Resource Link

Fiscal Year 2019-20 Mid-Year Report

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

ASR
Helping People
Build Better Communities

Resource Link FY 2019-20 Mid-Year Report

Introduction and Purpose

In June 2018, Resource Link emerged as a data-driven work group of Opportunity Youth Partnership (OYP) in response to the four year pilot of OYP's shared measurements system which gatherd data from two reengagement high schools and 10 community based organizations (CBO). The results of this work showed that only about 10% of students at the Opportunity Youth Academy (OYA) and San Jose Conservation Corps and Charter School (SJCC&CS) were engaged in services provided by partner organizations in the OYP network. This learning was further bolstered by learnings gleaned through the OYP's three year social innovation funded pilot project, Opportunity Works (OW), which revealed reengagement high schools did not have a system in place to identify students' non-acadmic barriers; they also lacked a system to proatively match students to services. Resource Link was established as a way to connect reengagement schools and partnering CBOs in an effort to develop and refine an integrated system of support for Opportunity Youth students.

> **Resource Link's purpose** is to ensure that the choice young people have to stay in school is far easier than the choice to leave by ensuring that even those students faced with significant barriers complete secondary education with reduced or no disruptions by developing and coordinating a well-integrated system.

As shown in Exhibit 1, Resource Link includes three partnering schools – OYA, SJCC&CS, and SIATech at Job Corps – as well as seven partnering CBOs. These include Bill Wilson Center, Juma, Work2future, City of San Jose Intervention Services, Pivotal, Teen Parent Support Program, and Teen Success Inc.

Exhibit 1.   Resource Link Partners

Reengagement School Sites	Stabilization and Support Providers
- Opportunity Youth Academy (OYA) - San Jose Conservation Corps & Charter Schools (SJCC&CS) - Siatech at Job Corps	- Bill Wilson Center - Planned Parenthood Mar Monte - Teen Success Inc - Work2Future Foundation - Juma Ventures - Silicon Valley Children's Fund/Teen Force - City of San Jose Intervention teams

The Role of Resource Link In Supporting Opportunity Youth

Through the three-year OW pilot project, it became clear that reengagement high schools had no way to surface students' non-acadmeic barriers at entry, which left them reactively dealing with crises when issues had fully manifested and knocked students off course. Further, CBOs were left on the sideline due to the lack of data and common language that could have helped schools to activate CBO services. An important stream of Resource Link's work has been to not only identify students' barriers, but also to identify barriers within the system and across organizations that prevent students with needs from connecting with available supports. The following are the opportunities for change that were identified.

Develop a Method for Sharing Data and a Common Language for Communication

Reengagement schools and community based organizations frequently serve the same youth, but prior to Resource Link, there were no structures or processes to allow for consistent collaboration and service integration. Additionally, there was a lack of common tools and language to assess and discuss young people's needs across schools and CBOs to foster appropriate referrals and high quality referral response. Creating a structure and process that revolves around data collected from a shared needs assessment is our group's first priority.

Connect Youth to the Appropriate Resources

Students at reengagement schools are the least connected, highest-need young people in Santa Clara County. It is common for students to face multiple barriers to academic engagement such as a lack of transportation and childcare; often these are the very barriers that lead to youth leaving school early in the first place. By conducting a needs assessment at the moment of intake/enrollment, Resource Link can quickly connect students to the supports they need to persist in their education. Resource Link creates an opportunity for early intervention to address barriers so that students will be able to focus on their education.

Increase Partner Accountability

The success of young people returning to school relies, in large part, on behavior of staff at schools and at CBOs, and the targeted and efficient delivery of services along with quality inter-agency communication. Breakdowns between adults affect young people in myriad ways that impede their progress. A critical opportunity for system-level improvement is to use data to grow the trust and familiarity among providers in a manner that leads to efficient working relationships defined by accoutnability to produce results for young people.

Build School/CBO Integration

The three Resource Link partner schools receive an average of approximately 60 new students each month. Knowing the needs and vulnerability of these students, enrollment is an opportunity for the students at these schools to be connected to a network of support that fosters their academic success. For CBOs, this presents an opportuntiy to secure a steady and reliable flow of referrals. Over time, schools and CBOs build relationships that are mutually beneficial and help one another achieve their goals through integrated practices that leverages the strengths and resources of each.

