**YouthBuild Narratives**

Updated – September 13, 2015

**CMO-1: Activating awareness of poor youth outcomes and commitment to youth helping youth inspired initial local action**

In 1978, Dorothy Stoneman and a team of youth formed the Youth Action Program and did a gut rehabilitation of an abandoned East Harlem building [Backgrounder A46].  Dorothy worked with the students to select a building, get permission to access the building and do the work. It was a volunteer effort with no outside funding. [F9]

A local champion, Dorothy Stoneman, founded the Youth Action Program in response to her **awareness** of the high rates of student drop-outs and poor outcomes for youth and her deep **commitment** to helping them take charge of their lives and become a positive force for change in their community. [E6]

Dorothy was a teacher at a small, experimental and parent-controlled community-based school in East Harlem [E4] At that time, thousands of teenagers were dropping out of school, spending their lives on the streets, or getting caught up in a cycle of violence. [E6] When a former student of Dorothy’s died in unexplained street violence in 1978, she was moved to take immediate action. [E6]

She undertook informal consultations with students about what they would like to do to improve their community. [E5, E9] They came up with the idea to rebuild run-down houses to create homes and take empty buildings back from the drug dealers. The idea was compelling given the high number of abandoned buildings in East Harlem at that time. Soon thereafter, Dorothy founded the Youth Action Program and enlisted 20 young people and five adult volunteers who completed the first building rehabilitation. [E5]

**CMO-2: Growing commitment to the Youth Action Program and confidence in the model led to expansion of youth-run community improvement projects in East Harlem.**

Seven additional youth-run community improvement projects were developed in East Harlem in 1978. [E4, E10] Over the next few years, the Youth Action Project developed thriving initiatives informed by the fresh awareness and perspective of the young people. [F10]

The expansion in the number of community improvement projects reflected both the ongoing **commitment** of Dorothy and her volunteers to community improvement and increasing **confidence** in the model based on their early experience.

The federal Community Anti-Crime Program (CACP) of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration had funding available for projects aimed at building community cohesion as a means of preventing crime. Dorothy saw this program could fit well with her overall goals [F7]. Later in 1978, Dorothy submitted a funding proposal to support a group of youth-run projects. Two months later she was awarded a quarter of a million dollars, sufficient for a group of youth-run projects aimed at community improvement. [E7]

With this funding, Dorothy, several adult volunteers, and ten teenagers hired seven community organizers to develop youth-run community improvement projects in East Harlem. [E10] Projects were developed based on input from youth and Dorothy and the organizers raised funds for each one, including the building of a park, an alternative leadership high school, a home away from home for young mothers and their children, a crime prevention patrol, an emergency hotline for teenagers, a housing rehabilitation project, and the East Harlem Youth Congress. [F10] Dorothy met weekly with youth elected by their peers as the policy committee. They were part of every important decision. [E12]

**CMO-3: Building commitment of local funding agencies led to expansion of YouthBuild programs to New York City**

In 1984, six New York non-profits established YouthBuild programs in their neighborhoods with city tax levy funds. Between 1984 and 1990, a total of $80 million was raised for six different employment models, serving 20,000 youth in New York City. This initiative became the biggest city-funded employment program in the country. [H19]

The funds required for the program to expand across New York City were obtained as a result of the **commitment** of the New York City Department of Employment (DOE) to improving youth employment and replicating the Youth Action Program’s ‘housing model’.

By 1981, there was a core of youth leaders committed to community organizing. [F13]

The East Harlem Youth Congress, which included the youth from the Youth Action Program, had come up with a "Youth Agenda for the Eighties." They selected five priorities for action, one of which was to give young people jobs rebuilding their communities.

In 1983, New York's Mayor Koch was launching a new program for disadvantaged workers to rehabilitate housing, however they did not want to include youth. Dorothy formed a coalition of 70 community-based organizations to organize for the purpose of obtaining City funds for youth employment programs. [F15] There was a pervasive spirit of collaboration rather than competition, with a focus on increasing the pool of resources to collectively meet the needs of youth. [E11]

In order to gain funding from the city, the Coalition realized it needed to lobby for something that filled a niche that no other public funds had filled. This requirement eventually led to the transformation of the program design from a voluntary, after-school job and leadership development program for teenagers to a full-time, comprehensive job-training program for high school dropouts who read below the 8th grade level. This redesign to fill an underserved niche gave shape to what would become the standard YouthBuild model. [E17]

The coalition developed a proposal that asked for $10 million from the City Council, launched a campaign and met with key Council members and City officials. [F15] Dorothy trained the leaders of the Youth Congress and made sure that they participated in meetings, planning sessions, and public appearances, including provided testimony about why they wanted this program at City Council’s budget hearings. [F15] The adult and youth leaders of the coalition also worked with experienced lobbyists to influence City Hall. [F15] This momentum eventually led to the creation of CityWorks, an agency within the City’s Department of Employment to administer the program models recommended by the Coalition. [H16]

