

Opportunity Forward



National Opportunity Youth Incubator
for
Nonprofits, Businesses and Youth Leadership




Meet Our CEO





Opportunity Forward | Agenda

- Welcome from Big Thought
 - Grounding – The Work of the OY National Incubator
 - Virtual Handshake – Networking Activity
 - NOYI Purpose
 - Projected Outcomes
 - Data & Impact
 - How this Works!
 - Reflections & Next Steps
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ANIA HODGES



KRISTINA COLA



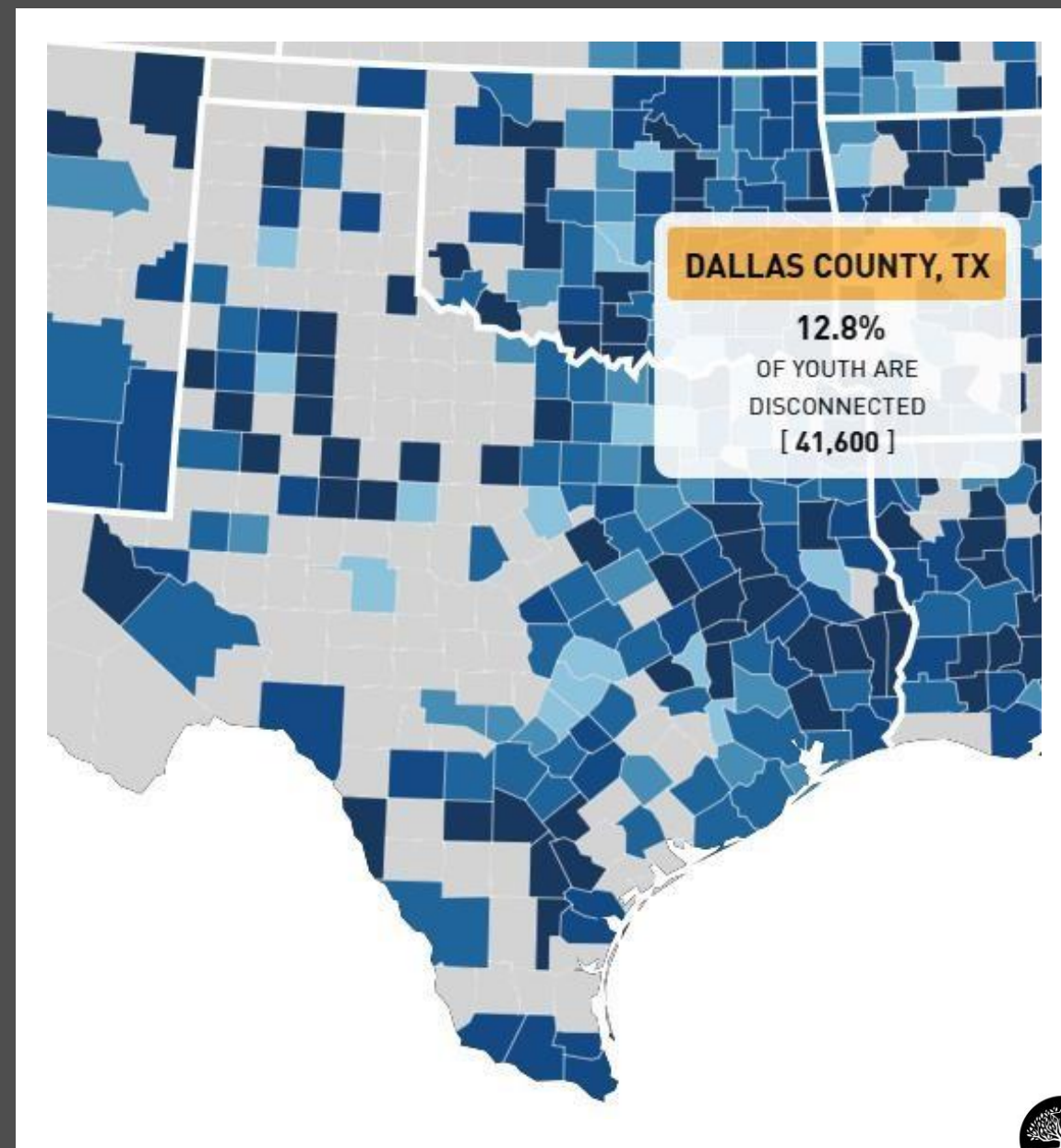
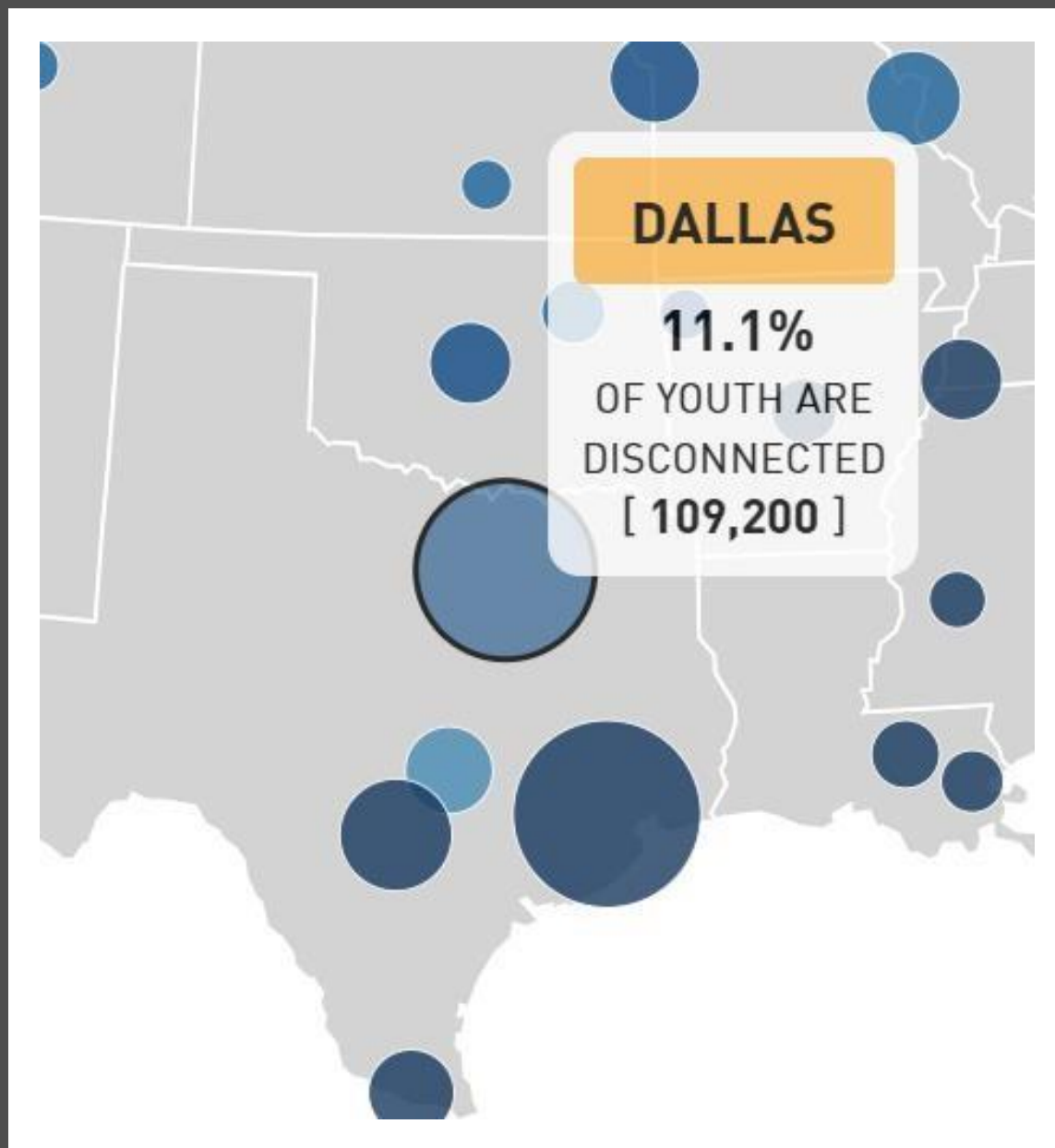
FRANKLIN ZUNIGA



