive change for themselves. We aim to follow what they say—to do nothing “about us, without us.” The Catalysts for Change team is a group of program leaders who are the experts who are best suited to find the solutions for where to invest to grow social capital for their communities. We are honored to walk with them in pushing the field of youth development forward with their recommendations, grounded in their own and their communities' lived experiences and desires.

The next step is now on us—and the philanthropic sector as a whole—to heed their guidance from this PAR process and move to ACTION and CHANGE.¹

1. Developed by Josh Bloom & Levana Saxon, Partners for Collaborative Change, www.collabchange.org.

FORWARD

By Julie Lammers, Senior Vice President, Advocacy and Corporate Social Responsibility, American Student Assistance

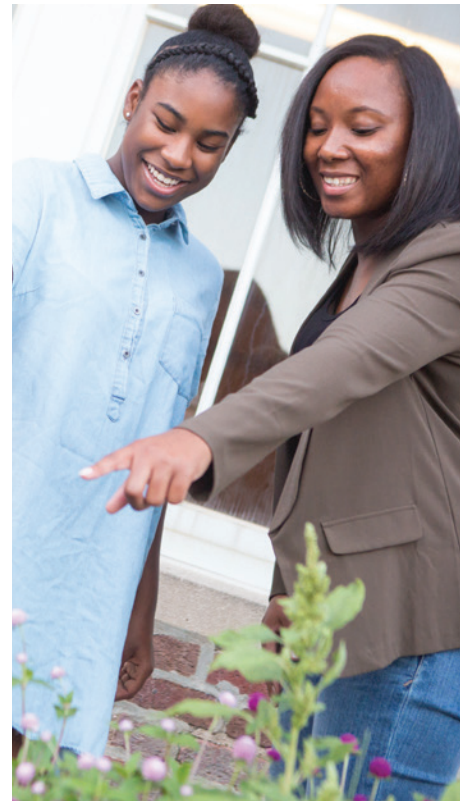
As a national nonprofit working to change the way young people learn about careers and navigate to postsecondary education and career success, American Student Assistance (ASA) is committed to improving social capital for youth, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. Networks are critical to student success, but many students do not have the same opportunities to develop meaningful relationships or connections with caring adults who can help them further their career potential. Philanthropic investment in this area is desperately needed, yet the concept of social capital can appear vague and intangible, hard to operationalize and measure. That's why ASA has been so deeply committed to partnering with MENTOR to build a relationship-centered ecosystem around young people that creates a web of support, helping them pursue their passions, education and career goals.

At ASA, we believe that to bring about effective change and positive impact, you must first listen to the voices of those you're trying to help. That is why we were so compelled to back this participatory action research project – a more equitable model of research incorporating the perspectives of both youth and the practitioners who help them every day.

We look forward to sharing this report's findings with the funder community and we ask fellow funders to consider:

- 1. That staffing, capacity planning and overhead, are critical in the efforts to help youth build social capital;**
- 2. Multi-year funding is key to ensure long-term planning and sustainability; and**
- 3. Securing funding also often depends on who you know rather than what you do.**

We all must work harder to ensure those who seek funding have equal opportunity to build their own social capital and the social capital of those they serve.



OUR STORY

Think back to the most important experiences of your life, the highest highs, the greatest victories, the most daunting obstacles overcome. How many happened to you alone? I bet there are very few. When you understand that being connected to others is one of life's greatest joys, you realize that life's best comes when you initiate and invest in solid relationships. —John C. Maxwell

Introduction

We are a group of 14 mentoring and youth-serving nonprofit leaders gathered together by MENTOR National to listen to those who are doing the work in the world of building social capital. We met weekly for months to evaluate, discuss, dissect, and ask questions around social capital:

- What is social capital and how is it connected to relationships?
- How do they and other practitioners help young people develop it?
- What are the benefits associated with it?
- What are the opportunities around it?

We found that, at its core, social capital is all about relationships. With willingness to understand the importance of relationships and the work that goes into them, we have countless opportunities to grow this work and invest in our youth.



As a group, we offer a story that demonstrates the power relationships have to transform lives. A young woman escaped a war-torn country in the most dangerous way, traveling in an overcrowded ship without food or water, just to make it alive to the next country. Because of her solid relationship with her mentors, she was given a chance to come to the United States. Then, she was connected with resources and opportunities to pursue her master's degree—all while benefiting from free housing, food, transportation, guidance, and love. That young woman's life was transformed by the mentoring and other resources she was able to access. She went on to work for the

World Bank, become a Vice President at a major bank, and positively impact the lives of her family and community back home. In fact, she was so inspired by her lived experience that she decided to become a mentor. Ultimately, she created her own mentoring organization to provide girls with social capital opportunities similar to hers. This woman is Gabriela Edon, the Founder and CEO of Girls L.E.A.P. Mentoring, and a member of the Catalysts for Change Participatory Action Research Team.

Our Team

Since September 2022, our group of 14¹ mentoring program leaders became the Catalysts for Change Participatory Action Research Team, accepting the challenge to listen to program staff, mentors, funders, youth, and families. These efforts aimed to address systemic barriers that affect organizations pushed to the margins—in BIPOC communities in particular—related to funding, resources, and improving social capital for youth. The group sought to find ways to answer core questions to help inform MENTOR’s Philanthropic Agenda. Each of us greatly enjoyed being a part of this team, which gave us the opportunity to work together and share our lived experiences. Most importantly, we were able to elevate the voices of program staff, mentors, and youth in a more inclusive way through evidence-based data to drive change.

Our team members originated from a variety of backgrounds. Our diversity of race, cultural heritage, language, and geographic locations made us a powerful collective. Besides research from the field, our diverse group also drew from our personal and professional expertise to inform the report. The melding of youth and practitioner perspectives—along with data—was key to making progress and improving social capital for young people.

Our Purpose

The purpose of this report was to shed light on the disconnects and the biggest barriers and systemic inequities that exist—and persist—for service providers in the field of youth development and social capital. Through pulling out these disconnects from listening to youth, mentors, funders, and staff around the country, the team then provided recommendations for the Philanthropic Agenda to correct these inequities and divides. The report was designed to answer the following critical questions:

1. What are the most under-resourced and overlooked opportunities that show significant promise for increasing social capital for youth?
2. What types of investments and additional resources would be needed to turn these opportunities into reality, and how should we measure success?

Also, the team wanted to clarify two distinctions in this report related to relationships and social capital:

1. Relationships are the foundation of social capital. Throughout this report, our team has highlighted the importance of relationships that create the conditions for youth to build their social capital.
2. For the purpose of this report, our team has defined social capital in alignment with Julia Freeland Fisher’s research out of the Christensen Institute: “Social capital is people’s access to, and ability to mobilize, human connections that might help them further their potential and their goals.”

A young person cannot mobilize a network they have not developed a relationship with, either directly or through another party.



