



# Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

**Meeting Date:** December 17, 2013

**Prepared By/Phone Number:** Juanita Jackson/854-4467

**Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head:** Sherri E. Fleming,  
County Executive for Health and Human Services and Veterans Service

**Commissioners Court Sponsor:** Judge Samuel T. Biscoe

**AGENDA LANGUAGE:**

Consider and take appropriate action on request for a one-time investment of \$35,000 from Work Force Solutions for the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative.

**BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:**

See attached memo

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Staff recommends approval of this item

**ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

See attached memo

**FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

Proposal will allocate existing department resources.

**REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:**

Mary Etta Gerhardt, Assistant County Attorney'  
 Leslie Browder, County Executive, Planning and Budget Office  
 Cyd Grimes, CPM, Travis County Purchasing Agent  
 Nicki Riley, CAP, CMA, Travis County Auditor  
 Patty Lennon, Financial Analyst, Travis County Auditor's Office  
 Aerin Toussaint, Analyst, Planning and Budget Office  
 Sherri Fleming, County Executive, HHSVS  
 Kathleen Haas, Finance Manager, HHSVS

AGENDA REQUEST DEADLINE: All agenda requests and supporting materials must be submitted as a pdf to the County Judge's office, [agenda@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:agenda@co.travis.tx.us) by **Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.** for the next week's meeting.




**TRAVIS COUNTY HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES  
and VETERANS SERVICE**  
502 E. Highland Mall Blvd.  
P. O. Box 1748  
Austin, Texas 78767

**Sherri E. Fleming**  
County Executive for HHS/VS  
(512) 854-4100  
Fax (512) 279-1608

**DATE:** December 10, 2013

**TO:** MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSIONERS COURT

**FROM:**   
Sherri E. Fleming, County Executive  
Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service

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**SUBJECT:** Investment in Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative Planning.

**Proposed Motion:**

Invest \$35,000 with Workforce Solutions to support planning tasks related to the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative.

**Summary and Staff Recommendations:**

The Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative is one of 21 sites nationwide (the only site in Texas) that has been funded under the Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund to build effective Pathways to post-secondary education and careers for opportunity youth. HHS&VS proposes to invest \$35,000 to match this grant and support key gaps in the current planning effort: further data analysis and policy analysis and development.

**Budgetary and Fiscal Impact:**

Proposal will allocate existing department resources.

**Issues and Opportunities:**

As the fiscal agent for this broad based community collaboration, Workforce Solutions

was awarded a \$100,000 planning grant from the Aspen Institute, Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund. Upon completion of the planning period, our community will be eligible to compete for a three year implementation grant. The Sooch Foundation (\$25,000) and Workforce Solutions (\$9,500, plus substantial in-kind contribution) have already invested in support of this effort. The leadership of the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative (AOYC) is actively reaching out to other community stakeholders to secure additional investments in both the current planning phase, and the implementation phase to come.

Key components of the planning phase are:

- Data and Research: to fully understand the state of opportunity youth (defined for this purpose as aged 16-24, not sufficiently attached to school or work) in our community: number, demographics, what systems they are in, etc.;
- Promising Pathways: identifying and analyzing promising pathways that can lead youth into and through post-secondary education, into the workforce, and ultimately to a family sustaining wage, to develop strategies that will bring systems together to more effectively support opportunity youth;
- Policy Analysis and Development: identifying policies and other restrictions that create barriers to success;
- Youth Voice: actively engaging and developing opportunity youth as leaders in the development and implementation of the programs, services and systems that serve them.

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The need to complete this planning phase in time to compete for the implementation grant in the summer of 2014 creates significant pressure to move quickly, and raises the need to secure additional resources to support work in each of these areas. In particular our investment will support additional data analysis (that will be useful for our own internal programs, our purchased youth and workforce services, as well as for the AOYC), and policy analysis and development (again, we will be able to apply this research on policy to our own work with and for youth).

While additional investment is needed to complete the planning process in a timely manner, formal match is not a requirement to the planning grant. Securing additional match will, however, place our community in a more positive light when it comes to competition for the implementation grant.

