



Safety & Belonging Work Group Meeting #5

A Children & Youth
Community Plan Initiative

July 23, 2026





Agenda

**Review key themes and discuss
what we've learned**

15 min

**Identify which strategic direction(s)
appear most ready for coordinated action**

50 min

Next Steps & Close

5 min



Today's Purpose

To review what we've learned and identify which strategic direction(s) are most ready for coordinated action.



What We've Done So Far & What We've Learned





What we have done so far

Over the past two years we have:

- ☑ Engaged 1,800+ youth
- ☑ Reviewed local data
- ☑ Examined research on what works
- ☑ Mapped existing efforts
- ☑ Identified gaps, fragmentation, and opportunities for coordination

Now it's time to use all of that information & choose where coordinated action could make the biggest difference!



Executive Summary

Youth told us:

- They want safe spaces, trusted adults, belonging, and meaningful opportunities.

Data tell us:

- Overall, students are reporting less engagement in fighting and bullying rates have declined. However, students missing school due to feeling unsafe has sharply increased.
- School data show a persistent rise in interpersonal conflict.
- We also see declines in students feeling welcome or cared for in school climate surveys. Hispanic students consistently report the lowest levels.

Youth Recommended:

- Strengthen adult roles, training & accountability (*strengthening relationships*)
- Expand access to safe afterschool and enrichment opportunities (*strengthening opportunities*)
- Improve community-level safety conditions (*strengthening the built environment*)
- Expand mental health and therapeutic supports (*promoting mental health*)
- Build students' conflict-resolution and coping skills (*strengthening skills*)
- Expand youth leadership and peer-led solutions (*strengthening systems*)

Research tells us:

- Relationships, skills, opportunities, and supportive systems matter.

Ecosystem mapping showed:

- Alexandria has many strong efforts already underway.
- Gaps remain in access and awareness.
- Coordination is inconsistent.
- Many opportunities exist to strengthen existing work rather than create new programs.

Question:

- Where can coordination and partnership make the biggest difference over the next five years?





What We've Learned About Each Strategic Direction

What stands out to you? What surprises you?

Where do you see the biggest opportunity?

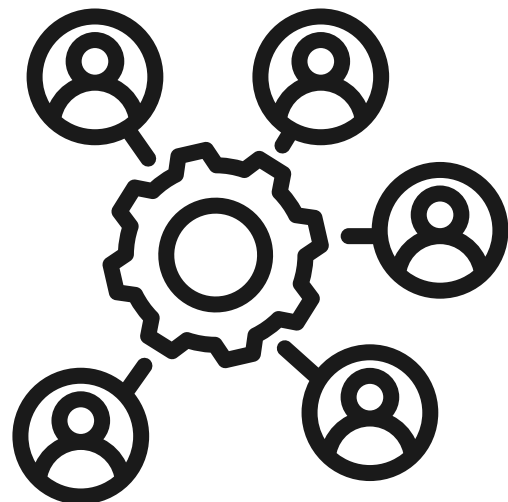
What to Strengthen (Strategic Direction)	Relationships	Skills	Mental Health	Opportunities	Systems	Cross Cutting Themes
What We Have (Alignment)	• Lots of adults who care about young people. • Mentors, coaches, club advisors, teachers, youth workers, and peer leaders. • Many opportunities for youth to connect and belong.	• Schools, clubs, mentoring programs, and prevention programs all teach important life skills. • Youth have many chances to learn communication, leadership, and conflict resolution.	• A lot of mental health resources. • Strong school and community partnerships. • Growing awareness of mental wellness.	• Clubs. • Sports. • Jobs. • Leadership programs. • Mentoring and volunteer opportunities.	• Strong partnerships. • Many groups focused on youth well-being. • Growing commitment to prevention and youth voice.	• Extensive youth-serving infrastructure • Strong partnerships and leadership structures exist • Many youth-led opportunities • Multiple initiatives are already working toward similar goals
What's Getting in the Way (Gaps & Fragmentation)	• Some youth have many connections while others have very few. • Youth often need an adult to help them find opportunities. • Programs aren't always connected to one another.	• Different programs teach these skills differently. • What youth learn in one setting may not be reinforced elsewhere. • Online conflict is growing faster than our prevention efforts.	• Youth and families often don't know where to go. • Services can feel overwhelming or hard to access. • Stigma, transportation, language, and cultural barriers still exist.	• Youth can't participate in opportunities they don't know about. • Transportation remains a major barrier. • Access often depends on whether an adult helps make the connection.	• Coordination doesn't always lead to action. • Systems still rely heavily on individual champions. • Youth and families often experience services as disconnected.	• Youth and families still experience the system as fragmented • Navigation depends heavily on trusted adults and informal relationships • Awareness and transportation barriers limit participation • Access is uneven across schools, neighborhoods, and populations
What We Could Do (Opportunities)	• Make it easier for youth to move from one supportive relationship or program to another. • Help trusted adults connect youth to additional opportunities. • Build a stronger "web of support" around youth.	• Use more shared language and approaches. • Expand peer-to-peer leadership and prevention efforts. • Help adults reinforce the same skills across settings.	• Make the system easier to understand. • Strengthen referrals and warm handoffs. • Invest more in prevention, belonging, and connection, not just crisis response.	• Improve outreach and awareness. • Make opportunities easier to find. • Create clearer pathways from one opportunity to the next. • Support ALX Beyond's & Connecting Youth Initiative's existing work.	• Strengthen communication and referrals across organizations. • Build more consistent ways of working together. • Focus on connecting existing efforts instead of creating new ones.	• Help existing efforts become more connected, coordinated, and easier for youth and families to navigate



