I AM A WORLD CHANGER.

Bringing Youth Into the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Best Practices and Opportunities for Granting and Program Design
From the Youth Entrepreneurship Learning Initiative (YELI)

CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION

NEI new economy initiative

Community Foundation FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

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A NOTE FROM OUR STAFF
AT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

Southeast Michigan has suffered greatly as COVID-19 continues to touch every aspect of our lives. At the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan (CFSEM), we are determined to do our part to ensure the health and safety of our community, and we have been proactive in grantmaking related to COVID-19 relief. As a special project of CFSEM, the New Economy Initiative (NEI) continues to support entrepreneurs and small businesses, grow new companies, create new jobs, and build a more diverse and equitable economy for our region.

Youth are critical to the future of our entrepreneurship ecosystem and the stability of our economy. During these difficult times, we are committed to ensuring that youth emerge from this crisis with strength, resilience, the capacity to dream, and pathways to achieve.

This report highlights key findings from the Youth Entrepreneurship Learning Initiative (YELI). While the YELI work took place pre-COVID-19, our findings may offer some direction for grantmaking and youth programming today. Four opportunities are worth considering:

> 1. Encouraging **experimentation** and **collaboration**. Youth entrepreneurship programs must creatively navigate the challenges and opportunities of distance learning in order to keep youth engaged and thriving. Youth entrepreneurship program providers will need to try new approaches, take more risks, and work together to offer enriching, nurturing experiences.

> 2. Being **flexible** and **inclusive**. Many of our YELI grantees faced the challenges of inadequate access to transportation and technology. In the midst of COVID-19, educators have worked to accommodate students who lack adequate access to technology. Now more than ever, youth programming may need to be more asynchronous and nonsequential in order to be successful.

> 3. Prioritizing youth **leadership** and **mentorship**. Leadership opportunities and great mentorship are both critical aspects of youth entrepreneurship programs. During COVID-19, youth need to be more independent and professional in order to be successful with distance learning. Many are doing so with parents and caregivers who are already overwhelmed with responsibilities. Mentorship is more important than ever, and the rise of video conferencing may actually create better access to a wider range of mentors.

> 4. Creating **new metrics for success**. In order to accommodate the wide range of program designs, the YELI reporting guidelines allowed grantees to collect and share the program data that was most relevant to them. COVID-19 is a great time to thoughtfully consider how learning outcomes and program assessment and reporting can be more innovative and inclusive.

Throughout this project, NEI used its assets and relationships for the YELI project, in partnership with the Community Foundation. As NEI continues to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem, CFSEM will continue its work in supporting youth, and will incorporate lessons learned from YELI into future youth-focused and youth-led projects. CFSEM has been committed to advancing youth voice and leadership through permanently endowed funds, a Youth Advisory Committee, and various special initiatives over the last three decades. As we move forward, CFSEM will build upon the learnings and work from YELI to further advance youth leadership in our region. We will also use this experience to inform our work at the intersections of youth organizing, community-building, and social justice.

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BACKGROUND

The New Economy Initiative is a special project of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. In 2017, NEI and CFSEM co-funded a scan that focused on programming designed to help young people in the K-12 age group learn about entrepreneurship, develop an entrepreneurial mindset, or start businesses.

The scan described the landscape of youth entrepreneurship-focused programs and organizations in southeast Michigan, national models of innovative youth entrepreneurship programs, and an understanding of the role of philanthropy in supporting these programs. It also revealed key challenges to successful youth entrepreneurship programming including transportation, a lack of infrastructure and connectivity among existing programs, and a lack of integration of youth entrepreneurship programming within school curricula.

The scan became the catalyst for NEI's partnership with the C.S. Mott Foundation for this project through a one-year grant. This grant was the foundation of the Youth Entrepreneurship Learning Initiative cohort. The C.S. Mott Foundation chose Detroit/southeast Michigan as a focus area because of the strong entrepreneurial ecosystem that already exists for adults, and because of NEI's instrumental role in helping to build that ecosystem.

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ABOUT THE YELI COHORT

The Youth Entrepreneurship Learning Initiative cohort was made up of nine organizations, all with existing entrepreneurship programs in southeast Michigan. All were current or former NEI/ CFSEM grantees that work with underserved populations.

The organizations were supported in piloting projects and developing strategies for building effective youth entrepreneurship programming that could connect youth between the ages of 14-24 to the existing adult entrepreneurship ecosystem in southeast Michigan.

HOW THE COHORT WORKED TOGETHER

Each organization in the YELI cohort was given the opportunity to design a pilot project that would help test ways to introduce youth to the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem in southeast Michigan, helping to better connect youth and adults. In October 2018, NEI disbursed YELI funding in the form of $20,000 grants for each organization in the cohort. NEI convened the cohort five times over the course of a year to discuss opportunities and challenges, and to share ideas and resources.