Objectives

Given the needs of Opportunity Youth students and the Resource Link partners who strive to support them, Resource Link has worked to achieve two main objectives:

1. Conduct a common needs assessment at intake for every reengagement student in Santa Clara County so that the removal of barriers is prioritized at reenrollment.

2. Use this new data to create a powerful system of linked and integrated educational and support services, in which schools connect to the services that students need, and CBOs have access to school personnel, as well as data to better support students in making durable educational progress.

Development and Implementation of the Success Assessment

Through the three-year OW project, it has become clear that schools are under-resourced and are not designed to meet the diverse non-academic needs of the Opportunity Youth student population. Through OW, we learned that neither of our pilot partner schools were using a needs assessment at enrollment, often leading to a reactive approach to addressing student needs at schools during moments of crisis.

Resource Link, thus, developed and implemented the Success Assessment as a systematic way to understand the needs and barriers of students who are already attending or who are enrolling at partnering reengagement schools, and to connect students with CBOs within the Resource Link partnership, if needed.

The Development and Implementation of the Success Assessment

The Success Assessment is comprised of questions that are aimed to better understand the needs of Opportunity Youth on a range of life domains including their housing status, employment status, food insecurity issues, access to medica carel, dental care, and health insurance, mental health needs, transportation needs, and childcare needs. Importantly, the survey also asks students about whether or not they are interested in receiving support in those need areas, as a student may have a need, but may not desire or be open to receiving services.

When first implementing the Success Assessment, students already enrolled at reengagement schools also took the assessment which takes about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Currently, the assessment is completed online by incoming students as part of an orientation class or upon enrolling in the school.

Developed in collaboration with the Resource Link partners, the tool was implemented with the understanding that further refinement of the instrument would be required. Through an iterative process of assessing and understanding the data, as well as engaging in work sessions with Resource Link partners and an external research and evaluation firm, Applied Survey Research (ASR), the Success Assessment has been, and continues to be further refined.

Piloting a Shared Process and Data Tracking System

Through the three-year OW project, we also discovered that there was not an agreed-upon process or a clarity of roles among reengagement schools and CBOs, which routinely left

students feeling confused in having to navigate the system themselves, and oftentimes having to serve as the go-between among teachers, school staff, and direct service staff.

Thus, in addition to implementing the Success Assessment, Resource Link introduced and put into place: 1) Resource Link Operating Principles, 2) a preliminary process, 3) a Resource Link Matrix of Supportive Services, and 4) a shared referral tracking spreadsheet to help get schools and CBOs on the same page.

Operating Principles

The Resource Link Operating Principles is a document that, in great detail, describes our role definitions, agreements, and practices. Resource Link partners co-created this document and use it as a guide for our work. The Operating Principles are continually reviewed and refined to reflect the changes made to the Resource Link process.

Preliminary Process

Resource Link's preliminary process entails the following:

- A student takes the Success Assessment when they re-enroll in school.

- The Success Assessment reveals an individual student's needs (e.g., food insecurity, housing instability).

- Once a week, Kids in Common, reviews the Success Assessment results to identify which students would like support in any of the areas decribed earlier in this report. Kids in Common indicates the need areas each student would like support with in the referral tracking spreadsheet shared with each school partner. For programs with tight eligibility, Kids in Common identifies which students meet the requirements to access services. Using the shared referral tracking spreadsheet, reengagement school staff then reach out to each student with an identified need to discuss the need(s), inform the student about available services, to gather whether the student agrees to receive that service, and if so, makes a referral to the partnering CBO.

- Once a referral is received, the CBO tries to make contact with the young person; if they cannot reach a student, the CBO may reach back out to the school navigator who can then follow-up with the student.

Matrix of Supportive Services

The Matrix of Supportive Services is a spreadsheet that maps out all the Resource Link CBO partners, specifies each CBO's eligibility requirements, services offered, referral process, and point-of-contact. Reengagement school staff refer to this spreadsheet when discussing identified needs with each student. The spreadsheet is meant to help staff thoroughly discuss available services to help students make decisions that support their school success.