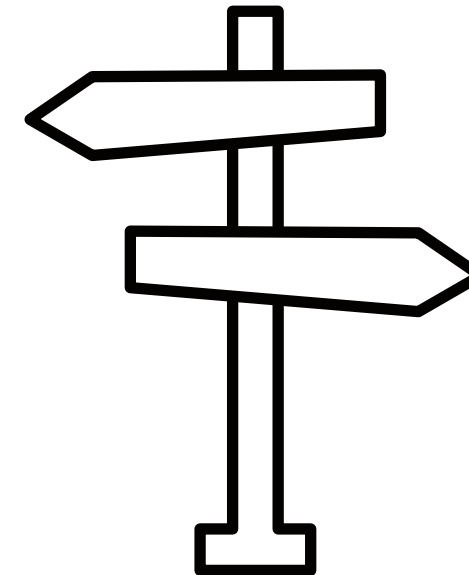
Patterns Appearing Across All Five Strategic Directions



Alexandria has many programs, partnerships, youth leaders, and caring adults.

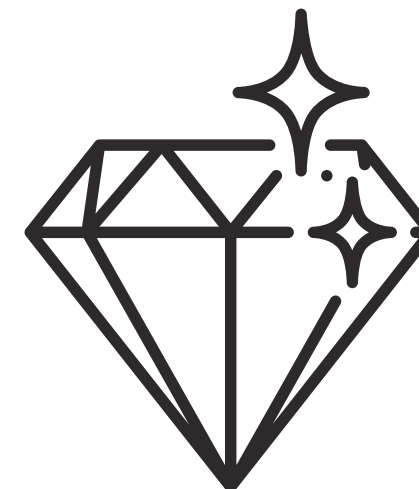


Our challenge is helping youth and families experience our efforts as a connected system rather than a collection of separate opportunities.



We struggle with:

- Navigation
- Awareness
- Referrals
- Transportation
- Consistent implementation
- Cross-system coordination



CYCP's greatest value may be helping the many good things already happening across Alexandria become more connected, coordinated, and easier for youth and families to navigate.



**Identify which
strategic direction(s)
appear most ready for
coordinated action**





Discussion/Activity:

Identify which strategic direction(s) appear most ready for coordinated action

- **Individual reflection** (3 minutes)
- **Dot voting** (2 minutes)
- **Small groups** (15 minutes)
- **Whole group synthesis** (20 minutes)
- **Consensus discussion** (10 minutes)



Link:
canva.com/design/DAHOokEQ78g/ABKKjBfwJMqEgd79mpziHQ/edit



Which strategic direction is most ready for coordinated action?

1. Strengthen adult roles, training & accountability (**strengthening relationships**)
2. Expand access to safe afterschool and enrichment opportunities (**strengthening opportunities**)
3. Expand mental health and therapeutic supports (**promoting mental health**)
4. Build students' conflict-resolution and coping skills (**strengthening skills**)
5. Expand youth leadership and peer-led solutions (**strengthening systems**)

As We Decide, Let's Consider...