Our Approach

To assess mentoring organizations around the country, specifically those in communities that experience significant barriers due to racial identity, community ZIP code, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and age, we applied the following methods:

- A questionnaire survey was conducted with over 250 respondents across the country in Spanish and English—including staff of youth-serving and mentoring organizations, funders, mentors, and young people. Each Catalysts for Change team member distributed this survey to youth-serving organizations and funders in their local communities. Additionally, MENTOR and its Affiliates promoted the survey to their network of mentoring professionals, as well as to over 100 national and local foundations and corporations that invest in the social capital space.
- Focus groups and interviews were conducted with over 100 youth, mentors, funders, and staff in the youth development field.
 - We extended targeted invitations to 63 local and national funders based on their giving priorities, aiming for a representative mix of local and national private foundations, family foundations, and corporations. We held two focus groups, engaging a total of 15 funders. The conversations focused on understanding how funding decisions are made, how funders interpret social capital and measure investments, how they build relationships with grantees, and what barriers to change exist among their grantees.
 - Each Catalysts for Change team member held interviews with at least 10 stakeholders in their networks. Conversations focused on the lived and professional experience of interviewees and the key components to their success or the success of their programs. We also discussed barriers they've faced in securing funding or support for programs, as well as challenges or successes they have experienced in building relationships with funders.
- The lived experiences and stories from 80 mentoring leader applications for this Listening Project were included.
- Research from the field and MENTOR National on best practices and trends also was applied.

This process was extensive, but not exhaustive. Our team took a collaborative approach to each phase of this project, working together to create a research plan, write survey and interview questions, and analyze the results. Team members were assigned to different aspects of the project, including facilitating funder focus groups, compiling initial findings, presenting findings for feedback, and writing sections of the report. Community Wealth Partners provided project management support and oversight, and MENTOR offered complementary external research and introductions to further inform the findings and recommendations. With additional time and funding, we could embrace opportunities to expand on the team's findings and recommendations.



OUR FINDINGS

Mentoring can hold many challenges. However, through our experience and listening process, the Catalysts for Change team found that **a more sustained focus on relationships between funders, staff, and mentors is key for sustainability and positive outcomes for youth to build social capital.** Interestingly, our team discovered all of the key findings tied back to relationships. Mentoring organizations were highly aware of how important relationships are to their outcomes. Obviously, these groups were aware that the relationships they build with mentors are vital, so those mentors can build relationships with students. But what about the relationships they built with funders? What about the relationships they built with other community organizations, so that their impact could grow collectively? Perhaps most importantly, how did mentees learn to build their own relationships to grow their social capital? Results of this study indicated a huge disconnect between funders and program staff on the importance of relationships and their role in building social capital for young people. Interestingly, there was also a disconnect on the length of time it takes to build relationships that lead to lasting change. Please take a look at the key findings, below, through the lens of relationships.

Our findings highlighted the **significance of program staff in helping youth build meaningful connections and foster trust to increase their social capital.** Yet, the importance of these staff roles was often overlooked and underappreciated. Most mentoring and youth-serving organizations received restricted and short-term funding, which limited them from investing in quality pay, benefits, professional development, and mental health services for the staff doing this hard work. The cornerstone of social capital is relationships, which made the role of mentoring program staff essential to the success of young people. They fostered and nurtured connections with mentees, mentors, other nonprofits, and funders. Mentoring program staff also supported matches daily, by guiding, coaching, and reinforcing the bonds between mentees and mentors.

We found that **developing healthy, meaningful relationships takes time, energy, effort, and resources.** The mentoring staff provided young people with the reliable support system they needed to practice building their own social capital. In order to see long-term, positive results for youth, funders must acknowledge the critical role of this relationship structure and the labor needed to cultivate it—and then invest in the personnel who do the work.



FINDING 1

Long-term, consistent staff relationships with program participants are the main driver of volunteer mentor retention and youth outcomes. However, there is a lack of unrestricted investment to support adequate staffing and capacity for relationship building by grantors and funders for social capital programs, including succession planning, hiring, and investing in staff professional development and well-being.

- **Connection is foundational to all outcomes/metrics:** Funders need to embrace the true costs of building connection, since connection is the key driver of the long-term life changes many funders seek to support.
- **Increasing staff capacity will have immense return on investment,** because a solid relationship between the program and the match shows significant promise to support young people into adulthood—well after they have formally left the program.
- To support mentors, **staff at mentoring organizations identify their number one need as unrestricted funding** that can be put toward sustaining the staffing costs necessary to recruit, train, and retain mentors over the long term.
- **According to 81 percent of organizations surveyed, consistency in staff is most important to volunteer retention,** which aligns with past research from the nonprofit sector.
- **Staff burnout and mentor turnover rates are high.** Some 36 percent of respondents reported that investment in self-care for staff is a low priority for their organization. Unsupported staff and less prioritization for self-care lead to higher burnout rates, which, in turn, can contribute to greater volunteer turnover and fewer opportunities for youth.
- **When asked if their organization could pay them the prevailing wage, only 39 percent answered yes,** 35 percent said somewhat, and 26 percent said no. These responses suggest that only just over one-third of organizations are able to pay the prevailing wage consistently.
- Our survey data and conversations with mentoring—as well as other youth-serving—organizations clearly showed that the **low investment in staff comes down to funding.** Staffing is often lumped in with overhead and, therefore, local donors, corporate funders, or foundation grantors are unwilling to pay for it. The concept of only funding nonprofits with extremely low overhead and staffing costs partners particularly poorly with mentoring organizations, who rely on staff to facilitate mentor/mentee relationships by recruiting, vetting, training, and supporting the community volunteers who mentor.



Disconnect

Surprisingly, there seems to be a disconnect between what funders say they are funding and what youth-serving organizations are able to access in funding. Our surveys showed that mentoring and youth-serving organizations are in desperate need of funding for staffing, so that they can build sustainable long-term programs, support mentor connections, deepen relationships, and enable growth. Organizational staff shared that they struggle to find grants and funding opportunities that provide adequate funding for staffing. And the survey data indicated that funders aren't funding organizational staff at sustainable levels needed, as staff shared that they don't have enough funding for staff support, self-care, or competitive wages.

Mentees need a guide to help them get through any challenges. Not a therapist. A guide to help them define right from wrong.

—Youth participant



FINDING 2

Long-term, multi-year funding is imperative to the social capital building work that mentoring organizations do, yet is not highly available.

- Both the organizations our team surveyed and mentors shared that long-term, consistent relationships are the core of building social capital.
- They also shared that there is a lack of long-term funding opportunities. Most grants are one to two years in length, according to survey results.
- Staff shared that one- to two-year funding does not create sustainability within their organization and can often create stress.



Disconnect

Most funders want to invest in long-term positive changes (71 percent), yet no funder respondents expect outcomes to take five to ten years of doing this work to see progress. Instead, the majority expect outcomes in one to two years and grant funds accordingly.

We have to have staff, so long-term funding creates job security and that allows for a longer, deeper impact. With limited short-term funding, there is no continuity of program structure to achieve your goals long term.

—BIPOC staff

We only have one-year funding available in our foundation.

—BIPOC funder



FINDING 3

Aligned with other research from the nonprofit sector, the programs we spoke to elevated the need for more equitable grant processes in social capital funding. This is especially true for those leaders denied opportunities and networks of wealth systematically because of race, geography, lack of network connection, and other systemic barriers.

According to [research](#) done by Echoing Green and Bridgespan, “leaders of color often bring strategies that intimately understand the racialized experiences of communities of color and the issues these communities face.”

However, looking at Echoing Green’s “highest qualified applicants (i.e., those who progressed to its semifinalist stage and beyond), **revenues of the Black-led organizations are 24 percent smaller than the revenues of their white-led counterparts**, and the unrestricted net assets of the Black-led organizations are 76 percent smaller than their white-led counterparts.”

These studies represent just a few examples of the disparities that exist for BIPOC leaders and white-led counterparts.

