Taking a Societal Sector Perspective on Youth Learning and Development
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### A Societal Sector Approach

Despite their common focus on young people, youth-serving institutions—schools, health and welfare services, juvenile justice agencies—typically are disconnected from, and uninformed about, each other’s programs, policies, and approaches.

Youth’s cognitive, social, emotional and physical development does not divide neatly into institutional domains. The institutional resources available to youth are generally not integrated, resulting in a set of institutional silos that each work to support different areas of development.

New cross-sector tools are necessary to support cross-institutional collaboration for youth.

### The Youth Data Archive

The **Youth Data Archive (YDA)** is an integrated longitudinal data system comprised of administrative records from community agencies and organizations linked together at the level of individual youth.

- **Create a virtual youth sector** by linking across agencies to understand opportunities and program participation for the community’s youth
- **Promotes an actual youth sector** by focusing on relevant questions across agencies and enabling partners to understand and act on resulting analyses

#### THE YDA PROCESS

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<th><strong>START-UP ACTIVITIES</strong></th>
<th><strong>ANALYSIS AND EARLY REPORTING</strong></th>
<th><strong>ACTION AND DISSEMINATION</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>JGC STAFF</td>
<td>Produce Preliminary Fact Sheet</td>
<td>Conduct Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify Research Topic</td>
<td>Create Research Questions</td>
<td>Discuss Findings &amp; Refine</td>
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<td>Transfer Data</td>
<td>Share &amp; Review</td>
<td>Use analysis to improve services &amp; develop policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create Research Questions</td>
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<td>Disseminate findings to the broader field</td>
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### Focus on Actionable Research

**Action is defined broadly as:**
- Change in policy, practice, or programming
- Use of research to support continuation of existing efforts
- Intention to use research to discuss making changes

**Research in Action**
1. In San Francisco, findings from analyses of math and English remediation in community college led to modification of the community college placement process to allow more students to place into courses for which they would accrue college credit.
2. In Redwood City, an analysis of chronic absenteeism led partners from school districts and other city and county agencies to collaboratively consider responses to the underlying student and family barriers that affect student absences.

### Lessons for Supporting a Youth-Serving Sector

**Motivation matters.** A problem salient to all stakeholders spurs collaboration, learning and joint action.

**A situated lens focuses action.** Local contexts embed practices, institutional histories and relationships, and political and economic realities that are situated in existing arrangements.

**Process is product.** A collaborative stance within a youth sector requires a fundamental shift in perspective from one defined by specific institutional goals to one that focuses on broad, cross-institutional goals of youth development.

**Trust and credibility build over time.** Through its emphasis on relationship building, iterative analysis and reporting, and sharing findings, the YDA team becomes embedded in the collaboration.

**Knowledge production is interactive and collaborative.** Collaborations like the YDA see knowledge as changing, changeable, and sometimes inconsistent—the result of a locally adaptive process.

**Capacity develops collectively.** Collective capacity builders take the system as the unit of action, and view the processes of making and sustaining change in terms of relationships, joint action and investment.