



# COLORADO YOUTH FOR A CHANGE

[youthforachange.org](http://youthforachange.org)

**Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions in partnership with Ballmer Group announces \$1.5 Million Investment in Impact Grants for Denver's Opportunity Youth**

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For Immediate Release**

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The Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions' Opportunity Youth Forum (OYF) announced a \$6 Million investment in pathways for opportunity youth - defined as youth and young adults, 16-24 years of age, who are neither enrolled in education nor engaged in the workforce.

The Denver Opportunity Youth Initiative, led by Colorado Youth for a Change, is one of four Opportunity Youth Forum partners in the country who will receive support. As part of a larger 3-year investment by Ballmer Group, \$1.5 million will support Denver and Aurora-based programming over the next three years.

"We're excited that the Denver Opportunity Youth Initiative is in a unique position to scale placed-based strategies with a history of positive youth outcomes, and to engage a broader set of stakeholders in gathering, sharing, and collaborating on youth outcomes that engage young people 16-24 in meaningful education and employment opportunities."  
Mary Zanotti, Executive Director at Colorado Youth for a Change

This investment will provide a continuum of reenrollment services for youth who've left school without a diploma; support for youth who are chronically absent and therefore at risk of dropping out to complete high school diplomas and GEDs; and post-secondary connection for young people to engage in meaningful careers in high demand sectors. Additionally, this investment allows the Denver Opportunity Youth Initiative to better track and share outcomes across all partnerships in the collaborative.

Partners include Denver Public Schools, Zero Dropouts, Colorado Youth for a Change in partnership with Aurora Public Schools, YAASPA, Mile High Youth Corps, Colorado's Youth

Mental Health Corps, and the City and County of Denver in partnership with the HYPE program and the Denver Economic Development & Opportunity. Additional partners of the Denver Opportunity Youth Initiative include the Colorado Department of Higher Education, Inclusive Design Group, and Innovate+Educate.

“Achieving the future we all deserve requires an investment in every youth and young adult so that they are meaningfully supported to belong, make meaning of their lived experience in ways that enliven their wellbeing and purpose, and ultimately thrive. This investment in impact will accelerate this vision in transformative ways,” said Monique Miles, Director, Opportunity Youth Forum.

This three-year investment comes right after an additional \$250,000 was awarded to the Denver Opportunity Youth Initiative and two of its partners from the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions. These funds support cross system and sector collaborative efforts in communities aimed at improving outcomes for youth and young adults. Central to the work is the effort to foster belonging, meaning, wellbeing, and purpose (BMWP) in order to reform systems that support youth and young adults.

#### **About Colorado Youth for a Change**

Established in 2005, Colorado Youth for a Change (CYC) addresses barriers to learning by providing individualized supports throughout pivotal stages of students’ education journeys. CYC’s prevention and reengagement programs span from ages 3-21 and serve over 5,000 Colorado students every year. CYC is also the backbone organization of the Denver Opportunity Youth Initiative, bringing together different sectors and centering youth-voice to help young people achieve better outcomes in education and employment.

#### **About the Opportunity Youth Forum**

The Opportunity Youth Forum began in 2012 (as the “Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund”) to leverage momentum coming out of the White House Council for Community Solutions. It is comprised of a network of urban, rural, and Indigenous communities seeking to scale multiple reconnection pathways that achieve better outcomes in education and careers for opportunity youth. Approximately one-quarter of all opportunity youth in the U.S. live in the areas in and around Opportunity Youth Forum communities. Learn more at [aspencommunitysolutions.org](http://aspencommunitysolutions.org) and [@AspenFCS](https://twitter.com/AspenFCS)

#### **About Ballmer Group**

Ballmer Group works to improve economic mobility for children and families in the United States who are disproportionately likely to remain in poverty. It supports the use of data and strong partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit organizations at the community level to more effectively serve families. Ballmer Group was co-founded by philanthropist and civic activist Connie Ballmer and her husband Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft, founder of USAFacts, and chairman of the Los Angeles Clippers.

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