Funders need to recognize that philanthropy runs on social capital—who knows you, your connections—and those connections mostly live with larger, white-run, privileged organizations. It’s necessary to pursue processes and investment strategies that spread and build that wealth more equitably. To this point:

- **Grant applications are often disproportionate to the award.** A grant of \$1,000 to \$2,500 having a 20-page application process is a waste of staffing hours and organization resources.
- **Applications are often not available** in grant writers’ native languages.
- **Evaluation processes often focus on quantities versus lived experiences and other ways of assessing quality, long-term impact.** Not all relational equity, social capital, and long-term impact can be captured effectively in quantitative data. Stories and qualitative data are needed to better understand the impact of mentoring.



Disconnect

Funders are asking for and funding equitable programs that serve diverse populations. Yet, most funders have not taken the time to evaluate their grant processes to make them more equitable and inclusive.

There is a disconnect between the funders and the programs regarding what is the appropriate data to collect. Programs need more time to get to the causation data. A one-year grant does not provide enough time for a true evaluation of outcomes.

—Staff

Are “big” funders truly aware of the biases and restrictions on the application forms that really impact smaller organizations? If a big bank funds a foundation and an organization receives a smaller amount of that funding from the foundation, the organization is no longer qualified to apply directly to that bank, even where there is an opportunity to do so

—Funder

FINDING 4

Research and conversations are needed to help funders and organizations better understand social capital.

- **The different social capital realities experienced by those with privilege or connections and by those pushed to the margins** often are not acknowledged or accounted for in investments/processes.
- **The data we received from funders showed that relationship building and social capital are not widely seen as the top impacts of mentoring** and consistently receive insufficient investment.
- In addition, corporate funders are frustrated. **While they understand social capital as a concept, they find it hard to justify social capital's significance for funding.** Their executives don't view social capital as tangible and a necessity in the culture (even though they've often benefited from it).
- **Our team found that while social capital can be seen as trendy and funders seem excited to fund it, there is a lack of understanding of what social capital is** and how to invest in it. Relationships take time and energy before anyone can leverage them. The idea of just meeting someone one time and then being able to leverage that single connection as social capital is not a reality.



Disconnect

Staff see relationships as a top outcome, but funders value them much less. Our surveys showed that 65 percent of staff consider relationship building a top program outcome, while **only 14 percent of funders see relationship building between mentors and mentees as a priority outcome.** This underscores the disconnect we found on what social capital is.

You cannot just use people up, you have to invest in the relationship with them.

—Young adult at the National Mentoring Summit

You might question yourself like, do they really even want me to be here? Am I wasting their time? It's easy to question yourself because maybe you're not getting a lot of energy in return, but remind yourself that just by being there, you're breaking down barriers.

—Mentor

It's not about whether social capital is valuable. It's about admitting we have two narratives. Students in poor communities are told they're failing because they're not working hard enough. But no one wants to admit their more affluent peers are sitting at dinner tables with reachable access to open doors. Stop saying it's about metrics. It's about whether we want to see equity and change. Let's be honest.

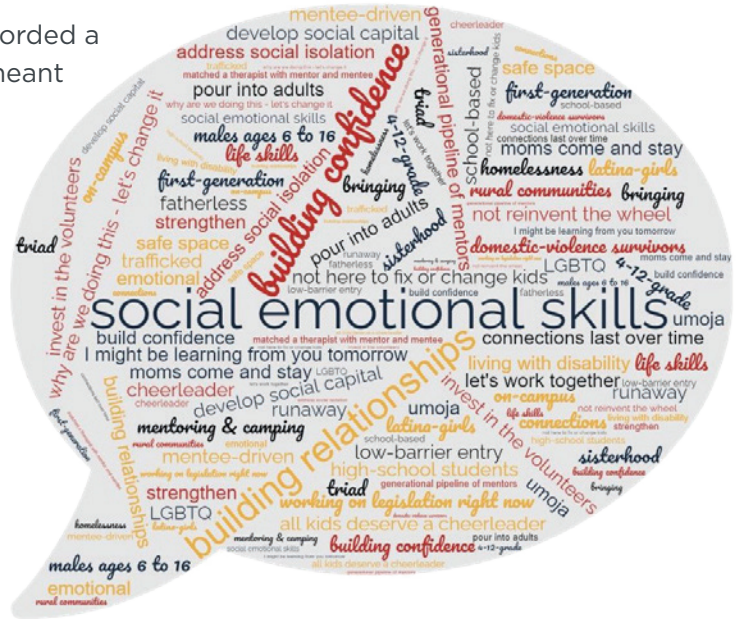
—Michelle



OUR LIVED EXPERIENCE

Toward the end of the work on this report, our team recorded a 45-minute session where we discussed what this data meant to us. We also shared recommendations we would offer from the lenses of our lived experience as leaders in the mentoring space every day. We viewed this as a key component of the report and our recommendations to the field. We have included a select number of quotes below and encourage all readers to view the session using the link provided.

[Link to video recording, passcode: IB?0Vkye](#)



Our Stories

In order for funders to really, truly operate in this realm, they have to have some change in mindsets....It has to shift to a qualitative mindset—relationships, what about spiritual and emotional growth, or health and wellness of persons and organizations. We are currently stepping up against culture and society and systems and policies that actually center the quantitative. That's going to take a lot of work. —Bianca

We are in a crisis after the pandemic—mental health crisis. We need relationships and belonging and connectedness to address it. And invest in that, not in also do this tutoring program and also do five field trips, etc.—Florence

*So much is about caring for staff and mentors. Staffing and people—a lot of funders willing to fund staffing—but only at 10 to 15 percent overhead. Mentoring and costs really are relational—that overhead is not enough. It's about people—not snacks and products and papers. **It's about investing in people and staffing first.**—Jenna*

*Studies from organizations like Race to Lead, Building Movement Project, and Echoing Green have indicated that the **number of BIPOC leaders in the nonprofit sector has remained stagnant over the last 15 years.** A major issue that keeps arising is a lack of access to social capital that BIPOC leaders face when compared to white leaders. There is a certain irony that our organizations are fighting for young people to have access to resources and opportunities, when we ourselves face the same barriers.—Michelle*



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our lived experience, data collected, and the listening process, the following are our top recommendations for funders to move forward a Philanthropic Agenda that gets to long-term, transformational outcomes for the young people supported by it.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Update funding processes and strategies to go all in on organizational and staffing capacity and relationship building

To address the disconnect between what funders say they are funding and what organizations are able to access in funding, **hold focus groups with your current grantees** to understand why staffing needs are not being met right now (e.g., salaries currently being paid less than current market rate, not offering benefits, etc.).

- **Identify a handful of grantees for an “Invest in Staff, Invest in Results” pilot** to a) bring lowest-paid staff up 15 percent and b) fund at least one crucial benefit for all staff.
- **Invest in capacity and operations for greater youth and volunteer inclusion**, not simply programming in these areas:
 - Youth inclusion in program development takes time and staff involvement to facilitate and capture.
 - Partnerships with outside organizations take time and staff involvement to foster long term. Partnerships are relationships between organizations and, like any other relationship, they need to be invested in.
 - Mentor/volunteer recruitment, training, and ongoing support, including direct relationship time with staff and mentors. Research shows the staff to match ratio is currently at one staff member for 77 matches—this is unsustainable.
- **Accept staffing costs as programmatic costs** when investing in initiatives to build social capital.
 - Our research is aligned with national nonprofit sector research that indicates mentoring organization staff identified their number one need as unrestricted funding. For mentoring programs, this is particularly important to ensure the proper quality support of mentors working with young people. Unrestricted funding allows flexibility to put resources toward sustaining the staffing costs necessary to recruit, train, and retain mentors over the long term.
 - Understand that with mentoring organizations specifically, so much of the work is relational. Investing in relationships seems like “overhead,” but it is integral to success. (Speaking to overhead/administrative caps on funding, CalNonprofits has an article that helps explain this well. It can be found [here](#).)
- **To this end, support the following staffing costs more:**
 - Recruitment of high-quality staff for positions within the organization and living wages and benefits for positions.
 - Professional development for the nonprofit’s staff to have more impact in long-term outcomes.
 - Investment in self-care/well-being for staff.
 - Investment in succession planning.