Despite this success, the Coalition was disappointed with the appropriation of only $4.75 million, rather than the $10 million they requested [H16]. They changed their names to the “Coalition for $20 Million” and expanded membership to 150 organizations. [H19] After lobbying City Hall heavily during the next budget season, City Council budgeted $12.75 million for the program in 1986. Every year the Coalition continued to lobby for these funds and obtained them, until Dorothy moved to Boston and the Coalition gradually declined. [H19]

When expansion in New York City began, Dorothy believed that providing funds to community groups would be enough to make the program work. However, lack of training and technical assistance, coupled with the fact that there had been no handbook or prototype from which the organizations could learn resulted in five of the first publicly-funded replication sites failing and becoming de-funded within two years. [E23] As a result, Dorothy organized a team to write a handbook in 1988. At that time, three of the new organizations in New York were succeeding at replicating YAP's Housing Model. [F20]

**CMO-4: Fostering interest in the YouthBuild program led to implementation in the first site outside of New York**

YouthBuild was launched in Boston in 1991, and was the first site outside New York City [F41]

Bringing YouthBuild to Boston was inspired by the interest of Tim Cross, Director of Teens as Community Resources in Boston, and a steering committee of Boston community leaders. [G26]

In the summer of 1988, Dorothy launched the National Replication Project of the Youth Action Program of the East Harlem Block Schools to build on existing advocacy efforts and to provide assistance for organizations interested in bringing the Housing Model to their communities. [E27] YouthBuild informational packages were sent to local organizations interested in housing, job training, youth development, education, homelessness, community service, or community development to encourage organizations to join the coalition and reach out to those who might be interested in bringing YouthBuild to their communities. [F29] Organizations who sent in a membership were invited to a seminar in New York City to learn about running a YouthBuild program and the YouthBuild philosophy, design, and vision. [F30]

After attending the YouthBuild seminars in New York City, Tim Cross, returned to Boston to convene meetings with community leaders interested in housing, job training, community development, women and minorities in the trades, homelessness, and youth leadership development. [F26] In the course of the meetings, a steering committee of people who showed deep interest in bringing YouthBuild to Boston coalesced. [G26] This group gathered to explore whether the YouthBuild program should be replicated in Boston and if so, what existing agency should sponsor it. Dorothy attended these meetings in support of Tim, and a video about YAP’s success in New York proved to be extremely useful in communicating the vision and philosophy of YouthBuild. [F26]

At the end of the series of meetings, this committee decided that there was no existing organization ideally positioned to start YouthBuild in Boston and that a new organization should be created. [H26] Tim hired a director to develop the new organization and, in order to ensure the success of this first replication project, Dorothy put her on YouthBuild USA’s payroll for six months until sufficient funds could be raised for YouthBuild Boston. [F41]

**CMO-5: Growing confidence in the program and its leadership led to the launch of a YouthBuild Demonstration Project in twelve sites across the country**

With grants from the Ford and Mott Foundations, and later the DeWitt Wallace Reader’s Digest Fund, YouthBuild launched in twelve sites around the country in 1990. [I34] Due to limited funding, only five sites were included in the formal evaluation, but the remaining seven received the same training and technical assistance from YouthBuild USA as those participating in the formal YouthBuild Demonstration Project. [E38]

The Youth Action Project in New York City had attracted the attention of several Foundations. Based on their **confidence** in the program and Dorothy’s leadership, they agreed to fund a demonstration project to test the program’s replicability. [E27]

Based on support from ten diverse community based organizations from around the country a decision was made to create a national YouthBuild Coalition to advocate for federal funding for the Housing Model. YouthBuild USA was incorporated in 1990 as a separate national organization with new leadership in addition to Dorothy. [F27, F28]

Early on, the Ford Foundation wrote a public report on YouthBuild, which turned into YouthBuild USA’s first brochure. It gave them national recognition and enhanced YouthBuild’s credibility. The Mott Foundation also wrote an annual report featuring YouthBuild USA, further strengthening their credibility. [F37] While there were some local and national funders willing to support the replication efforts, there were also some skeptics in the funding community who felt YouthBuild couldn’t be replicated because it was dependent on Dorothy Stoneman’s personality and leadership. [E33]

The Foundations agreed to support the demonstration project on the condition that it be accompanied by an external and independent evaluation. The primary purpose of the evaluation was to learn about the process of implementation outside of New York City to compile information and lessons that might be useful in the future. [H42] The independent evaluation of the YouthBuild Demonstration Project began in 1991 and ended in 1994 [F44].