Shared Referral Tracking Spreadsheet

The shared referral tracking spreadsheet was created as a tool for partnering schools, CBOs, and Kids in Common to jointly track the needs of students and the referrals that are made. The tool is used to track which students school navigators need to reach out to regarding which need, which students consent to a referral, to which program a referral has been made, including the date of the referral, as well as whether a student engages in programming. Tracking these data points will help us understand where students may be "falling through the cracks" in our youth-serving

ecosystem, and identify opportunities to close communication gaps, re-asses eligibility, and address other barriers.

Success Assessment Results: Mid-Year Glance

The purpose of implementing the Success Assessment across partnering reengagement schools was to be able to gather data on the needs and challenges of students using a shared language and data system to foster interagency collaboration that is necessary to maintain educational momentum among Opportunity Youth students.

This section summarizes the results of the Success Assessment data gathered thus far, describing the needs, challenges, and goals of Opportunity Youth on average across the County, as well as for those students attending each reengagement school.

In addition, the results presented in this section provides evidence that the implementation of the Success Assessment, as well as the preliminary process put into place in order to respond to youths' needs, are doing what they were intended to do – to inform how to further improve integration and coordination among the Resource Link partners, so that students' needs are identified and the necessary resources are aligned with and become accessible to youth.

Number of Students Who Completed a Success Assessment By School

A total of 555 Success Assessments have been gathered thus far, of which 63% were completed by Opportunity Youth students at SJCC&CS, 24% at SIATech, and 13% at OYA.

Exhibit 2.   Number of Students Who Completed a Success Asssessment by School

School	N	%
OYA	71	13%
SIATech	133	24%
SJCC&CS	351	63%
TOTAL	555	100%

Plans After Graduating from High School

Over half of all Opportunity Youth reported planning to go to community college after graduation (55%), and 43% indicated that they intend to find a full-time job. There was a higher percentage of youth at SIATech who reported wanting to seek out a full-time job after graduating high school and a lower percentage at that school who wanted to attend community college, compared to the other schools.
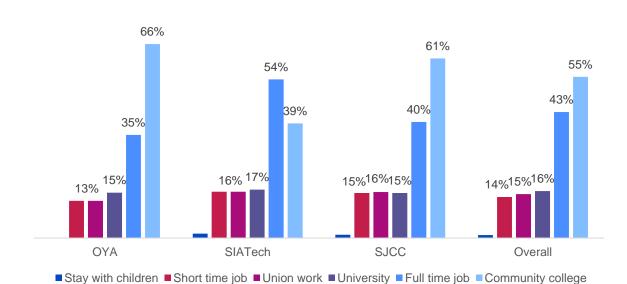
Exhibit 3. Plans After Graduating from High School

Source: Success Assessment. N=133 (SIATech), 351 (SJCC&CS), 71 (OYA).

Number of Students with at Least One Identified Need on the Success Assessment

Based on youth's responses to the Success Assessment, Kids In Common indicates on a referral tracker document that is shared with each school and partnering CBOs: 1) the area(s) of need that each youth has indicated they would like support with (e.g., housing), and 2) which Resource Link CBOs provide specialized services to address that need (e.g., Bill Wilson Center) if the youth qualifies for that service.

Of the 555 total students who took the Success Assessment, 186 (34%) students indicated that they want support in at least one need area (Exhibit 4); this includes 70% of OYA respondents, 44% of SJCC&CS respondents, and 30% of SIATech respondents.