RECOMMENDATION 2

Provide multi-year funding whenever possible to create more stability for programs working on the long-term relationship building necessary to build social capital for young people

- **Create more multi-year (e.g., three- to five-year versus one- to two-year) funding opportunities**
 - This shift is especially vital for local funders. While national funders probably offer opportunities for larger multi-year investments more frequently, local funding opportunities often are less likely to be structured that way. With a majority of mentoring and youth-serving programs not tied to a national organization, local funding is particularly relevant. When local funders don't offer multi-year support or allow for continued renewal of grants, it makes sustainability and long-term outcomes more challenging and requires the organization to spend more money on fundraising.
- **Enable ability to renew a grant** for future years with demonstration of progress after one to two years.
- **Shift from funding “new” and “innovative” programs every year to finding a new or innovative program and investing in it for five years** to allow the organization to focus on building structures and systems that can sustain that program for years to come. (Maybe funding decreases year to year as the organization builds these structures and identifies funding streams.)
- **Private funders don't have to go it alone—advocate to unlock more public dollars** for this as well.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Make the grant-making process more equitable, especially for those typically denied social capital and connections

- **Provide grant-writing training** (or work with United Way and similar organizations) to support small nonprofits and BIPOC-led nonprofits especially.
- **Refine applications with equity in mind:** Consider length of applications' expected outcomes and questions, especially to offer better access for those systemically denied access to wealth.
 - Have applications available in more languages.
 - Allow submissions in various formats (e.g., digital, paper, video, and presentations).
 - Push beyond to broader, more diverse distribution of grant opportunities.
 - Create grant applications proportionate to the award.
- **Allow grants to be categorized by organization size.** For example, have different grant/funding opportunities for a small community-based organization with a budget of \$50,000 versus an organization with a \$750,000 budget.
- **Check in with and tailor to your grantees:** What do your grantees say needs to happen in order to make your grant-making more equitable?



RECOMMENDATION 3

Influence and support partners to understand what social capital is, the current inequity of it, metrics to measure to improve it, and how relationships are core to social capital

- **Promote the concept of social capital to peer funders, executives within companies, and those in your network.** A few resources may help shape these conversations:
 - <https://www.equitablefutures.org/toolkit/a-guide-for-talking-about-social-capital/>
 - General resource page of equitable futures: <https://www.equitablefutures.org/tools/>
 - <https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/the-power-of-social-capital-2>
- **Fund organizations to develop practitioner- and youth-informed evaluation and outcome-tracking processes and tools that better capture relationships and their impact/benefit for the mentee's life.**
- **Rethink metrics to focus on quality and relationships versus quantity and numbers:**
 - With pilot grantees—driven by youth and staff—co-create plans to measure mentee/mentor belonging and relationships within the context of increased staff satisfaction.
 - Accept outcomes that are not solely based on numbers, but rather on quality.



CONCLUSION: STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

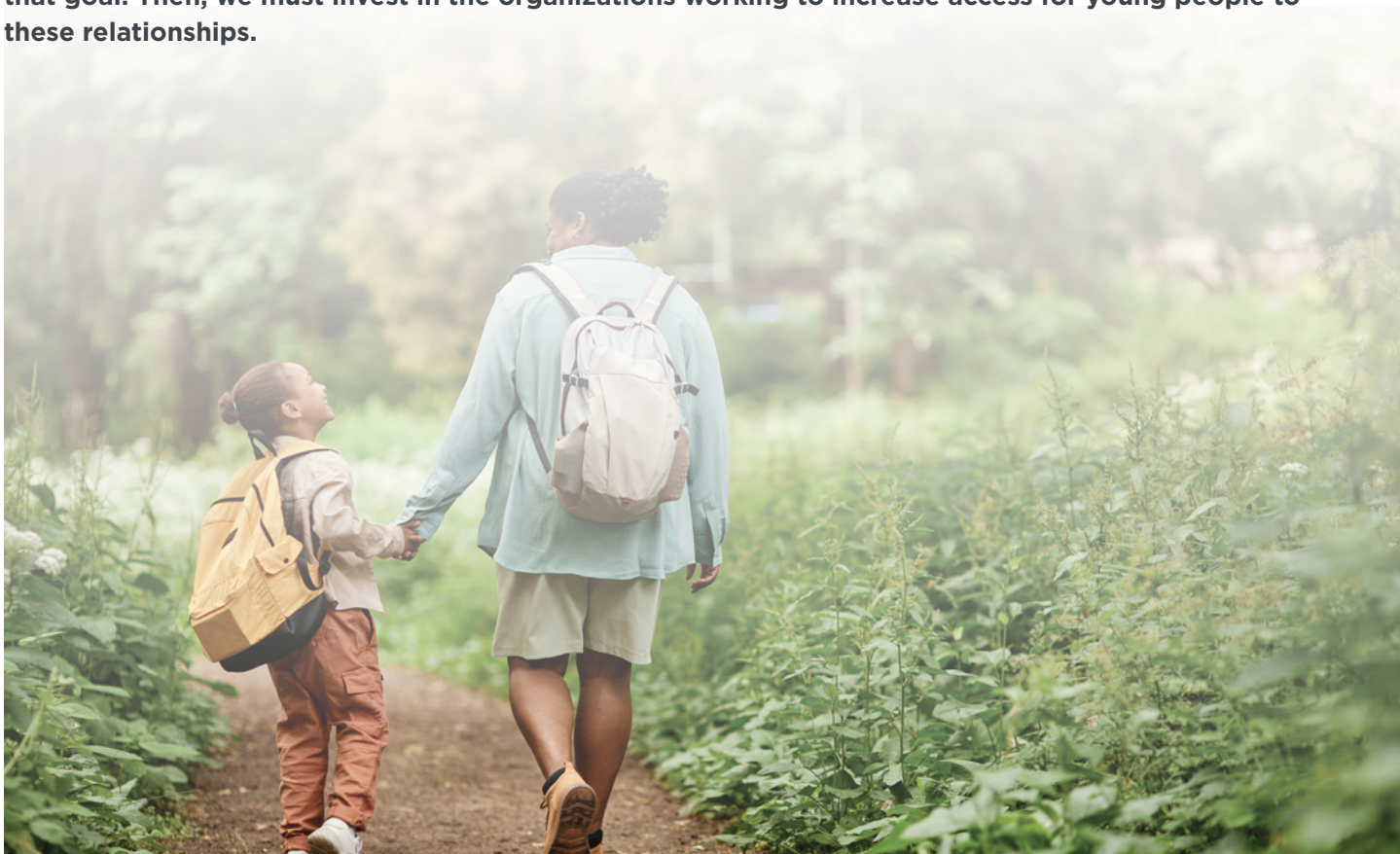
At the start of our report, we emphasized the transformational power of relationships. Funders and nonprofits that work together to support youth share a common goal: To cultivate the conditions that young people need to achieve their version of success. The data shows that both funders and staff view relationship building as a key factor for youth success, ranking it as a top three program outcome.