YouthBuild USA managed a competitive proposal process with 22 organizations competing to become the first five formal demonstration sites included in the evaluation. [F38] The seven runners-up became replication sites, and, along with the original three sites still operating in New York City, brought the total number of operating YouthBuild sites to 15 by 1993. [I38]

The first year of the demonstration program was the first year that Youth Build USA provided technical assistance, including weekly check-ins by telephone with program directors. Training sessions convened groups of directors and staff members from across all of the demonstration sites. These involved instruction by consultants and staff from Youth Build USA as well as opportunities to share and learn from peers. Youth Build USA developed new instructional materials in response to the needs that staff members who attended the sessions expressed. [F47] Learnings from the evaluation were used to improve YouthBuild USA’s training and technical assistance programs/materials. [H97]

**CMO-6: Maintaining commitment and support from YouthBuild champions resulted in multi-year federal government funding.**

The HUD funding did not actually reach any sites until two years after the legislation was passed. Starting with $40 million in 1994 and increasing to $68 million in 1995, HUD began releasing grants to YouthBuild programs around the country. The demand was great. 880 organizations applied for funding in the first year alone, with 31 receiving implementation grants and 105 being awarded planning grants. In 1995, HUD funded 77 implementation programs, increasing the total number of YouthBuild sites in operation to 108 by 1996. [E88]

By 2002, there were approximately 200 YouthBuild programs in operation. The HUD funded 116 of these sites (including new and existing YouthBuild programs), with grants ranging from $217,000 to $700,000. [H62]

The success of YouthBuild in becoming a federally funded program and receiving ongoing federal funds was influenced by the **ongoing commitment and support** of political champions, youth, and members of the YouthBuild coalition. Over several years and a number of set-backs, these YouthBuild supporters continued their efforts to secure and maintain federal funding.

Although the YouthBuild Coalition had gathered a considerable set of organizations that advocated for the same purpose, getting the federal government’s attention promised to be challenging. At the time, there had been a steady decrease in federal funding for programs that served low-income communities. [E35] When Dorothy first approached members of Congress, she was warned that support for this program was unlikely since it was going in the opposite direction of the current trend in the government, which consisted of giving more money to the states and not creating new domestic discretionary line items. [E35]

Nonetheless, Dorothy was able to recruit key political champions in the House of Representatives and Senate whose strong support contributed to the eventual success of the YouthBuild Act. [F35, H35] Youth supporting and participating in YouthBuild programs also played significant roles in the advocacy efforts that led to the passage of the legislation. As part of their leadership development, youth from the different sites would visit members of congress, share their personal experiences and advocate for YouthBuild to become a federally sponsored program. [E57] Once the YouthBuild legislation passed in 1992, members of the YouthBuild Coalition flooded HUD with letters of support for the highest level of appropriation, which was received. [F54]

YouthBuild USA was contracted by HUD to provide training and technical assistance to YouthBuild sites. [F89] They held 20 trainings a year for staff from YouthBuild sites and produced six detailed handbooks covering each component of the program. [F74] This support was deemed important in order to avoid the mistakes of replication in New York City when new agencies had not received sufficient help and failed. [F89] HUD had to approve everything YouthBuild USA did: Every document that would be given out to the field, every training session that was organized, and every handbook that was written needed HUD’s signoff. This process had the benefit of forcing YouthBuild USA to plan far in advance, but it also slowed things down. [F83]

HUD managed the grant program independently, although it often did pay attention to YouthBuild USA’s recommendations. In the early years, the managers at HUD consulted with the leadership at YouthBuild USA on most policy matters affecting the program. [F82] Maintaining strong relations with HUD leaders was not easy. Between 1994 and 2002 there was rapid turnover of leadership and staff at HUD. Some had a great understanding of and enormous commitment to the program. Others had different priorities. New relationships had to be established with every new staff member at HUD. [E84]

Despite delays and hiccups, YouthBuild USA and HUD created a trust driven relationship in which they were able to learn from each other and strive to make the YouthBuild program better. In 2002 HUD and YouthBuild USA jointly produced a YouthBuild video, with footage supplied by YouthBuild USA that honored the partnership. [H91]

Independent of HUD, a number of private foundations supported the important evolution of the YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network: which provided democratic structures of accountability, additional technical assistance beyond what HUD will approve for affiliated sites, and the national network of youth leaders emerging from the local sites. [H71] Foundations also played a critical role in funding the transition to public funding, providing additional support during periods of rapid expansion and filling funding gaps from HUD. [H78, H81]

Despite YouthBuild’s success and growth to 200 operating sites, YouthBuild USA's leadership believed that the number of sites was still short of the “full” scale to which they aspired. They viewed the problem in terms of the number of young people still waiting to be served. The average YouthBuild program had 3 to 6 times as many applicants as it could accept, and HUD had 5 to 10 times as many proposals as it could fund. Demand far exceeded supply. [E86]

