

Big Ideas for Little Kids: Policies to Transform the Next Decade

Creating a Youth Master Plan for Greater Rochester

Problem	Policies affecting children are frequently fragmented across a number of government departments and agencies. Philanthropic funders, public entities, non-profits, and residents are often disconnected. Services and programs don't always coordinate to optimize their combined impact for the good of kids. As a result, too many children do not have access to vital services and opportunities that support their development.
Solution	Create a Youth Master Plan , coordinated across all sectors, to identify gaps and better leverage already-invested resources to improve kids' outcomes, prenatal to age 21.
Existing Experience	<p>There have been many important local efforts over the years to think strategically about the needs of children and youth in the Greater Rochester area, now including ROC the Future. Creating a Youth Master Plan, as discussed here, would build on existing efforts and past work.</p> <p>Youth Master Plans allow city officials, school leaders, community partners, and youth to take stock of local programs and services for young people, identify cost savings, reduce duplication of services, and strategically address pressing needs (NLC 2011).</p> <p>Over the last 10 years in more than 30 communities, including Nashville and San Diego, Mayor's Offices and County human service departments have created comprehensive Youth Master Plans that establish a shared community vision and set the stage to coordinate services provided by multiple stakeholders.</p> <p>Bringing together research findings, local data, and input from youth, families and decision makers, these plans are founded in reality and research. Done well, these plans are a highly strategic to-do list of next critical steps that allow communities to take good ideas and put them into fast action for children.</p>
What's Next?	A Youth Master Plan can be created in many ways. The Mayor and County Executive could assign departments to co-lead a collaborative community process with the deliverable being a Master Youth Plan. City Council or the County Legislature could pass legislation calling for an annual Youth Master Plan. Regardless, two key factors appear necessary for success: setting a time-table and ensuring there is a community-trusted champion to lead a collaborative process. To move forward, we should investigate the results of efforts in other cities and find out if sectors coordinated, programs aligned, and outcomes for children have begun to move in the right direction.