If we all agree that it is essential to create a web of support for young people, why is there a discrepancy in the sense of its importance? **Why do only 14 percent of funders see relationship building as key to long-term change, while 65 percent of staff recognize it as such?**

Further research is needed to understand this disconnect, but we can offer a hypothesis based on the listening tour our Catalysts for Change Participatory Action Research Team has been on since September 2022—and our combined hundreds of years of experience working with youth.

Nonprofit staff, unlike most funders, have direct relationships with the communities that we serve. We are in constant conversations with our young people with the purpose of listening, learning, and understanding. They confide in us their interests, their dreams, their goals, and their challenges. They trust us with their lived experience. This knowledge, and the relationships we created with them, helps us more accurately recognize where there are gaps to be filled and opportunities to strengthen support.

Young people's support networks vary; some have strong bonds with family or their community, while others find less of a connection. However, even those with close relationships can still benefit from having an additional network of connections. Widening their circle can help them gain access to resources and opportunities otherwise out of reach. **If our shared goal as nonprofit staff and funders is to create the conditions for youth to succeed, we must recognize that strong relationships are essential to achieve that goal. Then, we must invest in the organizations working to increase access for young people to these relationships.**





Our investigations have provided **four guidelines for philanthropists** to help strengthen social capital for young people:

- 1. Create funding strategies to address organizational capacity building and staffing.** Supporting mentees and mentors requires highly skilled staff who deserve to be equitably compensated for this challenging work.
- 2. Devise long-term funding plans, instead of settling for short-term, “new” and “innovative” initiatives.** This change in strategy gives organizations the time to create sustainable systems and apply what they have learned to achieve even better outcomes.
- 3. Rework grant applications with a focus on equity that considers what organizations with fewer resources need to apply and compete for those grants.** This can include, for instance, funding grant-writing courses for their employees, offering applications in several languages, and giving diverse options to submit applications, such as electronically, written documents, videos, and presentations.
- 4. Encourage peer funders and company executives to recognize the importance of social capital, with a primary focus on the relationship** as a quantifiable result.

If you're wondering how to begin and how you'll measure your success, following these guidelines is a good first step. But don't stop there.



Here are **some additional action steps** to make this transition and to help achieve progress on these four guidelines more broadly within the philanthropic community.

- **Share this report with your network** and emphasize one part that stood out to you and/or one of the recommendations that you plan to champion.
- **Speak to your existing grantees** with the intention of understanding the impact of social capital. How are they helping young people create connections? Where do they need additional funding and resources to expand and strengthen their efforts?
- **Review your funding priorities** with a view toward equitable social capital. Do they explicitly recognize the concept? Is it hinted at? Is there any indication of it at all? What relationships do you need to cultivate to make a stronger argument for its importance?
- **Help the Catalysts for Change team spread the word** about this report. Invite them to conferences, board discussions, and funder circles, and cover the associated expenses.
- **Fund additional social capital research.**

After researching and gathering different perspectives on the significance of relationships to youth success, it's clear most of us recognize the power of connections. We can recall moments when we either got help and support from someone, or when we needed someone to advocate on our behalf. We remember the impact that assistance had on the outcome. Though social capital research is a relatively new area of study, social capital itself—“people's access to, and ability to mobilize, human connections that might help them further their potential and their goals”—is not.

Hard work alone will not result in success. We need to stop perpetuating that myth. If we're serious about creating the conditions to help young people succeed, we must put money and resources into people, organizations, and systems, making it possible for them to build connections that can help them achieve their goals.

WHO WE ARE



Isabel Argoti (Maryland)

Who I am: I am a connector, creative analyzer, and nonprofit leader looking to create a better space for youth, women, girls, and first-generation students. I am currently the Deputy Director of Programs for Community Bridges Inc in Silver Spring, Maryland. We empower girls in grades three through 12 to be healthy and positive leaders in their communities. I also serve on the board for various youth programs and advocate for issues of women and girls in Montgomery County, Maryland. I am a daughter, sister, aunt, partner, friend, mentee, mentor, and community member.

My mentoring community: I take great pride in being a part of my Latino and immigrant community that molded me into a resilient and adaptable individual. Montgomery County is one of the most diverse counties in the nation, lending itself to dozens of languages, various immigrant communities, and a mesh of cultural backgrounds. Supporting our youth and families in such a diverse setting is a responsibility I hold near and dear to my heart. Whether it is sharing resources, connecting families, or translating information, I recognize that I am not an expert in all topics, but my responsibility is to share my knowledge and use my skillset to help my community. As a woman, especially, I find strength among the women who shaped me. I stay grounded in various women's groups, including my sorority, Montgomery County's Commission for Women, and girlfriend circles. Here, natural nurturing and mentoring is a means of accessibility, empowerment, and uplifting. I believe that safe spaces rooted in culture, shared identity, or lived experience are places of deep strength and opportunity.

My story: I am a first-generation student who immigrated to the United States from Ecuador right before my second birthday. I received mentorship and various community resources that poured into me and ultimately empowered my family and myself to succeed. Through afterschool programs, free and reduced lunch, sports team with equitable scholarships, teachers who were able to speak Spanish to my parents, college and financial aid assistance programs, and community mentorship, I was able to be the first in my family to go to college, start my own mentorship programs, and now continue to serve the same community I grew up in and which molded me. Right outside the nation's capital, Montgomery County is a beautiful community filled with generations of culture, diverse languages, hardworking immigrant families, and students ready to succeed. I believe that that if we work as a community network, we can help our kids succeed and improve our communities.



David Baker (Nebraska)

Who I am: As a dreamer, advocate, and listener, it has always been my goal to advocate for my communities. I strongly believe in the power of curiosity and regularly get excited about others' contribution to our world. Before my formal mentoring career, I spent eight years training scholastic and world-class performers in the color guard community. I find joy in watching our youth grow into themselves, and I'm excited to see what the future has to hold for all of the students I have interacted with and for those yet to come.

My mentoring community: One of the most incredible things about my mentoring community is how inclusive we strive to be. We strongly believe that every kid who wants a mentor deserves to have one, regardless of background or life situation. It is our mission to positively impact the world by inspiring our students to reach their full potential through mentoring. We currently serve thousands of students across a five-state region, connecting them with a safe, caring adult friend who focuses on their strengths.

My story: When I was 9 years old, my family moved back to the United States after spending five years abroad in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. While the entire experience shaped the person I am now, there is one clear lesson I've carried throughout my personal and professional life: people have perspectives and experiences that are incredibly valuable to hear and understand. I've been very privileged to have two parents that value curiosity and resiliency; who recognize the importance of failure. I'm incredibly thankful for my mentor, Hannah, who pushes me to be the best version of myself that I can be. I'm also grateful for my partner, Scott, who encourages my individual growth and helps me laugh on a daily basis.