In preparation for creating the grantmaking strategy of the program, a literature review was conducted that helped shape the grant application and reporting guidelines. The review included a scan of current academic scholarship, industry reports, and a comparative analysis of various successful youth entrepreneurship programs from across the country. It examined the potential for southeast Michigan youth to succeed in the innovation economy through better exposure to the region's existing entrepreneurial ecosystem.

KEY TOPICS THAT UNIFIED THE COHORT

Topics included:

- Social and economic forces shaping the nation and southeast Michigan

- Challenges and implications of reaching underserved populations

- What it takes to foster an entrepreneurial mindset in youth

- How to frame an ecosystem with youth at the center

- How to measure the success of program design and outcomes

OVERVIEW

The participating organizations and their YELI projects were:

The DETROIT AREA PRE-COLLEGE ENGINEERING PROGRAM partners with Michigan universities to develop and facilitate STEM curricula to youth who live in the city of Detroit and southeast Michigan.

DAPCEP'S project introduced an entrepreneurial component into the existing Hustle-to-CEO program design, utilizing mobile app development software to create a new business opportunity.

TECHTOWN supports entrepreneurs who are developing technology-centric, high-growth retail, wholesale, and neighborhood-based businesses.

TECHTOWN'S project provided training to Detroit Public School Community District high school teachers in the Korda Method, a set of principles used to build an entrepreneurial mindset, and the Lean Startup methodology.

LAWRENCE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY'S Centrepolis Accelerator is the university's public face for entrepreneurship services, while the LTU Marburger STEM Center is the clearinghouse for the STEM initiatives on LTU's campus.

LTU'S project connected their accelerator and STEM center directly to Detroit neighborhoods through a partnership with the faith-based organization Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in the form of a youth entrepreneurship program and pitch competition.

The DETROIT FOOD AND ENTREPRENEUR-SHIP ACADEMY partners with high schools, educators, chefs, business owners, and food entrepreneurs to facilitate a year-round course of study that results in the design and launch of students' own "triple-bottom-line" food businesses.

DFA'S project focused on expanding their Small Batch Detroit business launch program, which engages youth from elementary school to beyond graduation across Detroit's neighborhoods.They increased their mentorship and field trips.

THE HENRY FORD provides "unique educational experiences based on authentic objects, stories, and lives from America's traditions of ingenuity, resourcefulness, and innovation."

THF'S project expanded aspects of the Michigan Invention Convention to better include hard-to-reach youth through a virtual competition platform and learning community. They also hosted two Invention Convention workshops with Wayne County educators.

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THE HENRY FORD LEARNING INSTITUTE prepares students to make an effective transition from elementary and high school classrooms to college and beyond through four K-12 urban Henry Ford Academies.

HFLI'S project documented their approaches, lesson plans, and other learning tools, and created a digital "how-to" guide to help other educators implement STEAM Lab camps that support Youth Leadership x Design in their own communities, including schools, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and other youth-focused organizations.

GIVE MERIT INC. oversees the FATE program, a four-year, cohort-based mentorship and leadership experience for Detroit high school students that blends project-based learning, entrepreneurship, career exposure, and character development while creating projects for the cause-based fashion brand, Merit.

GIVE MERIT'S project was a youth-led charity fundraising event planning project for 11th graders, who hoped to raise $80,000 for FATE college scholarships. The students' ideas included celebrity guests, games, and refreshments. Planning activities included envisioning, promotion, pricing, and budgeting.

BUILD INSTITUTE is a small business accelerator focused on grassroots community entrepreneurship, with a mission to make it easier for artisans, tradespeople, retailers, and others to establish independent businesses.

BUILD'S project consisted of two Youth Detroit SOUP events which were community-based, micro-granting dinners. The goal of these dinners was to lower the barriers for young Detroiters who are starting small businesses, and to develop a supportive community built by and for Detroit youth.

MICHIGAN WOMEN FORWARD is the only public, statewide foundation specifically devoted to the economic self-sufficiency and personal well-being of the state's women and girls.

MWF'S project was to augment their Unstoppable Generation of Girls Summer Camps with the program UGOGirls Intensive. The program included a greater focus on entrepreneurship and 21st century skills. The organization partnered with a Detroit charter school called Equity Education and an outside consultant from New York City's Out of School Time initiative for help with the effort.

OVERVIEW

IMPACT SUMMARY OF YELI GRANTEE PROJECTS

1. DAPCEP **utilized an existing entrepre-neurial curriculum and combined** their most successful entrepreneur training curriculum with a low code mobile app development platform.

2. **Youth were leaders** in the selection of the technology they wanted to learn. Their voices were heard and the program responded.