Exhibit 4. Number of Students Who Want Support in At Least One Need Area

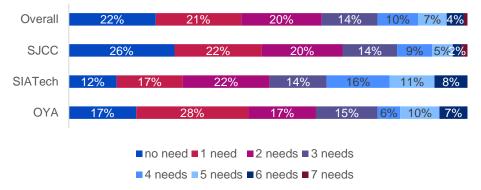| School	Number of Students Who Completed a Success Assessement	Number of Students Wanting Support In At Least 1 Need Area	% of Total Students at Each School Wanting Support in At Least 1 Need Area
OYA	71	49	69%
SIATech	133	56	30%
SJCC&CS	351	81	44%

	TOTAL	555	186	34%

The Number of Need Areas that Students Want Support With

About 20% of Opportunity Youth students overall did not want support in any need area, while another 20% wanted support with 1 to 2 needs, 14% with 3 needs, 10% with 4 needs, and 4% to 7% with 5 to 6 needs. There were, however, some differences by school with a higher proportion of students who wanted support in more need areas at SIATech, followed by OYA and SJCC&CS.

Exhibit 5.   Number of Need Areas that Students Want Support With

Source: Success Assessment. N=133 (SIATech), 351 (SJCC&CS), 71 (OYA).

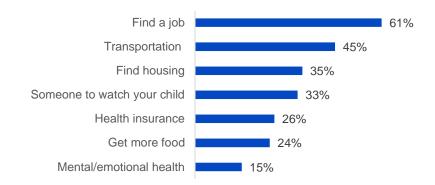## The Need Areas that Students Want Support With

The assessment asks each student whether they would like to receive support in a number of need areas. The following section provides results which illuminate the need areas that students at each reengagement school wanted to receive support in, as well as the highest need areas among all students who completed a Success Assessment.

OYA

Exhibit 4 shows that 61% of OYA students who completed a Success Assessment reported that they want to receive support related to finding a job, while 45% want support related to transportation, and 33% to 35% would like support in the areas of finding housing and having someone watch their child.

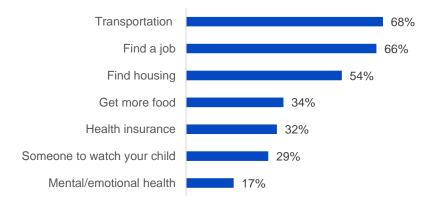**Exhibit 6.**   Wanting to Receive Support in a Given Need Area: OYA

Find a job	61%
Transportation	45%
Find housing	35%
Someone to watch your child	33%
Health insurance	26%
Get more food	24%
Mental/emotional health	15%

SIATech

At SIATech, 66% to 68% of Success Assessment respondents reported wanting transportation support, as well as support related to finding a job, while 54% reported wanting help finding housing. About a third of respondents (32% to 34%) reported wanting help getting more food and with health insurance.

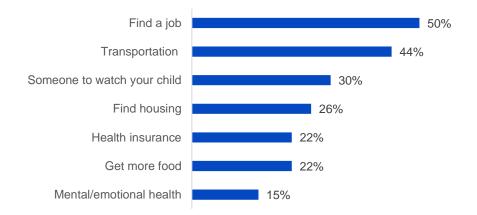**Exhibit 7.   Wanting to Receive Support in a Given Need Area: SIATech**

Transportation	68%
Find a job	66%
Find housing	54%
Get more food	34%
Health insurance	32%
Someone to watch your child	29%
Mental/emotional health	17%

SJCC & CS

Half of SJCC&CS respondents reported wanting support related to finding a job, while 44% want help with transportation, and 30% would like someone to help watch their child. About one-quarter of respondents (22% to 26%) wanted help with finding housing, with health insurance, and getting more food.

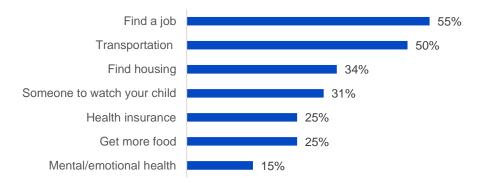**Exhibit 8.   Wanting to Receive Support in a Given Need Area: SJCC&CS**

Source: Success Assessment. N=75-351.

Overall

Across all Opportunity Youth who completed a Success Assessment, 55% reported wanting to receive support realted to finding a job, 50% reported wanting transportation support, and about one-third (31% to 34%) want support related to finding housing and someone to watch their child. One-quarter (25%) of all respondents want to receive support related to health insurance and getting more food. Across all schools, 15% of Opportunity Youth want to receive support related to their mental and emotional health.