**CMO-7: Acknowledging uncertainty about funding led to the closure of more than 50 YouthBuild programs**

Despite YouthBuild’s federal funding from HUD starting in 1994, more than 50 YouthBuild programs closed between 1996 and the end of 2002. [E62]

**Uncertainty about funding** and the widening gap between funds available and the funds needed resulted in closures of these programs. [E62]

The fickleness of the political landscape posed challenges for YouthBuild. After the 1996 elections, both the House of Representatives and the Clinton Administration zeroed HUD’s YouthBuild program out of the budget. At the time, even the survival of HUD had been in question in Congress. However, YouthBuild’s primary champion in the Senate, John Kerry, joined forces with the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee, and together they saved the program in the Senate. The Senate kept the appropriation at $40 million, the House of Representatives split the difference with the Senate in Conference, and YouthBuild survived, but certainly did not expand, with $20 million in 1996. [E98]

In response, HUD eliminated planning grants and cut the size of the implementation grants in order to spread the funds further. They experimented with various size grants, finally settling on a ceiling of $700,000. There was no guarantee that any program would be funded from year to year. [E98]

The YouthBuild Coalition, by then 650 organizations, redoubled its efforts after the 1996 cut. With the support of its champions in Congress, the Coalition was able to build the funding back up to $65 million by 2002 through steady annual expansion of bi-partisan support as elected officials visited local YouthBuild programs in their communities and became supporters. [F121]

**CMO-8: Building and maintaining commitment of diverse funding partners sustained YouthBuild programs**

Due to the reductions in and uncertainty of HUD federal funding, existing YouthBuild sites needed find other sources of funding in order to survive. [E105] **Commitment** to YouthBuild by foundations, private sponsors and state coalitions enabled many YouthBuild sites to continue to operate with funding from diverse sources.

HUD and key staffers in Congress held the view that seeding new programs was an effective way to spread the program, and they expected grantees to achieve sustainability by finding funds elsewhere. This strategy worked to some degree. In 1994, all existing YouthBuild programs were funded 100% by HUD; by 2002, slightly more than half of the existing programs (116 out of 200 sites) received the HUD funding, and then only at a level of 70%. [H105]

YouthBuild sites found funds elsewhere, including at the state level. [E105] With a trend towards transferring more money and spending decisions from the federal to the state budgets, Dorothy decided they should begin positioning YouthBuild to advocate systematically on the state level as well [E92]. Many states had allocated funds for youth and/or community development activities. Seventeen YouthBuild state coalitions were organized and trained by YouthBuild USA. The coalitions met regularly and advocated collectively to obtain either a line item in the state budget or to get YouthBuild legislation passed. [F92] By the end of 2002, eight state coalitions had obtained funding for their members at the state level. [H92]

During the 1990’s, the charter school movement began in the US, creating an opportunity to sustain YouthBuild programs with reliable annual funding and expand the number of students served since the funding followed the students. [I106] This source of state funding was crucial in supporting these local programs, providing about 3/5 of the annual cost of each student, although compliance with the charter school regulations also required significant alterations to the standard YouthBuild model. [H107] Between 1997 and early 2003, 19 local YouthBuild programs succeeded in becoming charter schools. [F106] In early 2003, YouthBuild USA received a major grant from the Gates Foundation to systematize this move and demonstrate the methods that can succeed with students who have dropped out of traditional schools. [H106]

Seeking corporate support had not been a part of YouthBuild USA’s strategy originally. However, as more YouthBuild sites were formed and as the program became more successful and visible, corporations started approaching YouthBuild to see if there could be potential areas of collaboration. [E108] One of those was The Home Depot, whose charitable priorities were providing affordable housing and helping at-risk youth. Many local YouthBuild programs had been receiving monetary or in-kind assistance from the Home Depots in their areas. Starting in 1998, The Home Depot gave YouthBuild USA half a million dollars a year, 60% of which was targeted to support local programs. [H111] Proactively pursuing corporate partnerships was not a priority, however YouthBuild USA and local sites did receive smaller contributions and significant in-kind donations from a number of other corporations. [H111]

Dorothy had been building relationships within the Department of Labor (DOL) since the beginning of YouthBuild. In 1998, YouthBuild received a $5.4 million grant from the Welfare-to-Work initiative of the Department of Labor to support ten sites. [F109] Unfortunately, the Welfare-to-Work program was ended by the DOL after three years, so there was no opportunity to continue this program. [F109] However, this relationship demonstrated YouthBuild USA's role as national intermediary to attract funds for the local sites and publicize their success. [F109]

There were consequences of operating with more diverse funding sources. In most cases, sites were serving fewer students and their outcomes were weaker than when they had full funding from one source. They had also stretched their administrative staff very thin to handle the demands of different funders. [H105]