3. Youth gained **specialized skills** that are transferable to the job market like understanding business concepts, writing, accounting, presentation, and evaluating the impact of concepts on end users. They also learned **skills** like success-oriented attitudes, risk-taking, and teamwork.

1. TechTown **partnered with teachers** at two Detroit high schools to deliver entrepreneurial concepts through real-world projects to develop solutions for problems that mattered to them.

2. They **utilized an existing methodology** – the Korda Method – and were able to send two high school instructors to the training. They also hosted a workshop that was open to members of the YELI cohort. Korda was an **efficient and affordable** way to help expand the expertise of educators.

3. The program happened **during school hours,** and therefore it was built into existing classes so transportation was not an issue.

1. LTU partnered with **faith-based organizations** to deliver their youth entrepreneurship competition.

2. Working with a congregation ensured participation and support at all phases of the project. It also allowed them to **engage an existing and trusted network of adults to work with the youth.**

3. They **adapted existing models** for the boot-camp and pitch competition, and recruited the **expertise of their university staff and faculty**.

4. They provided adult mentors, field trips, and exposure to area entrepre-neurship support organizations.

1. DFA used the funding to work with more food business partners as **field trip hosts, workshop leaders, and mentors** for their students' Small Batch Program.

2. **Financial literacy** was stressed through a workshop on banking, budgeting, and taxes. **Field trips, skill-shares,** and **working at markets (i.e. direct sales)** are also important aspects of the program.

3. As an ongoing part of DFA's work, students run market stands, which makes them more interested in learning more about **customer service**. Through field trips funded by the grant, they learned about how customer experience plays a role in sustaining local enterprises.

1. THF **successfully collaborated** with key technology, educational, and networking partners to achieve the goals of the project and ensure the target audience was reached. In doing so, they **assured subject matter expertise as well as attendance and participation.**

2. They combined Michigan Virtual's **experience in facilitating** design sprints and developing student-centered digital learning platforms with their own logistical and programmatic knowledge about creating student learning programs.

3. THF was able to **expand their network** in new and exciting ways through resource-motivated partnerships.

1. HFLI took their existing STEAM Lab curriculum and tried to make it more **accessible for sharing and scaling** a new Learning Management System for educators. Their work focused on **the education of educators**.

2. The HFLI curriculum promotes facilitation, mentoring, and coaching over direction from the adults. They guide with questions and possibilities, rather than authoritative statements or positions; share their personal experience as entrepreneurs; and offer stories of challenge, success, lessons learned, and aspirations. They also ensure **compassionate judging over competitive pitching** in their STEAM Lab exhibition.

1. Give Merit's project with 11th graders is **one part of a multiyear program** where students learn skills in the classroom and then flex those skills with a real-life project: planning an event.

2. For projects like these, students work with a **wide range of partners** from com-munication, retail, and event/hospitality. For this project they worked with TJ Maxx, a local hotel, and a local news channel.

2. They have **committed mentors** and work with University of Michigan's NAACP to recruit Black business leaders. They focus on creating a **family atmosphere,** and that is what their program is known for.

1. Build **remodeled** their existing SOUP program for youth. This allowed them to execute two events in a short period of time.

2. Build worked closely with youth to plan and execute the Youth SOUP and **utilized existing youth networks.**

3. Youth were **engaged in the event planning**, providing initial feedback in the planning stages, and helped pick a day/time/location for the first SOUP event.

4. Youth SOUP **event guests learned** about empathy, participating in a community, the power of voting and democracy, and the importance of supporting local projects.

1. MWF made the choice to **augment an existing program** to give it greater focus on entrepreneurship.

2. MWF enhanced their project by **bringing in outside expertise** that was funded by another grant.

3. Their expert brought a deep **knowledge about national standards and best practices** in program planning, delivery, evaluation, staffing, budgeting, safety/security concerns, quality measurements, and the investment strategies of other city networks.

GRANTING PROCESS

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES AND GRANTMAKING GUIDELINES

The granting process focused on driving youth entrepreneurship in southeast Michigan through an ecosystems approach. The granting process was structured with careful consideration for the monetary amount of the grants ($20,000 each) and the amount of time the organizations would need to commit.

The modest budget and the tight turnaround time were put in place to encourage **experimentation.** NEI established realistic expectations and urged the participating organizations to set achievable goals by **taking one of three approaches:**

1. Using the money to test something new,
2. Adding to or enhancing an existing program, or
3. Expanding an existing program or building upon existing successes.

Furthermore, the organizations had the opportunity to submit collaborative proposals to receive a joint grant, compiling grant dollars and resources. While none of the organizations chose to take this approach, **accessibility and collaboration** were communicated through the granting guidelines. The grantmaking process was not framed as a competition, but as an opportunity to build community among the organizations.