Jenna Berry (California)

Who I am: I am a creative, stubborn, ambitious mountain mover. I believe that everything is figure-outable if we take the time to look at it from all sides. I love details, care deeply about people, and love creating space for people to thrive. I am a wife and a mother. My husband and I have four rambunctious, beautiful, hilarious kiddos. I have a master's degree in social work and a background of working with child-focused nonprofits. I am so very aware that children are our future and am passionate about investing in them now. I have spent time investing in youth through 4-H as the superintendent of Equine 4-H on Whidbey Island, through time as an instructor and wrangler at Exodus Farms, as a foster parent, and now as an adoptive parent. I joined the Catalyst Mentoring team as the school liaison and became the executive director in October of 2020. I am extremely passionate about the youth of our community and I love

that my role at Catalyst allows me to advocate for them.

My mentoring community: My mentoring community is expansive. I am honored to have been mentored by powerful women over the course of my life. I now work alongside and partner with powerful people across my community, state, and country who are providing mentoring in amazingly creative ways. I am extremely proud of the work that my team is doing through Catalyst Mentoring, based in Redding, California. We recruit, train, and, most importantly, support community members as they mentor kids on local school campuses. Our desire is that the youth of our community have healthy safe mentors to champion, guide, and encourage them. Every kid deserves to experience safe spaces and safe adults who care about them. We want our youth to have solid connections in our community. We feel that that is made possible by the way we invest in the community members that show up for them.

My story: My life has been greatly impacted by mentoring. I have been lucky to have had mentoring experiences all throughout my life. But four years ago, things really shifted for me. My husband and I were fostering and I was serving with a nonprofit in town that pairs rescued horses with kids who are hurting. My eyes were opened to just how few of the kids in my community had access to healthy supportive adults. My heart just continued to break and what I was seeing and experiencing ultimately lit a fire in me to start actively finding ways to expand mentoring in my community. I joined the Catalyst team in 2019 and built our school-based mentoring program on five local campuses, with the desire to remove the barriers for kids to have access to healthy safe adults. I was promoted to Executive Director in the fall of 2020 and have been honored to expand our program to 26 local campuses, serving 250 students. One of the most impactful things we have done while growing our program is adding in continued mentor support. We choose to lean in and invest in the mentors we send out to support kids. We have seen a massive impact with this model and far lower turnover rates with our mentors, but this model takes time and resources. One of our biggest struggles is finding funders that understand the importance of investing in relationships and community with our mentors to create better and longer-term relationships for our mentees. It's not overhead, it's an investment in people.



Stephanie Deible (Michigan)

Who I am: Stephanie is an inclusion and belonging advocate, mentor, avid learner, and friend. With a background in student affairs, leadership, and communications, she is passionate about increasing access and empowering future generations to actively pursue their goals. Stephanie has helped individuals all across the country gain access to the resources needed to become stronger advocates and lead the lives they want to live. Currently, she works alongside Disability Network West Michigan and Michigan Disability Rights Coalition to provide peer mentoring support and specialized programming that helps individuals set goals, as well as providing them tools to help increase inclusion and accessibility in their communities.

My mentoring community: Stephanie’s mentoring community is ever-evolving. For nearly 10 years, she has had the opportunity to mentor women of all ages, including college students, as well as youth with and without disabilities and their allies.

My story: As an individual with a disability herself, Stephanie faced many access barriers growing up as a wheelchair user in rural West Michigan. Having limited resources—and not knowing many others who were trying to navigate life with a disability—motivated Stephanie to try to use her experience and knowledge to create change. From a young age, Stephanie recognized and valued the importance of having mentors who are there to help others learn the skills that are needed to help them succeed in their own lives. Today, she strives to be one of those dynamic and generous professionals who is paying it forward to future generations.



M. Michelle Derosier (NYC)

Who I am: For the past 15 years, I have connected volunteers, educators, community partners, and funders to support marginalized students. I currently serve as Associate Executive Director for iCouldBe, a virtual mentoring nonprofit. In my role, I am leading the investigation into AI's potential to foster relationships between matches and to help young people develop new connections, with a focus on doing so ethically. I want to leverage AI to amplify the impact of iCouldBe's work. In 2025, I will become the organization's first person of color Executive Director. In 2021, I was chosen for the American Express NGen Fellows Program honoring changemakers below forty.

My mentoring community: My first non-family mentor was my childhood pastor, who taught me to see strength in my ability to listen and to measure my words. Since then, teachers, colleagues, and friends have all been part of my mentoring circle. Now, I am part of an informal network of BIPOC leaders with the mantra, "when you know better, you do better." We are unlearning damaging narratives about successful leadership and not passing on the harm done to us in our careers.

My story: Growing up in a high-needs community and now serving as the Associate Executive Director of iCouldBe, an education-technology nonprofit that supports youth in similar areas, I have seen firsthand the two types of narratives of success that young people in this country receive. Students in economically challenged communities are only taught what-you-know, not who-you-know. Meanwhile, those from more privileged backgrounds are provided with both what-you-know and who-you-know, almost as a given.

Success doesn't come solely from hard work and self-determination. It's time we stopped telling those lies. If we are to bridge the inequity gap and give a fighting chance to young people with no or limited access to a broad network of support, we must invest the money and resources in the work of intentionally building relationships.



Gaby Edon (Ohio)

Who I am: Gaby is a wife, a mother of three, a mentor, and a nonprofit/community leader. Her love and passion for girls' education and empowerment has inspired her to launch Girls LEAP Mentoring program in Columbus, Ohio. Gaby's main objective is to educate, inspire, and empower girls to be bold leaders and changemakers. She believes education is the most powerful tool to alleviate poverty and that investing in girls/women can result in positive changes in communities. As the first in her family to complete college, Gaby is very proud of her efforts to expand social capital opportunities for youth.

With over 18 years of experience in the field of Banking/Finance, Gaby holds an M.B.A. degree in Finance and a B.S. in Business Administration with a minor in Economics. While she was pursuing her career and serving as a Vice President at a major bank, she was actively mentoring youth through her employer, church, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters. She loves to help others by volunteering her time, mentoring children, and serving in soup kitchens. She speaks five languages and loves to travel, read, bike, cook, dance, and learn new things. She has been married for 22 years and is grateful for her husband's unconditional love and support that helps her pursue her dreams.

My mentoring community: My mentoring community includes resilient girls from fifth to twelfth grades from underserved communities and first-generation African descendants in Columbus, Ohio, as well as dedicated mentors, engaged parents, and local community partners.

My story: Gabriela Edon has always had a passion for helping others, especially girls, access education. Growing up in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa, Gaby was a youth leader in her church and tutored math and science. The defining moment in her life was when she chose to adopt an at-risk young girl off the streets in Guinea-Bissau to help her attend school while providing support to her elderly grandmother. Her interest in empowering girls took root then. She came to the United States with a Fulbright scholarship with six other countrymen.



Santina Fryer (Georgia)

Who I am: I am the founder of GENTS&GLAM, a youth development organization. I love rural Georgia. My goal is to inspire young people to dream, believe, and achieve. I am an elected official, mentor, and a mother to Jacob, my 14-year-old son.

My mentoring community: My mentoring community is comprised of beautiful women. My mother is by far my biggest mentor, friend, confidant, and cheerleader. I have friends who keep me grounded, who encourage me and nurture my soul. I created Gents&Glam to provide young people with opportunities, resources, and support. The kids I mentor are my strength, lifeline, and hope for a better tomorrow.

My story: I grew up in a family of eight. I am the fifth child of six. My parents loved and cared for us immensely. My dad, however, died when I was 12. My dad taught me how to serve, love, and care for others. I would help take care of him when he was sick. I learned how to be empathetic from that, and desired to change the world. Gents&Glam is my passion. Gents stands for guys engaged now to succeed and Glam stands for girls advocating and mentoring. Through Gents&Glam we provide mentoring, life skills training, college tours, post-secondary support, and experiential educational travel. Mentoring is important, especially in rural America. Young people need to feel connected and have a sense of belonging.



