

THE ALLIANCE

The National Alliance of Youth and Young Adult Advocates

We Need a Movement for Youth and Young Adults

For decades, the United States has not had an integrated or comprehensive vision for the transition to adulthood and how youth and young adults achieve independence, pursue meaning, secure stability, and find happiness. We know what young people [need](#), that proven programs can fill in gaps, and that the American public is anxious about the fate of our youth. The COVID-19 pandemic has opened a policy window for considering solutions of comprehensive scale, but youth and young adults have not benefited. Three major barriers stand in the way:

1. **We cannot paint a clear picture of young people.** There are few shared, powerful data points about the value of investing in young adults. *Data is insufficient and fragmented*, both about program impact and on the various barriers that young people face. We need real-time data and a research agenda that will bolster advocacy.
2. **We do not have a compelling narrative about the transition to adulthood.** Conceptions of young adults still center first-time, full-time college-going achievers bound for white-collar jobs. We need a new narrative about adulthood that highlights the range of educational and employment paths – and many strengths – of young people today.
3. **We do not have a strong political constituency.** At the local, state, and federal levels, coalitions often mirror the siloes in which services are delivered. We need a movement that, while centering equity, reflects the aspirations of young adults.

Without these pieces, no single plan – for addressing K-12 education reform, college affordability, workforce development, mental health, or anything else – will succeed. *Time is of the essence.*

Our goal is to create a new, equitable vision for the transition to adulthood.

What We Seek to Accomplish

The National Alliance of Youth and Young Adult Advocates will focus on **four major areas of work**:

1. **Narrative change:** With young people, partners, and the media, we will build on existing narrative change efforts to tell a new story about the transition to adulthood.
2. **Data and research:** Working with researchers, data scientists, and data users, we will identify data and research projects that will change the services and opportunities available to young people – and make the case that policy change is needed!
3. **Coalition and field building:** Many wonderful and strong coalitions exist to advocate for and on behalf of youth and young adults. We will facilitate connections among these coalitions at the local and national levels, harness new grassroots enthusiasm, and increase the capacity for young people and youth workers to engage in this work.

4. **Policy advocacy:** With young people, we will pursue shared policy goals, increase the prominence of youth and young adults across policy debates, and create the right configurations to increase receptivity among policymakers.

We seek partners who support our vision and will contribute to these efforts. Join our effort at www.nayyaa.org.



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Our Theory of Change

As the proverb says, where there is no vision, the people perish. Apathy and lack of vision for youth and young adults has produced policies that are insufficient or even counterproductive. A mindset that nothing works, or nothing better is possible, has set in. We propose:

Activities →	Outcomes →	Solution →
<p><i>Launch National Alliance that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Creates, with young people, a positive narrative •Gathers data, aligns research •Builds grassroots, place-based enthusiasm •Implements a shared advocacy strategy; growing group of partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Grassroots and grasstops enthusiasm for new narrative, and for young adults •More and varied depictions of young adults •Policies reflect new narrative, more cohesive vision, transformed systems, better outcomes 	<p><i>Young adults have equitable pathways to adulthood</i></p>

Our approach takes its cues from successful recent efforts in the early childhood education and homelessness spaces, which emphasized 1) shared data points, 2) shared messages, 3) vibrant and coordinated grassroots and national coalitions, and 4) shared policy advocacy strategies.

The Core Group Leading This Effort

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) — in partnership with young people — educates, engages, and informs policymakers, practitioners, and researchers about education, youth, and workforce policies to improve the lives and outcomes of youth marginalized by systemic inequities.

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) works to develop and implement federal, state, and local policies (in legislation, regulation, and on the ground) that reduce poverty, improve the lives of people with low income, and create pathways to economic security for everyone.

The National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) improves the lives of the more than four million young people who are out of school and out of work (opportunity youth), by building the capacity of young people themselves, youth-serving organizations, and advocates.

The Corps Network (TCN) advances programs that transform young people’s lives and communities through career development, conservation, and civic engagement.