CREATING THE GRANT APPLICATION

There were five key facets of the application:

1. The entrepreneurial ecosystem: The organizations were asked about the issues or problems they wanted to address with the grant, who in their existing ecosystem would be involved, and how they would establish or strengthen connections between youth and adults in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

2. Youth leadership: The organizations described how youth could lead in the creation or execution of the project.

3. Access: The application included questions about how the project would address diversity and inclusion, and how youth in underserved communities would learn about the project and participate.

4. Assessment: The literature review revealed that youth entrepreneurship programs are most valuable when they help youth develop an entrepreneurial mindset. Therefore, the development of an entrepreneurial mindset was an important measure of success.

5. Logistics: Some logistical information was requested as part of the application process, including who would be served, where the project would take place, a timeline, a budget, and how the grant might be paired with funds from other resources.

GRANTING PROCESS

REPORTING

Reporting was another aspect of the grant design that was carefully considered. **Best practices, challenges,** and **areas of opportunity** were the main focuses of the reporting.

Reporting guidelines were written to be **flexible,** as a way to be inclusive of the wide range of YELI projects. For example, it was suggested that the person reporting should respond only to the questions that pertained to their project. Many of the questions encouraged a narrative description to allow for reflection on successes, failures, expectations, and key learnings.

Reporting guidelines also encouraged the organizations to **look ahead.** Organizations discussed how they would approach the project differently if they were to be invited to do it again, and what additional resources they would need for it to be a greater success.

ASSESSING THE ECOSYSTEM

As part of the reporting process, the participating organizations described how their projects established new connections or strengthened existing connections between youth and adults.

The implications for the ecosystem were determined by various factors, including:

- How participants were identified and recruited

- Barriers to technology and/or transportation

- Examples of how youth participated in the co-creation of the effort

- The most valuable youth-to-adult points of interaction

- The soft and hard skills that were developed

- Optional quantitative data on participation among women and people of color

- Optional qualitative data like quotes from youth and/or adult participants

The time frame of the grant, the funding available, and the objective to drive experimentation and innovation were all uniquely designed to serve the diversity of organizations that made up the YELI cohort. Summarized here are six best practices and four areas of opportunity that were identified through the YELI granting process.

GRANT PROCESS BEST PRACTICES

1. Develop an understanding of the landscape.
A deep dive at the beginning of the grant provided the insights necessary to drive change. It's important to get to know the field by conducting an extensive literature review of academic articles, industry and government reports, and existing program models. A program scan and a literature review can guide the application and reporting guidelines.

These efforts can also help all participants kick off the grantmaking process from a place of shared understanding and critical analysis. The cohort can then set expectations in terms of what is achievable and realistic, based upon increased perspective, insight, and grounding evidence.

2. Form a diverse, committed learning community.
The cohort/learning community model can be a key factor for success. The cohort becomes a resource community. Networking is an inherent part of cohort meetings, enhanced through resource-sharing and cross-participation in projects. A cohort can also be a means through which curricula might be co-developed, shared, and put into action.

3. Allow for creativity and experimentation. Be agile and lean.
A short time frame and a modest grant can encourage more experimentation with project ideas. Participating grantees might be more inclined to try something new, or do something they have always wanted to try, without infringing on their standard operating budgets.

Providing loose parameters for program design and reporting, along with a noncompetitive granting process, means ideas and impact can be tested within communities that have greater barriers to successful program participation. With lower stakes, grant participants can experiment with doing more with less and feel more comfortable taking a chance.

YELI EXAMPLE:
KNOW THE LANDSCAPE

NEI hired consulting partners to conduct a scan and literature review that identified numerous models and approaches for youth-entrepreneurship education, implications for youth entrepreneurship, and the challenges of delivering and assessing different types of youth entrepreneurship programs.

The literature review also provided deep analysis relative to concerns about equity, inclusion, and access when it comes to designing and executing successful youth entrepreneurship programs for underserved populations. This was critically important for addressing this question of youth entrepreneurship in southeast Michigan.

GRANT PROCESS BEST PRACTICES (cont.)

4. Account for risk and allow for failure.
Risk-taking can be encouraged in the grant invitation and in the application. Furthermore, reporting failure should not be considered a detriment, but instead a benefit to the overall learning of the cohort group. Encouraging risks and allowing for failure empowers grantees to test new approaches to see where they should and should not venture in the future.

The opportunity to identify what does not work can be of equal value to the opportunity for growth. Organizations engaging in new programming need to regularly recognize their limits and assess their best competencies. This is especially true when it comes to youth entrepreneurship, where there is some risk of redundancy.

5. Build in flexibility to foster trust in leadership.
Flexibility and freedom are needed to encourage a range of projects and a diversity of outcomes across a cohort. Flexibility can also help balance the expectations of the granter with what is achievable of the grantees. Resource capacity, missions, motivations, and goals should be prioritized in place of a uniform set of outcomes for the grant. In doing so, grantees feel trusted and supported in exploring new possibilities for growth.