Chris Hultquist (Vermont)

Who I am: Chris is a social impact innovator dedicated to serving vulnerable populations and enhancing community sustainability. As an Executive Director and consultant, Chris has provided an array of advising, strategic planning, and management consultation to over 30 organizations across the East Coast, ranging from small start-ups to multi-million-dollar organizations. Chris led the implementation of a community entrepreneurship and training model that reduced youth substance abuse rates in rural New Hampshire. Additionally, he managed legislative outreach with local, state, and national representatives to secure funding for mentoring and prevention services. Chris' advocacy work has also led to presentations at statewide and national conferences, including FYSB, OJJDP, Mentor National, and CADCA. Chris holds a master's degree in Counseling with a concentration in Substance Abuse Counseling from Capella University.

My mentoring community: Growing up around the world allowed me to see mentoring as a valuable tool to not only expand one's support system, but to open a wide new perspective to life. I am grateful to have mentors from various walks of life and socioeconomic statuses.

My story: I knew from a young age that I was passionate about mentoring and enhancing social capital. My family moved from New York to Irian Jaya, Indonesia, when I was 2 years old to work with the Dani tribe. My earliest memories are of the smoke-filled villages packed with tribesmen and women during a celebratory pig roast. My parents still tell stories of me as a 6-year-old blonde-haired boy venturing off with the villagers to hunt a wild boar. By the age of 4, I had circumnavigated the globe, a feat I would accomplish another four times before college.

The international perspective opened my eyes to challenges and resourcefulness on a scale I could never have imagined. From the poverty in Calcutta to the ingenuity of the Singaporean businessmen, I saw first-hand the power of scarcity alongside the power of creativity. These intertwined forces gave me a passion for helping vulnerable populations and opened my eyes to the need to enhance social capital for today's youth.



Bianca Myrick (Virginia)

Who I am: I am a mother, daughter, sister, friend, connector, and network weaver. I am a lover of history and strategic thinking. Reading and walking outside are two things I love to do. My personal and professional experiences propelled me into starting Pretty Purposed, a nonprofit that inspires communities to empower young women and girls through social emotional learning, mentorship, and enrichment. Pretty Purposed now supports several schools and community-based sites throughout Southside & Central Virginia. I left my career as a teacher to be part-time Executive Director of Pretty Purposed, and I love it. Aside from Pretty Purposed, I have a few other roles. My love of ideas and operationalizing solutions fuels my work as a consultant for Mentor Virginia. I am a graduate of Virginia State University, where I now get to nurture my students as an adjunct professor and supervisor of student teachers, teaching classes about the nonprofit sector. I am also part-time Executive Director of the Virginia Association for Environmental Education, a statewide professional network that elevates environmental education. In addition to being a nonprofit leader, I dedicate my time advocating for funding for Black- and Brown-led organizations through trust-based and equitable grantmaking as Vice President of Collective 365.

My mentoring community: As a former fifth- and sixth-grade educator, I saw a need in my community to cultivate joyful spaces for girls, where they could meet friends, learn skills, and participate in an intergenerational exchange of wisdom. Our staff, mentors, volunteers, and network are truly a community of women that believe in being a part of the village for our girls. Our girls are fun, creative, resilient, and remind me of myself quite often.

My story: I grew up in Petersburg, Virginia, with my mom and my brother. As an overcomer of domestic violence, childhood poverty, and growing up in an under-resourced community, the women around me from birth to now have been consistent mentors in my life. I feel incredibly blessed that my work incorporates lived experience and allows me to center being a mom, building a beloved community, and elevating the voices and work of others around me.



Florence Parks (California)

Who I am: flow is love in the forms of a Robinhood for her hood, a mother to three amazing beings (Dalayna, Jared, and London), a wife to a beautiful, intelligent, strong black man, and a mentor in action and in purpose.

My mentoring community: My mentoring community is active and strong! In Humboldt County, the Board and Team at Big Brothers Big Sisters support and strengthen mentoring for the entire community. The emerging Humboldt County Mentoring Coalition and the California Mentoring Partnership's Leadership Team are essential professionals who have sharpened my skills and uniquely prepared me to advance the field of mentoring in my community and throughout the Nation State of California. I work with the best of the best, from researchers and trainers Dr. Dustianne North, Erika Green, Judy Strother Taylor, and Jerry Sherk to practitioners Jim Kooler, Arthelle Porter-Burns, Rosario Delgadillo-Di Prima, Bob Gotch, Doreen Ivery, and Lorna Pallares. MENTOR and Community Wealth Partners have expanded my mentoring community to include MENTOR and, most recently, the disruptors on the Catalysts for Change team. For that, I am forever filled with gratitude.

My story: Florence has dedicated her life's work to mentoring. She was drawn to the professional sphere of mentoring through her lived experiences during the war on drugs, mass incarceration, and her mother Carman's resolve to stand in the gap during her foundational years. She took refuge in the passionate community at Fighting Back Partnership, led by Jane Callahan, where mentors worked to transform carceral systems and address systemic issues. From her early exposure to community activism, she has been instrumental in the mentoring field—especially focused on equity for youth in Foster Care and informing statewide JEDI work (Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion). Active in developing programs, supporting and training volunteer mentors, and serving on the Leadership Team of the California Mentoring Partnership, Florence continues her work. She is currently the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast. When she isn't evolving mentoring, she is tree bathing or traveling with her husband Baron and daughters Dalayna (27) and London (8). #FightingInjusticeEverywhere



Tamice Spencer-Helms (Virginia)

Who I am: Tamice Spencer-Helms is a published author, speaker, and theologian based in Richmond, Virginia. After 16 years of full-time campus ministry, she founded Sub:Culture Incorporated, a nonprofit that provides holistic support and crisis relief for Black college students. In addition to her bachelor's degree in Religious Studies and Copywriting, Tamice has an M.A. in Contextual Leadership from Wheaton College and an M.A. in Theology from Fuller Seminary.

Over the years, Tamice has been a changemaker and pioneer for young people in her community. Throughout her life, she has connected, supported, and ministered to countless young adults and college students. Her friendly and down-to-earth approach to public speaking and teaching, as well as her dedication to theological study, has helped empower and inspire people in her community and beyond. Tamice lives in Richmond with her spouse, Ellison, her daughter, Harlym, and her puppy, Beacon.

My mentoring community: I provide DEI-infused research and curriculum for Mentor VA, which serves mentees ages 6 to 18. My organization serves students from ages 18 to 25. We provide mentors, mentorship opportunities, scholarships, fellows programs, and writing internships to BIPOC students who live and experience life at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities.

My story: After nearly two decades of campus ministry work, I grew weary of ministry organizations that offered theoretical and spiritual help that lacked any real or tangible demonstration. I routinely watched students face crises that their counterparts in the demographic majority did not face. We found that organizations that work with these students sometimes caused more harm than good, because of a lack of training in the unique disparities, perspectives, and challenges faced by the population we serve. I learned from my grandmother that if you see a need, meet it. If you can find the solution to a problem, then create it yourself. So, that is what I did in 2018. I started Sub:Culture Inc.



