

# The Youth Fields Workforce Survey



## Raising the Voices of Those Working in the Youth Fields

Youth fields professionals who ally with and support youth development are essential. They have the power to **change the odds for young people and upend inequities**. Yet little is known about this critical and diverse workforce. **A national Youth Fields Workforce Survey will provide a foundational understanding of and offer insights into the people who make up these fields:** their career pathways, their relevant expertise and training needs, opportunities for job mobility, and issues around preparation and retainment. The survey will **provide reliable information for policy, practice, and research efforts to understand, strengthen and support the youth fields workforce.**

### Who are the youth fields' workforce?

They include current and former community center staff, childcare providers, mentors, coaches, afterschool professionals, summer camp counselors, teaching artists, young adult librarians, science program facilitators, youth volunteer coordinators, wilderness guides, and many others. The youth fields workforce includes people at various places in their careers – from systems lead, to program director, to youth work staff. **The youth fields workforce is THE key lever** in supporting youth. They facilitate high quality programming, build sustained relationships that benefit youth, and support young people's experiences in learning and development.<sup>1</sup>

### Is a national Youth Fields Workforce Survey necessary?

**Yes! We need to answer critical questions** about today's youth fields workforce – especially in the age of the pandemic. While we have pockets of information that are useful for learning about the workforce in discrete fields or locations, **these do not provide the whole picture of the varied youth fields across the country and the challenges and potential of mobilizing that workforce more effectively for learning and development.**

A national Youth Fields Workforce Survey will provide current, relevant, and reliable information about the workforce: **who they are, what they do, where they work and have worked, their professional identities and pathways to and within their career, their competencies, and trainings they receive and need.**



<sup>1</sup> Cantor et al. (2018). Malleability, plasticity, and individuality: How children learn and develop in context. *Applied Developmental Science*, doi:10.1080/10888691.2017.1398649; Osher et al. (2018). Drivers of human development: How relationships and context shape learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, doi:10.1080/10888691.2017.1398650

## What is our plan?



## Imagine the outcomes for the field...

The Youth Fields Workforce Survey will fuel **practice improvements, policy advancements, and knowledge-building research** in our field. The information will help us **define the youth fields workforce**, prioritize efforts to **recognize their assets and needs and act upon their perspectives**, and ultimately support them and their continuing work to **ensure all young people have opportunities to thrive**. Independently, these efforts will contribute to the field using the information from the survey; together, they can **lead to lasting improvements for the youth fields' workforce and better outcomes for all youth**.



## Imagine the possibilities...



- PRACTICE** A local partner organization uses survey data to reveal simple tips to retaining and rewarding workers that lower turnover and build stability.
- RESEARCH** A national research firm analyzes the survey data to understand youth worker perspectives across the country regarding reasons youth workers stay in – and leave – the field.
- POLICY** A regional advocacy group uses the findings from the national research firm and the example of the local organization's efforts to advocate for changes in supports to retain youth workers, such as credentialing opportunities.

## Who is behind the work?

The Youth Fields Workforce Survey is a Readiness Project and is led by a co-operative of policy, practice, and research organizations. At the helm of the survey design and feasibility study are longtime youth development researchers, including Dale Blyth, PhD, and researchers from the American Institutes for Research and National Institute on Out-of-School Time.

In addition, the survey team is collaborating with national associations, intermediaries, and youth development organizations to ensure the survey reaches the widest possible audience and produces the most useful information to drive practice and policy and contribute to ongoing research efforts.

**Through the Readiness Projects**, The Forum for Youth Investment, the National Urban League, and the American Institutes for Research have united to devote our time, resources, and perspectives to stimulate equity-driven solutions and policies.

## Want to learn more or get involved?

**Great!** Email us at [YFSurvey@air.org](mailto:YFSurvey@air.org) to learn more or to join us in this important effort.