Metrics and measurements for success should also be flexible. Each organization's mission and purpose – and, therefore, their projects – should be uniquely structured. For example, reporting on pilot programs should include quantitative metrics if the numbers make sense. Qualitative evidence should not be required if a project is focused on building a tool vs. connecting with end users.

6. Leverage community foundations to make this all work.
Community foundations offer the mechanisms to make these types of cohorts and grants work. Community foundations are equipped to make grants of all sizes, and they often have a relatively wide reach with networks across many program areas. NEI, for example, could easily access a range of trusted partners, each with a unique mission and purpose and with distinctive organizational structures. These range from larger institutions like universities and museums to grassroots organizations and small business service-providers.

YELI EXAMPLE:
ALLOW FOR FAILURE

The Henry Ford Learning Institute reported that their decision to make their STEAM Lab curriculum and tools available at no cost required time and effort that was beyond what the organization had anticipated. They succeeded at packaging and sharing their educational tools, but they concluded that they might not be the best organization to provide weekend and summer immersive learning opportunities.

Techtown also assessed that their program design was ultimately not the best fit for them. They reported that, while they recognize the potential of students from the partnering school district, Techtown does not see themselves as the best organization to unlock this potential. TT's staff competencies are best suited for assisting adults and college students.

GRANTING PROCESS

GRANTMAKING PROCESS OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create avenues for matching and scaling.

Many grantees may only be able to further their grant projects with additional supporting funds or donations. Chances are they will be motivated by the work that came out of the grant, and might want to correct flaws and shortcomings and take a project to the next level.

RECOMMENDATION:
As a part of the reporting process, ask the grantees if they would do their project again or if they hope to take their project to the next level. This question would most likely be met with enthusiasm.

2. Compensate for the real cost of participation.

Cohort participation should not become a burden or deficit to an organization, which can easily happen to smaller organizations with less staff. Furthermore, new ideas are being tested and they may unintentionally grow to become larger than the scope of resources available. Some projects will need to be subsidized beyond the grant dollars.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
When allocating grant dollars, be sure to acknowledge the time commitment required for organizations to execute a project while also participating in cohort activities.

A cushion of supplemental money could be set aside for instances where an experimental or innovative project or program is proving to be successful, but needs additional funds.

Incremental disbursements of micro-grants could also be set aside for the second half of the granting process. In-kind donations could also be made available.
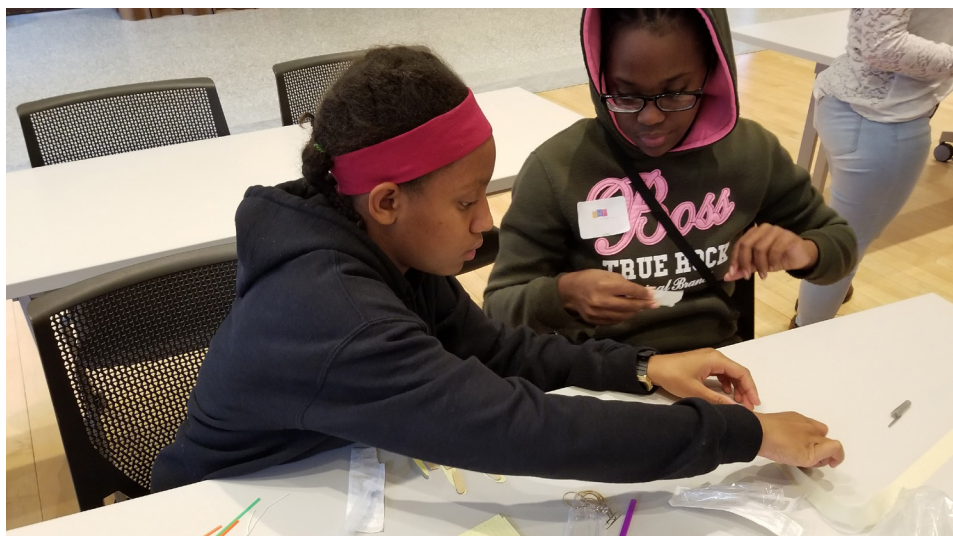
YELI EXAMPLE:
MATCHING AND SCALING

Lawrence Technological University significantly expanded its reach to work directly with a faith-based community organization, and it was a tremendous success. They envisioned that with an additional $30,000, they could include 45 participants, promotional activities, and the administrative time required to accommodate the expansion to bring in other youth-based organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Michigan, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the Police Athletic League.

YELI EXAMPLE:
THE REAL COST OF PARTICIPATION

The Henry Ford Learning Institute reported that they contributed additional resources to the project through in-kind salaries and benefits, curriculum and resource development, graphic design, web development, and more.