Jamal Stroud (South Carolina)

Who I am: Jamal is a man who wants to foster a healthier world through an expertise for mentoring youth. The key to healing young lives after trauma lies with programs that utilize trauma-informed care through supportive relationships to instill resiliency and hope to act as a stabilizer to trauma. Always remember when mentoring, the goal is progress, not perfection. Jamal has been a guest on The Ellen Show and has received numerous awards, including winning the prestigious Jefferson Award and the Public Elevation Excellence in Mentoring Award from MENTOR.

My mentoring community: My mentoring community includes youth ages 6 to 18 who were never taught how to dream in life and ranges from the local to the national level.

My story: Jamal Stroud is the founder of Big Homie Lil Homie Mentoring, a mentoring program for young males growing up without father figures. On a national level, Jamal works as the Mentor and Outreach Manager for Camp HOPE America, where he provides technical assistance to 40 different programs throughout the United States. Jamal has been recognized locally and nationally for the lasting impact on more than 10,000 youth, offering support and positive male role models for young people in South Carolina. Jamal's personal experience—growing up in the foster care system and living in six different homes by the time he was 6 years old—led him to the front lines of improving and advocating for youth.



Xavier Vazquez (Minnesota)

Who I am: I am a dreamer, connector, strategic thinker, and transformational leader who genuinely cares about the community and all its components. I am a father of two boys who is doing all he can to create safe spaces for our current youth and, consequently, impact my own kids. I live in Minnesota, where I built a community of love, support, and trust around me. Outside work, I also spend my free time connecting people with resources. Uplifting others uplifts me. As such, I do so every chance I get. I'm passionate about strengthening the community.

My mentoring community: No one is where they are now by just relying on themselves. It doesn't matter if we have direct or indirect influence from someone else, we as a community rely on mentoring and community building to reach our goals. There was always someone that believed in you, either for your first job or your relationship with your partner. I was blessed to have people around me that indirectly guided me to where I am now, basing my decisions on their lived experiences or stories. I also learned other things by falling and getting up continuously, but my family was my support network. I needed this growing up, knowing there was a place where I could come back, rest, and recharge when I needed to. That's what I'm trying to build around our youth, mentors, and families—a safe space and community that they see as their support network to return, rest, and recharge when needed. But also, to be there for them to share, celebrate, and honor their accomplishments when they want to.

My story: I am a first-generation college graduate. Three days after finishing my bachelor's degree, I moved to Minnesota from Puerto Rico to attend Medical School at the University of Minnesota. On my way to Medical School, the nonprofit sector and its work in the community awakened a passion that transformed my career. I'm doing my Master's in Business Administration, finishing in the summer of 2023. I'm currently the Executive Director at Saint Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN), a community media and technology center that provides the tools and training for youth, adult, and nonprofits to use media and technology to tell stories and gain job skills. Don't hesitate to connect if you want to hear more about my story and lived experiences!

OUR ORGANIZATIONS

Name	City	State	Affiliations
Isabel Argoti	Silver Spring / Rockville	MD	http://www.communitybridges-md.org
David Baker	Omaha	NE	https://teammates.org/
Jenna Berry	Redding	CA	https://catalystmentoring.org
Stephanie Deible	Grant	MI	https://mymdrc.org/ www.disabilitynetworkwm.org
M. Michelle Derosier	Brooklyn	NY	www.iCouldBe.org
Gabriela Edon	Columbus	OH	http://www.girlsleapcolumbus.org/
Santina Fryer	Baxley	GA	https://www.facebook.com/groups/GENTSANDGLAM/
Chris Hultquist	Wilder	VT	https://highhorses.org/ https://vermontafterschool.org/vyp/
Bianca Myrick	Chesterfield	VA	https://www.prettypurposed.org/
Florence Parks	Eureka	CA	http://www.ncbbbs.org/index.php
Tamice Spencer-Helms	Richmond	VA	https://www.subcultureinc.org/
Jamal Stroud	Columbia	SC	https://www.allianceforhope.com/about-us/our-team/ https://www.bighomieliilhomie.org/
Xavier Vazquez	Minneapolis	MN	https://www.spnn.org/



SOURCES FROM THE FIELD

Below are some of the sources of existing research we looked at and key data points tied to these findings and recommendations.

FINDING 1

Investment is needed in staffing and capacity building by grantors/funders, including succession, hiring, and well-being

- Among organizations led by women and girls of color that support women and girls, only 6.3 percent of those with budgets under \$50,000 have paid staff, while almost two in five (36.7 percent) with budgets greater than \$50,000 have paid staff. ([Pocket Change](#))
- The median size of grants made by foundations to organizations led by and serving women and girls of color is \$15,000. Nearly two-thirds (62.4 percent) of foundation grants are \$25,000 and under. Such small grants make it difficult to hire and pay staff sufficiently or adequately support the use of multiple strategies while working on multiple issues. ([Pocket Change](#))

**The data presented is representative of organizations that are run by and for women and girls of color, which provide a variety of services, including mentoring.*

- The average program has 7.45 FTE on staff, but only 4.1 are paid employees. ([Examining Youth](#))
- Understaffing can lead to issues with meeting demand and sustainability: 59 percent of programs have fewer than three staff members. ([Examining Youth](#))
- Progress is always seen as bigger and more: This leaves little or no ability to consider the cost of growth in social, emotional, psychic, embodied, spiritual, and financial realms. (From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001)

FINDING 2

Investment is needed in staffing and capacity building by grantors/funders, including succession, hiring, and well-being

- Eight in 10 adults support the use of government funds to grow mentoring opportunities, especially when charitable support is absent. ([Power of Relationships](#))
- Foundations committed to women and girls of color are most likely to fund community organizing (87 percent) and policy advocacy (69.6 percent), yet organizations by and for women and girls of color most commonly report doing service delivery (72.3 percent). Fewer than one in five foundations (17.4 percent) report funding service delivery. ([Pocket Change](#))
- Quality over Quantity: Short-term thinking, urgency thinking, either/or thinking in the consuming effort to meet often unrealistic quantitative goals—numbers. (From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001)



FINDING 3

More equitable grant processes are needed

- As reported to Candid, the median size of grants made by foundations to organizations by and for women and girls of color is \$15,000, while the median grant size for all foundation grants is \$35,000. In other words, the median grant to organizations by and for women and girls of color is less than half the overall median. ([Pocket Change](#))
- One Right Way (Perfectionism): Little time, energy, or money is put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice. In other words, there is little or no learning from mistakes, and/or little investigation of what is considered a mistake and why. (From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001)
- Progress is bigger and more: Valuing those who have “progressed” over those who “have not”—where progress is measured in degrees, grades, money, power, status, material belongings—in ways that erase lived experience and wisdom/knowledge that is invisibilized—*tending, cleaning, feeding, nurturing, caring for, raising up, supporting (thank you Bevelyn Ukah)*. (From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001)

FINDING 4

More research and conversations are needed to help funders and organizations better understand social capital

- “This mirrors the general research on volunteering, which suggests that those with more robust resources and social capital are most likely to have the ability to volunteer. Those struggling to get by in their own lives may be less likely to volunteer in a time-intensive activity like mentoring.” ([Power of Relationships](#))
- “When an employer directly supports mentoring, the percentage of individuals who mentor, both in a structured program and informally, triples in size.” ([Power of Relationships](#))
- “[E]mployers can play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of mentoring for adults, and bringing more mentoring to all youth across the nation. They can triple the rates of mentoring.” ([Power of Relationships](#))

Barriers to Funding and WGO Leadership

■ Not Led by WGO ■ Led by WGO