Exhibit 9.   Wanting to Receive Support in a Given Need Area: Overall

Need Area	Percentage
Find a job	55%
Transportation	50%
Find housing	34%
Someone to watch your child	31%
Health insurance	25%
Get more food	25%
Mental/emotional health	15%

Source: Success Assessment. N=98-555.

The Number of Students Wanting Support With Employment, Transportation & Housing

Overall, employment, housing, and transporation were the top three need areas that students reported wanting support with. Exhibit 10 shows the proportion of students who indicated wanting support with one, two, or three of these top needs. Sixteen percent of Opportunity Youth students wanted support in all three need areas, while 18% wanted support with two of the three needs, and 30% with just one of the three needs. There are differences, however, by school, with a higher proportion of students at SIATech wanting support with all three needs, followed by OYA, then by SJCC&CS.
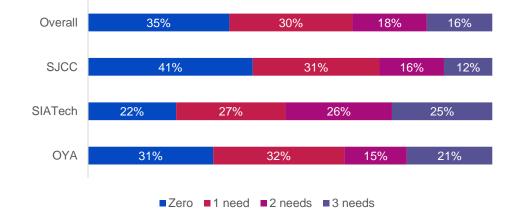
Exhibit 10.   Proportion of Students Wanting support in the Top Three Need Areas

	Zero	1 need	2 needs	3 needs
Overall	35%	30%	18%	16%
SJCC	41%	31%	16%	12%
SIATech	22%	27%	26%	25%
OYA	31%	32%	15%	21%

The Number of Students Who Were Currently Employed

While 36% of all Opportunity Youth who completed a Success Assessment indicated that they were currently employed, the proportion differed by school. While 45% of SJCC&CS and 39% of OYA students were currently employed at the time they, only 9% of SIATech students were currently employed.
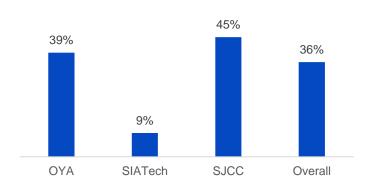
Exhibit 11.   Number of Students Who Were Currently Employed

Source: Success Assessment. N=133 (SIATech), 351 (SJCC&CS), 71 (OYA).

Number of Hours Worked Biweekly

Among students who were working at the time they completed the Success Assessment, 35% across all Opportunity Youth work 0-19 hours across a 2 week period, while 23% to 25% work 20 to 59 hours every 2 weeks. Another 17% work 60 hours or more during a 2 week period. However, as shown in Exhibit 12, the number of hours worked differs among students attending the different reengagement schools. For example, 84% of SIATech students reported working 19 hours or less, compared to 33% of OYA studens and 15% of SJCC&CS students.
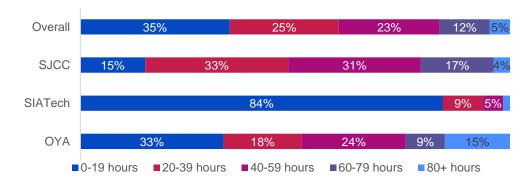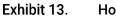
Exhibit 12.   Number of Working Hours Biweekly

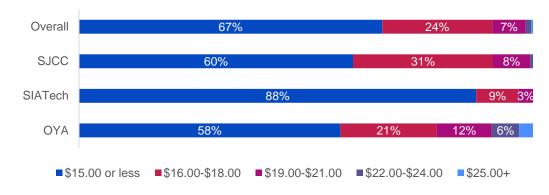Source: Success Assessment. N=64 (SIATech), 159 (SJCC&CS), 33 (OYA).

Hourly Wages of Employed Students

Among employed Opportunity Youth students, 88% of SIATech respondents earn $15.00 or less, compared to 58% to 60% of SJCC&CS and OYA respondents. Thus, 40% to 42% of OYA and SJCC&CS working students earn $16.00 or more.