GRANTMAKING PROCESS OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (cont.)

3. Find new and relevant ways to measure success.

With a diverse cohort, success is relative. One set of success metrics will rarely work for the wide range of projects being funded, due to the grantee's organizational size, scope, and resources. Furthermore, youth participation can vary throughout the duration of a project or program, mostly due to low awareness and limited access to transportation and technology. This can be a significant barrier to accumulating quality data.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
Reporting requirements should focus on what is really needed to determine effective avenues for innovation and growth for each project or program. This might require a diverse set of options for reporting.

Quantitative data might be difficult to procure and qualitative data may not make sense. Both types of data collection should be optional and grantees should be able to determine the best ways to communicate success and failure.

4. Create a wider participation window or rolling participation.

We learned that some organizations and projects needed more time to plan and execute. Organizations may be trying something new, accounting for unknowns, and making adjustments along the way. A more flexible timeline could lead to greater innovation when challenges and opportunities present themselves. Furthermore, youth have drastic seasonal schedule changes, which is important to consider when planning any youth programming.

RECOMMENDATION:
There is a greater need for funding opportunities that have a rolling participation window, especially when it comes to aligning with semesters and summer recess. Integrated classroom modules can also be successful for organizations that wish to operate their programs during the school year.

YELI EXAMPLE:
MEASURING SUCCESS

The Build Institute reported that quantitative assessment was a challenge. For example, they reported that sometimes one youth participant would submit a proposal on behalf of a team, but then bring a whole team with them the day of the event or swap out a new presenter.

Lack of continuity in participation made it difficult to plan and to have a clear sense of participation numbers, and created challenges when it came to collecting information without adding barriers to entry or continued participation.

Also, Build intentionally requires little information in order to be inclusive and accessible. Some of the information that was requested for this grant – especially demographic information – goes against their core mission of serving vulnerable populations.

BUILD INSTITUTE

PROGRAM DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

The YELI organizations assessed their programs through various metrics, including attendance, continuity and completion, and hard and soft skills development.

There were some parallels across the different projects in the cohort when it came to skills development. Tactical skills for business were taught through concept development, marketing, budgeting, and pitching to an audience of judges. Interpersonal skills and positivity were nurtured through teamwork, collaboration, creativity, learning to work under pressure, and building confidence.

Other best practices and challenges were identified when it came to program design. These themes have been summarized here in the form of six key best practices and three key challenges.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

1. Utilize existing curricula and other educational resources.

As the youth entrepreneurship community expands, so does the need for 21st century skills to become more prevalent in the classroom and in the workplace. It will become increasingly useful (if not necessary) for organizations to access a diversity of resources in order to remain competitive and responsive to the needs of youth and an ever-changing educational and professional landscape.

RECOMMENDATION:
Utilize existing resources to be efficient and affordable, like establishing or supplementing the expertise of entrepreneurship educators with resources. Be flexible and quick in responding to what youth are looking for in a program, including skill-building activities and tangible, hands-on experiences.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PROGRAM DESIGN (cont.)

2. Scale and share from past successes.

Entrepreneurship resource organizations usually have a broad range of experience and expertise, and they know their own limitations. All of the organizations in the YELI cohort had established programs, projects, and past successes from which to build upon. Even if they did not have existing programs focused on youth, they were able to modify or adapt a tool, approach, or an entire program design for youth participation.

RECOMMENDATION:
Organizations should work to build upon their existing knowledge instead of starting from scratch. This is a critical strategy that should be built into the grantmaking process. Small grants can be used to experiment in ways that make sense for the capacity of the organization and are based on the strength of past work, helping to ensure that the grant will be successfully applied.

3. Prioritize youth leadership opportunities.

In order to truly foster leadership skills, youth need to be given a chance to lead in the program design process. Allowing for these opportunities will help foster an entrepreneurial mindset. When youth are held accountable for real-world successes and failures, they will have more meaningful experiences. Modeling entrepreneurial activities in a controlled classroom environment can be great practice. However, confronting real risks will bring about greater, deeper cognitive change.

RECOMMENDATION:
Find ways to establish a sense of ownership in the program by encouraging youth participants to identify and try their own solutions. This approach will allow youth to struggle with and work through complex, real-world organizational problems and to see themselves as key stakeholders in the program and the organization.

YELI EXAMPLE:
SCALE FROM PAST SUCCESSES

The Henry Ford Learning Institute documented their approaches and learning tools to create a "how-to" guide for implementing STEAM Lab camps for a variety of youth-focused organizations and institutions. They updated existing materials, added new resources, and built out a technology platform to serve as an initial learning management system. They then piloted their new curricula in two different contexts: a small, rural school in southern Ontario, and a mid-sized Detroit high school entrepreneurship class.