Who are Opportunity Youth?

- Aged 16-24, not in school, not in college or postsecondary, not in work, or working in low-wage, dead-end jobs
- Also including veterans and neurodiverse populations
- Nationwide, there are over **5 million** opportunity youth and young adults
- **TEXAS is #4**





Virtual Hand-Shake!





NOYI | PURPOSE



Collaboration



Skills Plus Hiring Practices



Employer Engagement



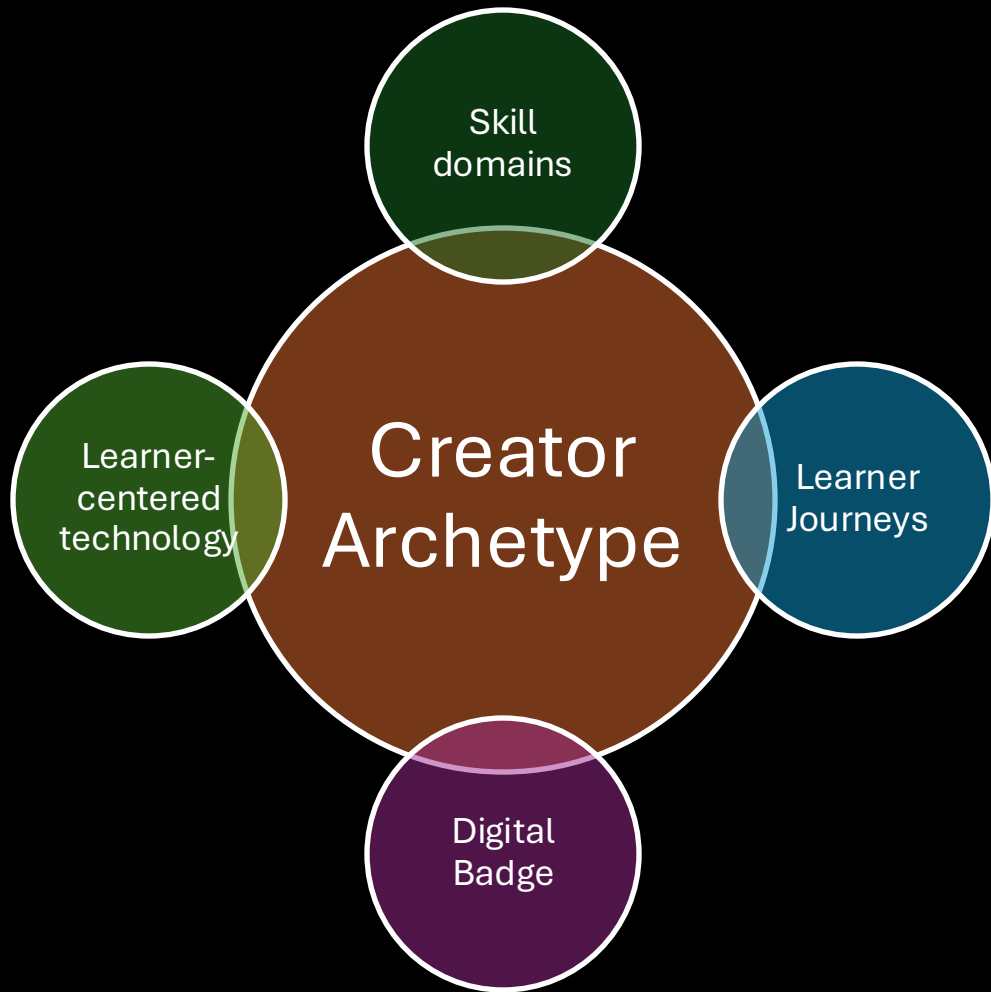
Digital Badging



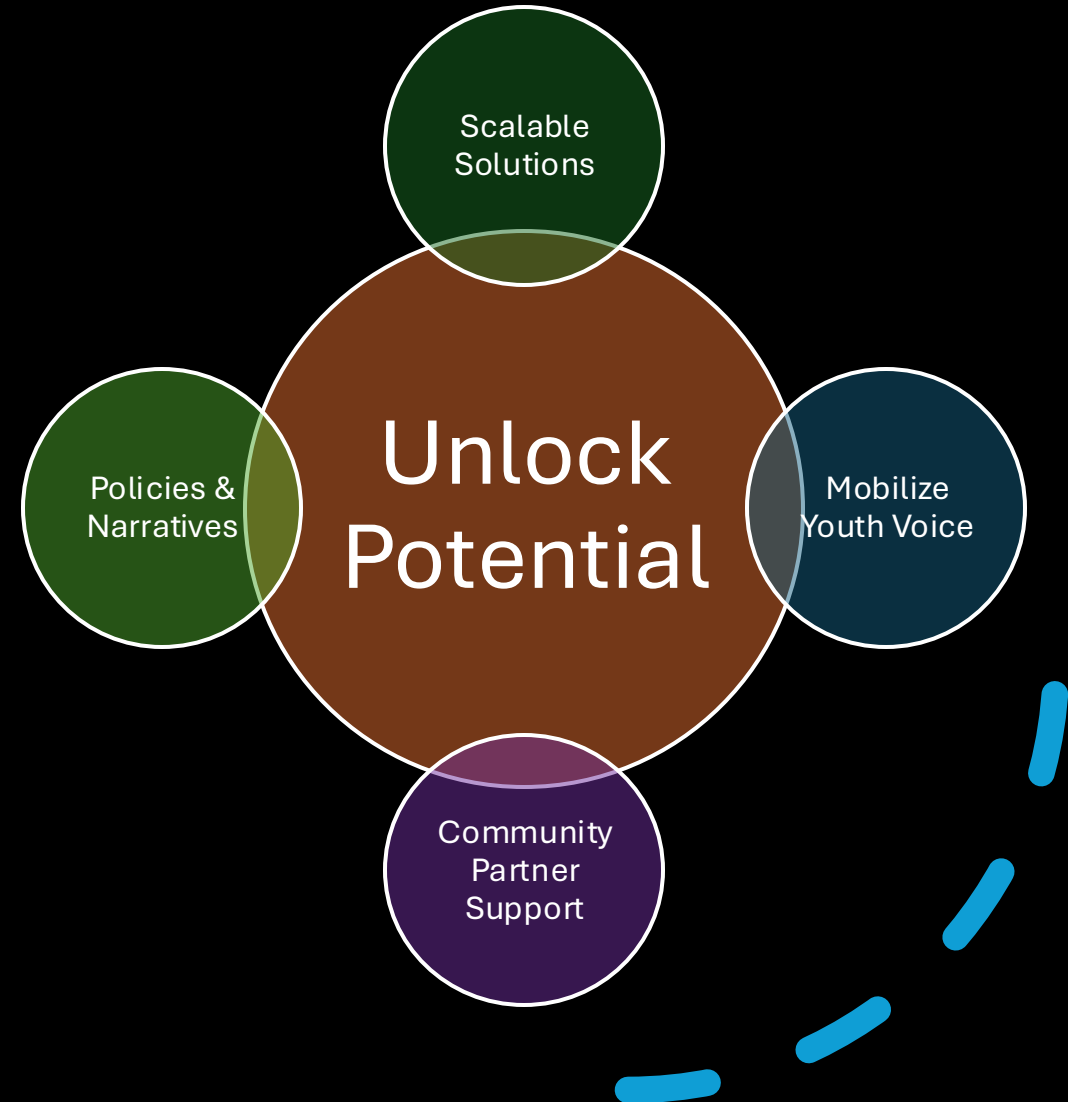
Unlocking Potential: Recognizing and Crediting 21st Century Skills

Welcome to a transformative approach that combines skill recognition with national impact. Through our National Incubator, we're establishing best practices and supportive policies to address systemic disparities while crediting essential 21st-century skills. By connecting community-driven hiring practices with youth development, we're creating pathways that truly unlock the potential of our next generation.

The Frameworks



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Skills-Plus Hiring



Mental Model

- **Skills-Plus Hiring** is a hiring approach that prioritizes a candidate's **skills and competencies** over traditional credentials like degrees or prior job titles. It acknowledges that valuable skills can be gained through **nontraditional pathways**, including work experience, apprenticeships, military service, and self-directed learning.
 - The “**Plus**” in Skills-Plus Hiring often refers to additional qualities that employers seek, such as:
 - ✓ **Social capital** (networks and relationships that provide access to opportunities)
 - ✓ **Mindsets and behaviors** (adaptability, problem-solving, collaboration)
 - ✓ **Relevant work experiences** (internships, volunteer work, or gig economy roles)
 - This model expands access to employment opportunities for individuals from **diverse backgrounds**, including **opportunity youth, veterans, and individuals with learning differences**, helping create a more **inclusive and skills-driven** workforce.
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Data & Impact

- Impact Team!
 - Year One - DFW OY COP
 - SMU CORE qualitative report
 - Micro-learnings
 - DFW OY COP Whitepaper publication
 - Year Two - DFW OY COP
 - Established broader process and data protocols to further understand impact of work – integrated data
 - Share back data and findings
 - Year Two - National OY Incubator
 - Scale DFW data practices to NOYI
 - Support partners in any and all data needs
 - Share back data and findings
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Federal Advocacy

Integrating OY strategies into all levels of advocacy and public policy change.