**Background:**

The goal of the Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund (OYIF) and the Aspen Institute, of which the Austin community is a \$100,000 recipient, is two-fold: 1) to build strong evidence of success for utilizing the collective impact community collaboration strategy to build and deepen pathways that achieve better outcomes in education and employment for opportunity youth, and 2) to make the case for increased adoption of collective impact and community collaboration as an effective model for community change. To accomplish these goals, **the OYIF has identified five areas of work that community partners have taken on as part of this initiative:**

1. Collaborating for Impact
2. Building Effective Pathways
3. Using Data to Guide Decisions and Assess Impact
4. Leveraging Funding to Support and Sustain innovation
5. Developing Supportive Policies

Of these areas of work, the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative (AOYC) feels that it has existing resources and capacity in the planning year (July 1, 2013 – June 20, 2014) of work to specifically support both 1) Collaborating for Impact and 2) Building Effective Pathways.

The work to date, along with consultation from both the asset-mapping consultants at Jobs for the Future and peer sites from around the country, suggest critical need in two additional areas.

**Workforce Solutions, acting as the backbone organization in the collective impact model for AOYC, has identified that its resource needs are currently tied to further data analysis (#3 above) and policy analysis and development (#5 above).**

cc: Mary Etta Gerhardt, Assistant County Attorney'  
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## **Proposal to Travis County for use of Investment in Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative Planning Year**

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### **Data Analysis:**

Nearly every stakeholder involved in the AOYC or consulted about this effort references the need for accurate, compelling, replicable data on opportunity youth living in Travis County. The Data and Research Committee has identified four primary research questions, the most comprehensive and complex of which relates to community-level data on opportunity youth. The research questions posed by the Data & Research Committee include:

- How many OY are estimated to be in Travis County?
- What is the demographic breakdown of opportunity youth in Travis County by: low income, ethnicity, immigrant status, court involved, and parenting?
- How many youth are currently being served by Travis County agencies and programs?
- What is the estimated share of opportunity youth not being served by Travis County agencies?

The search for these answers is multi-faceted and time consuming because no one tracking system is responsible for these youth. The data must come from both publicly available, and privately-managed databases, and be handled with a high degree of sensitivity and skill in order to interpret the results.

### **Policy Analysis and Development:**

The original funders, OYIF and the Aspen Institute, place an emphasis on developing supportive policies because they recognize that systems that are designed to serve youth may have policies and restrictions that inadvertently create barriers for opportunity youth trying to access career pathways and employment. These systems include, but are not limited to, the secondary and post-secondary school systems, local public benefits systems, performance requirements in locally-funded job training projects, and even non-profit eligibility systems.

Currently, due to limited resources, the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative has not formed a Policy Analysis and Development Committee, despite its recognition that one is essential. The AOYC has prioritized local agency policy analysis for this year of planning because it feels that it has the greatest chance of system change at the local level due to the high-level of support and relationships that already exists in Austin.

### **Investment Opportunity:**

In order to support both the Data Analysis and Policy Analysis and Development work outlined above during this current planning year (July 2013-June 2014), Workforce Solutions is trying to secure \$35,000 from other investors. The funding will support internal and contracted work with reputable existing agencies and individuals who have prior history delivery high-quality, high-value products.

In addition to the \$100,000 planning grant received from the Aspen Institute: OYIF, the Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative has received \$25,000 from the Souch Foundation and \$9500 from Workforce Solutions (not including in-kind contributions of staff time, facilities, and other operating expenses).

### **Outcome of Investment:**

The investment by Travis County will result in:

- a) Community-level data on OY that can be used for planning purposes by Travis County, including elected officials, planners, and providers of services.
- b) A policy analysis framework for organizing the work, and recommendations on public policy priorities for adoption by the AOYC Steering Committee.
- c) Meeting the cash match recommended for the planning year, totaling \$100,000. Securing the match helps position the Austin community in a more competitive standing for competing for the next funding cycle of \$500,000 per year for three years.