YELI EXAMPLE:
PRIORITIZE YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The Detroit Food and Entrepreneurship Academy's Small Batch Detroit business launch program offers youth the chance to build their own businesses and to lead at every stage. Youth decide every aspect of their project including naming, recipe development, packaging, marketing, and pitching. They also lead the other in-house businesses, helping to set sales goals, design new products, run a farmers' market stand, and meet customers' orders. That sense of ownership is key to the program's success.

PROGRAM DESIGN

BEST PRACTICES FOR PROGRAM DESIGN (cont.)

4. Reach participants through their own communities.

Timing of the program is a critical factor when it comes to access. (It is up there with transportation and technology.) Youth – especially high school students – already have many responsibilities and obligations for their schools, their families, and their communities. They also have trusted bonds within those spaces. While entrepreneurship happens in those familiar spaces, youth are often expected to travel outside of these communities to access entrepreneurial programming. This is especially difficult for youth in low-income, underserved communities.

RECOMMENDATION:
Work with existing organizations that youth already know and trust in their communities. These could be block clubs, neighborhood associations, churches, schools, or sports teams. Find the familiar ground where youth and their families can be more easily reached. This way, youth and their parents or guardians are more likely to engage, invest, expand, and otherwise ensure the success of the program.

5. Treat educational experiences like real-world projects.

It is widely accepted that real-world experiences are the best vehicles for building an entrepreneurial mindset. Go beyond simulations to make it real, so youth can see their role and direct impact in the project's success. This will also make them more resilient to real work pressures as entrepreneurs and as working professionals.

RECOMMENDATION:
Innovating for the real world can be made accessible to youth through a variety of projects. Some of the YELI projects included running a school store, incubating a new food business, and planning a social event. Other responsibilities like digital/social media campaigns can be familiar territory where youth can help build awareness and capacity.

Find the area of opportunity that exists in your organization and trust your youth to have a go at it. They will then become a more critical part of the ecosystem.

YELI EXAMPLE:
WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

Lawrence Technological University partnered with Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church to deliver a pilot educational program and pitch contest. By partnering with faith-based organizations, LTU was able to access an established network, already rooted in trust and youth advancement. Within two months of announcing the initiative, 13 faith-based organizations had recruited 32 youth participants.

More than 15 leaders from the faith-based community also provided mentorship, youth transportation services, space for workshops, catering, facility setup, security, and other logistical matters. They secured over 260 attendees at the pitch competition by promoting it within their congregations.

YELI EXAMPLE:
REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS

Give Merit had its 11th graders create an event concept to pitch to staff and peers, applying skills they had learned in the classroom. One team's event concept was executed by three youth-led committees that brought the event to life through marketing, fundraising, and production.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PROGRAM DESIGN (cont.)

6. Train-the-trainer: share tools to expand the ecosystem.

When it comes to youth entrepreneurship, keeping adult program organizers, educators, and mentors up-to-date is just as important as it is for youth participants. There is no short supply of approaches, educational resources, and materials. However, bringing those tools to the adults can be a challenge. One powerful way to expand and strengthen the adult ecosystem is to make access to resources and support as easy as possible.

RECOMMENDATION:
Make training-the-trainer a key part of your organizational mission and include it in how dollars are spent. Whenever possible, leverage existing materials and resources rather than starting from scratch. There is a wealth of resources that can be easily adapted. Furthermore, by connecting with other youth-entrepreneurship training programs, you can expand your network through shared pedagogy, thought partnerships, and experiences.

PROGRAM DESIGN CHALLENGES

1. Finding mentors that youth can trust.

Expertise isn't everything when it comes to building trust with youth. They need to feel encouraged and supported. Educating youth requires patience and the capacity to adjust one's expectations.

Finding the best mentors for the job is a common challenge. Many adult entrepreneurs are very busy keeping up with the fast pace of business and the aggressive demands of the startup experience.

Disconnects between adults and youth like inconsistency, competing ideas of success, or sporadic participation can mean the difference between a successful experience and an unsuccessful one. In the long term, if youth participants feel discouraged or overwhelmed, they may walk away with less enthusiasm for an entrepreneurial career path.

RECOMMENDATION:
Mentors, program leaders, and educators should be trained in youth development methods and approaches, including establishing close connections to help young people cultivate their abilities, and learn to engage and contribute.

YELI EXAMPLES:
TRAIN THE TRAINER

Techtown sent a Detroit Public School Community District instructor to a three-day workshop on the Korda Method, used to drive entrepreneurial and design thinking in K-12 educational environments. Techtown also hosted a workshop for other high school instructors and administrators. While the participation numbers were relatively small, the potential for impact was high.