In partnership with Texas OYF leadership and members, ensuring OY language makes into state statute

Collaborating with national coalitions to expanse advocacy reach to new federal initiatives that impact our OY youth.

Learning best practices from what has been done in other states, what can be replicated, and who to partner with.



Outcomes + Commitments

Projected Outcomes

- Organizations participate in skills+ frameworks trainings
- Organizations adopt digital credentialing into program practices
- Employers adopt and validate skills plus hiring practices
- Design solutions to ensure youth voice is at the center
- Advance policies, economic mobility and develop diverse pipelines of entry-level positions that lead to career pathways

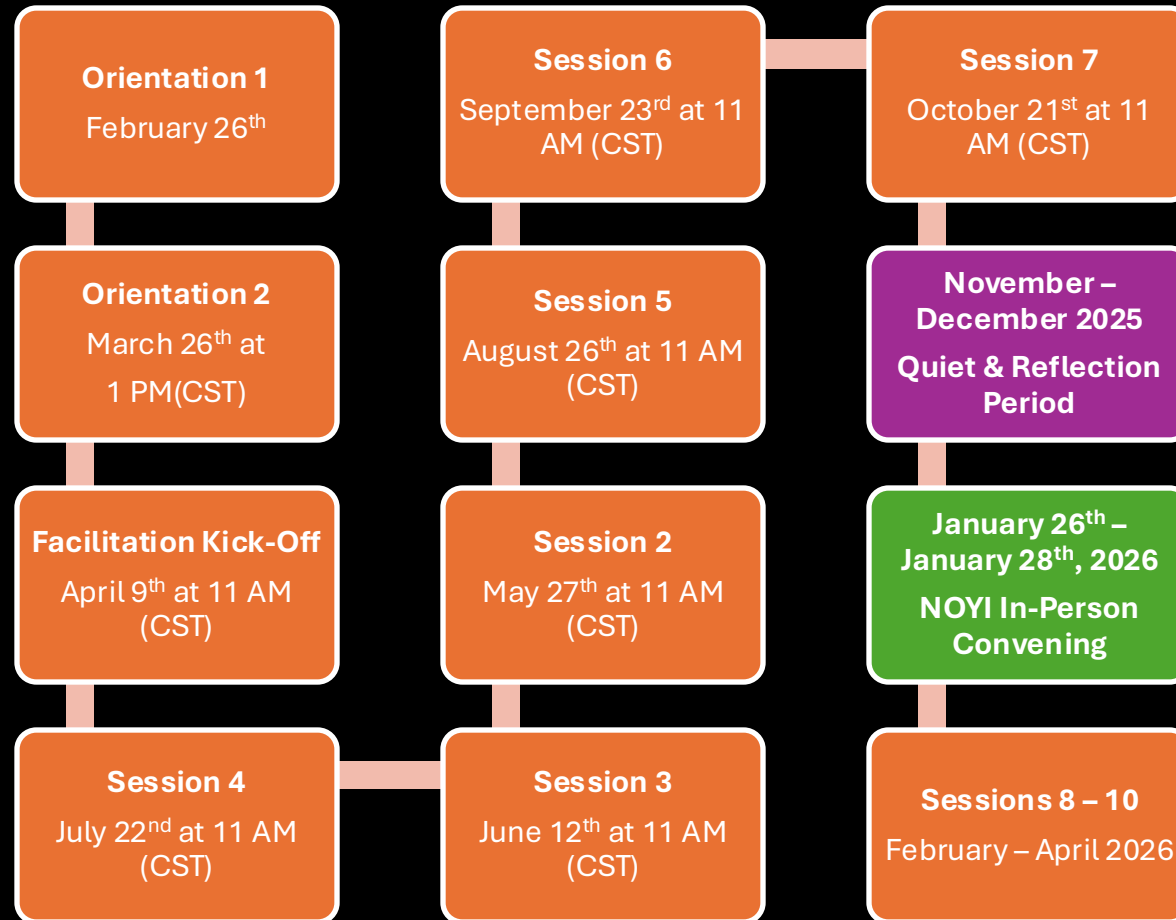
Commitments

- Attend at least 75% of the virtual NOYI sessions between April 2025 – April 2026
- Participate in skills+ trainings and badging workshops
- Data sharing
- Media and photo sharing
- (if applicable) Invite at least one OY to a virtual session

Big Thought's Commitment

- Each participating organization or individual will receive a stipend for participation in NOYI

Timeline



Reflections, Questions & Next Steps

THANK YOU!