Exhibit 13.   Hourly Wage of Employed Students

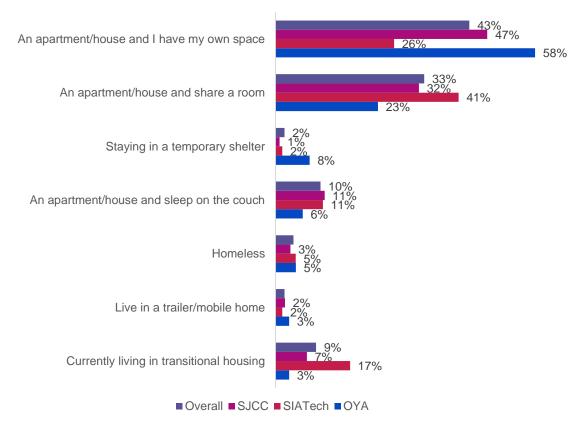|	$15.00 or less	$16.00-$18.00	$19.00-$21.00	$22.00-$24.00	$25.00+
Overall	67%	24%	7%		
SJCC	60%	31%	8%		
SIATech	88%	9%	3%		
OYA	58%	21%	12%	6%	

Source: Success Assessment. N=64 (SIATech), 159 (SJCC&CS), 33 (OYA).

Current Housing Situation

Roughly 41% to 58% of all respondents across partner reengagement schools reported living in an apartment or house alone or with a roommate. However, an average of 10% of resondents across these same schools reported sleeping on someone else's couch, and 17% of SIATech respondents reported living in transitional housing.
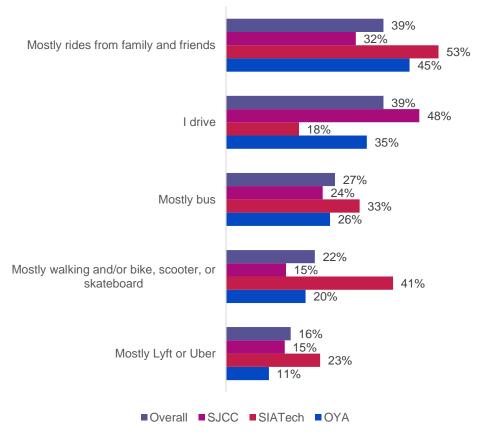
Exhibit 14.   Current Housing Situation

Source: Success Assessment. N=133 (SIATech), 351 (SJCC&CS), 71 (OYA).

Transportation Needs

The results show that Opportunity Youth students rely on a diverse range of transportation. Almost 40% of respondents across partnering schools reported getting rides from family and friends and driving themselves, while 22% to 27% of respondents take the bus or walk, bike, or use a scooter or skateboard. Another 16% reported using mostly Lyft or Uber.

Exhibit 15. **Transportation Needs**

Source: Success Assessment. N=133 (SIATech), 351 (SJCC&CS), 71 (OYA).

The Number of Referrals Made by Reengagement Schools to CBOs

A total of 547 needs that students wanted support were reported by 186 students on the Success Assessment. While 41% of the needs potentially requiring a referral were identified by SJCC&CS students, 34% were identified by SIATech students, and 25% by OYA students.

Importantly, though a shared referral tracking system was put into place by Resource Link to understand the process of whether and how youth with identified needs are connected to CBOs, only OYA provided data using the shared referral tracking spreadsheet; thus, no data was provided by SIATech and SJCC&CS. In addition to the result showing that only 5% of the 136 needs that OYA students wanted help with resulted in a referral, the lack of data from SIATech and SJCC&CS indicate the significant challenges faced by school navigators who are tasked with

the process of reaching out to each student about their identified needs, discussing their needs and available services, and if a student agrees, sending referrals to CBOs.

Thus, once again, the combined results of the Success Assessment and of tracking the preliminary process of coordinating the system, is serving its intended purpose - to surface the major challenges faced by partners, and to generate solutions to help connect Opportunity Youth students with necessary supports.

Exhibit 16.   **Number of Referrals Made by Partnering Reengagement Schools to CBOs**

School	Number of Recommended Referrals	% of Total Recommended Referrals	Number of Referrals Made	% of Recommended Referral That Were Made
OYA	136	25%	7	5%
SIATech	186	34%	-	-
SJCC&CS	225	41%	-	-
TOTAL	547	100%	7	1%

Source: Referral Tracker. Note: Data on the number of referrals made by schools was unavailable for SIATech and for SJCC&CS.