The Henry Ford partnered with Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency to host the Maker STEM Summit for approximately 230 educators, all teachers and curriculum directors from Wayne County schools.

The Henry Ford Learning Institute built a new Learning Management System for educators to access their STEAM Lab youth entrepreneurship materials. At the time of reporting, 49 educators had created a login to access these resources.

PROGRAM DESIGN CHALLENGES (cont.)

2. Assuring continuity and access.

Access is often an issue both geographically and digitally. Internet and other technology issues can be one set of challenges. Gaps in attendance is another, often caused by discontinuities in program timelines and outcomes.

Access to reliable technology is critical for any real-world entrepreneurial outcome. Having the latest technology could be a key factor in keeping youth motivated and keeping attendance high. Also, digital curricula and digital learning tools more generally allow the user to pop in and out, and learn at their own pace.

RECOMMENDATION:
Work with existing organizations that youth already know and trust. These could be block clubs, neighborhood associations, churches, schools, or sports teams. Find the familiar ground where youth and their families can be reached so that they can easily engage, invest, support, and help to expand the program.

3. Transportation is a common barrier to access.

Transportation is the most commonly reported challenge and directly impacts program participation. Sometimes work-arounds, like tapping into family networks, can help when it comes to providing transportation. For many organizations, there is no easy solution, especially when serving youth in underserved communities.

RECOMMENDATION:
Meeting youth in their communities is one way to address the transportation issue. Otherwise, be sure to develop a transporta-tion system or network from the start. (See DAPCEP example.)

### 4. Finding the best methods to measure success.

Quantitative methods can measure participation and qualitative methods can gauge perceptions, opinions, and experiences. Measuring a person's mindset can be especially hard to achieve and might require a range of assessment tools and approaches.

RECOMMENDATION:
Mixed-method approaches of interviewing, self-documentation, participant observation, and shadowing are intensive but are flexible, empathetic, and human-centered. These qualitative approaches can also drive creativity and innovation in both the granting process and in program design.

YELI EXAMPLE: **TRANSPORTATION**

The Detroit Area Pre-College Engineering Program was notably the most successful organization when it came to transporting youth because it has an established busing system already in place. DAPCEP moves at least a thousand students every Saturday between community-identified bus depots and program sites. Their trans-portation progam is a well-noted attribute of their offering and programming success.
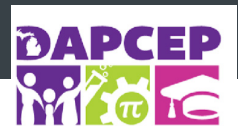
YELI EXAMPLE: **ASSESSMENT**

Lawrence Technological University provided some of the most robust data, and this was achievable through the use of existing, well-established survey tools called the Entrepre-neurial Mindset Survey and the Youth Resiliency Measure Survey.

Most of the other organizations focused on qualitative evidence gained through quotes and narrative accounts.

SYNOPSIS

**STRENGTHENING THE ECOSYSTEM:
INSIGHTS ON GRANTING AND PROGRAM DESIGN**

The YELI process had **a built-in support system.** By creating a community among the grantees, the cohort was able to strengthen the ecosystem through their work together. The collaborative nature of the initiative differentiated this grant from other more competitive grantmaking processes.

Strong mentorship and adult guidance are also key to strengthening the ecosystem, while weak or misaligned mentorship is a challenge. Through **developmental relationships**, adults work with youth to discover who they are, and develop abilities to shape their own lives and to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Furthermore, working closely with entrepreneurs in a familiar environment can lead to trusted relationships that can trigger entrepreneurial intent.

BE SUPPORTIVE

Leadership and self-efficacy should be key outcomes of an entrepreneurship program. When put in leadership roles with real-world context, youth can see the implications of personal and team performance, their own abilities to achieve goals, and how they can positively impact the ecosystem. Aside from entrepreneurial skills development, leadership was a critical goal for YELI and the bigger picture of youth development.

A focus on an **entrepreneurial mindset** is key to strengthening the ecosystem for and with youth. Very few young people are fully equipped and ready to start new businesses or other types of entrepreneurial ventures. Developing an entrepreneurial mindset involves risk-taking, collaborating, being conscientious and goal-oriented, self-motivation, and resilience without the expectations of establishing and sustaining a new venture.

BE IMMERSIVE

Programs should be **socially situated, human-centered and flexible.** Programs can meet youth "where they are" by facilitating their work within the communities they already know and trust. Furthermore, programs, projects, or activities need to be flexible enough to address issues of continuity, like retaining youth participants over the duration of the program. Program models should allow youth to be successful even if they need to pop in and out as scheduling and transportation challenges arise.

BE ACCESSIBLE

Lastly, **career path exposure** beyond entrepreneurship is critical, especially when working with youth in underserved communities. These youth may have a greater need for access to professional opportunities like certifications, internships, and apprenticeships. These opportunities can be more stable and lucrative than launching a new business or venture.