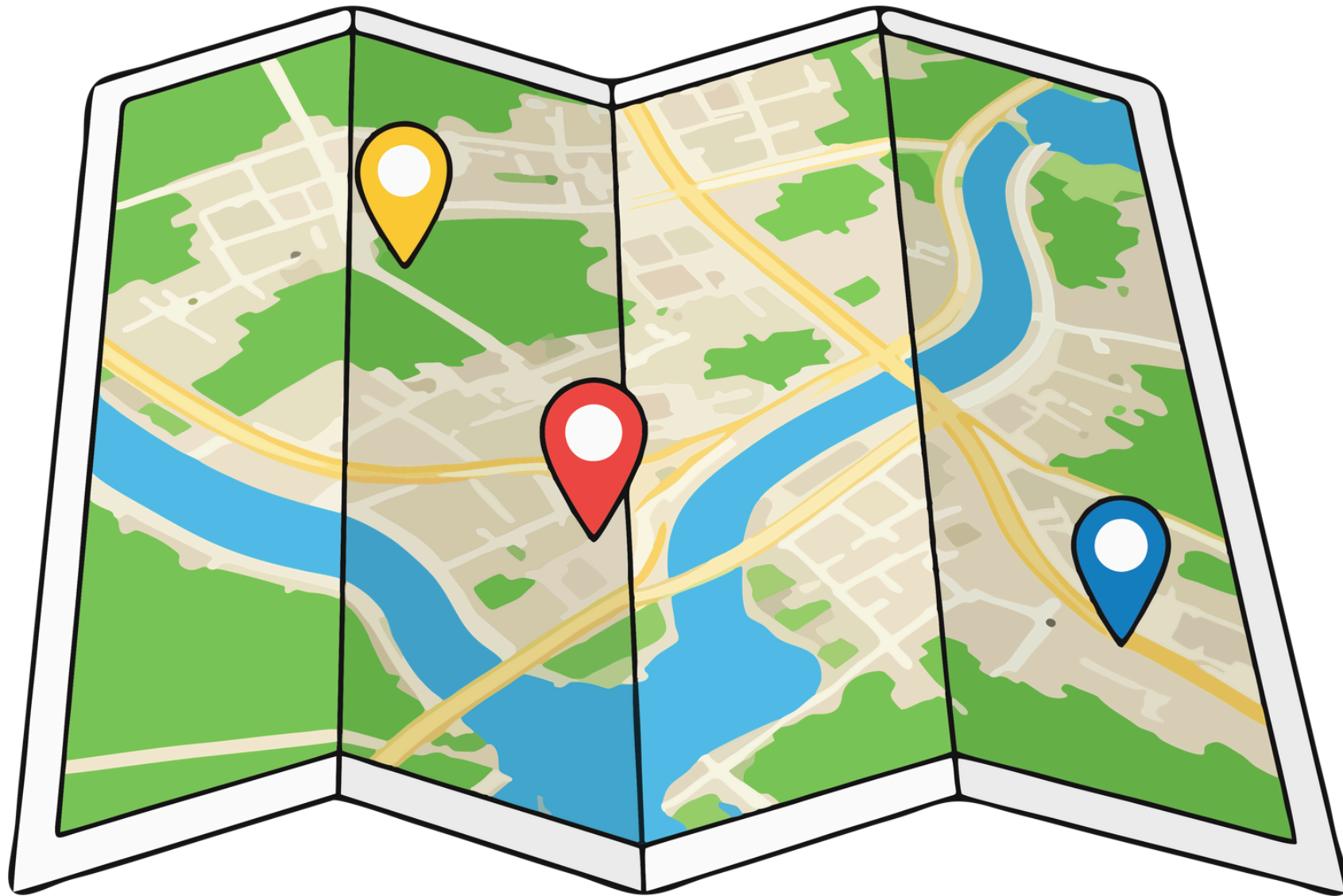
- 1 **Feasibility:** Which strategic direction is most ready for coordinated action? and what role could your organization play?
- 2 **Impact:** Which strategic direction could have the greatest impact on youth safety and belonging?
- 3 **Equity:** Which strategic direction would most improve outcomes for youth and families who currently face the greatest barriers?
- 4 **Systems Change:** Where could better coordination make the biggest difference?

Remember: the CYCP is intended to align, coordinate, and strengthen community efforts, not solve every problem in Alexandria.



Next Steps





Next Steps

Next month (August 27, 1-2:30PM)

- Depending on today's discussion we will...
 - Finalize the strategic direction(s)
 - Develop an action plan
 - Identify measures of success
 - Clarify partner roles
 - Draft Year One actions