Gathering Feedback and Discovering Solutions with Resource Link Partners

While continual feedback on the Success Assessment and the preliminary process of coordinating the system across partners was elicited from schools and CBOs during regularly scheduled Resource Link meetings, formal feedback sessions were also conducted by Kids In Common's partner research and evaluation firm, ASR.

In the month of January and early February 2020, ASR conducted one focus group with CBOs (three of the seven CBOs could attend), as well as individual phone interviews with each of the three reengagement schools. ASR worked with Kids in Common to develop focus group and interview questions that would illuminate partners' understanding of the mission and goals of Resource Link, whether they felt the Resource Link collaboration and meetings were useful, their views on the implementation and use of the Success Assessment, and generating solutions to troubleshoot issues of coordination across partners.

This section provides a summary of the results of those feedback sessions, including recommendations for next steps:

The Resource Link Partnership

- **Resource Link partners are clear about the mission and goals of Resource Link.** All school and CBO partners understand that it takes a network of supports and resources to address the diverse range of needs and challenges of Opportunity Youth students to help them succeed.

- **CBOs and schools recognize the need for good partnerships in developing a coordinated system**, and the Resource Link meetings were acknowledged as an opportunity for partners to learn about, connect with, and support each other.

- **However, there is still need for more opportunities to build partnerships and foster greater awareness among schools of CBO partners and their services**; CBOs offered to be part of a Resource Fair for teachers and school staff during lunch breaks or meetings to increase awareness of available services.

- **There is a need to develop a rubric for understanding which schools and CBOs can benefit from the Resource Link partnership.** One reengement school partner indicated that many of their students' needs are already being met on their campus, thus eliminating the need for sending gather more data on students to better understand their needs. Thus, further consideration should be made as to how we might further maximize the potential of te Resource Link partnership in order to foster success among Opportunity Youth across the County; this may include, for example, inviting potential new partners to the collaborative.

The Success Assessment as a Tool for Connecting Students with CBOs

- **There is need for further clarifying Success Assessment questions** to capture a "true need" that if unaddressed may result in leaving school early (e.g., being homeless, food insecurity) compared to a student's preference or long-term goal (e.g., lives with mom, but doesn't get along with her or doesn't like mom's cooking).

- **School navigators noted that students' needs change often**, thus, the Success Assessment should be administered in a way that takes that into account, especially if a follow-up or post survey is to implemented.

- **There is need for encouraging school navigators to develop and/or integrate their referral tracking process with the Resource Link tracking process**; this is important so partners can get on the same page, and the needs of the system can be identified to better align resources, supports, and services; technical assistance may be needed to support school navigators in this process.

The Need for Continuing to Streamline the Process

- **Funding is needed for more school navigators.** Currently, Kids in Common pulls Success Assessment results to update school referral tracking spreadsheets once a week; school navigators are then faced with the difficult work of tracking down each student who has indicated a need they want support with, speak to each student to understand whether there is a true need, explain services, gain student consent to refer, and then make a referral to a CBO; in the case of OYA, students are located at 6 different sites which makes this an even more challenging task. The process is timely, burdensome, and difficult for school navigators; more school navigators are needed because while CBOs are willing and ready to provide services for students, they have not been receiving Resource Link-related referrals from partner reengagement schools.

- **Rethink student orientation process.** Specific to San Jose Conservation Corps, school navigators should be provided with the Success Assessment results immediately, so they

can follow-up with students while students are already present and together on Orientation Day; this will eliminate the need for tracking down hard-to-reach students

- **Schools and CBOs called for even greater streamlining and efficiency in the system**. For example, CBOs can be invited to campus during orientation days, or whenever there is a critical mass of students. They can introduce themselves in fun and engaging ways, and help interested students complete applications; CBOs can also conduct a Resource Fair right after students complete their Success Assessments.

- **Explore the use of available online systems**, so that Success Assessment results can be viewed immediately by school navigators, generate easy-to-read reports, and links to CBO's program applications that can then be sent to youth; one school recommended a portal where students can log-on if a new need arises.