
Alexandria Children & Youth Community Plan (CYCP)

Strategy-Shaping Session with the Youth Services Coordinating Council



DEPARTMENT OF
**COMMUNITY &
HUMAN SERVICES**



Today's Purpose

- Ground us in what young people told us
- Share draft strategic directions for the next CYCP
- Explore where you see alignment, energy, and opportunity

Where We Are in the Planning Process

CYCP Development Journey

- ☒ Youth Needs Assessment
- ☒ Priority Selection
- ☒ Youth Validation & Solution-Shaping
- ☒ Strategy-Shaping with Partners (**We are here**)
- ☐ Action Planning
- ☐ Leadership Review
- ☐ City Council Approval



Results-Based Accountability: How We're Framing This Work



Result: What conditions do we want for children and youth?



How are we doing? What does the data tell us about how youth are doing?

Today's Focus



Strategies: What could help improve conditions?



Partners: Who has a role to play?



Story Behind the Trends:
What's driving current conditions?



Action: What are we going to do?

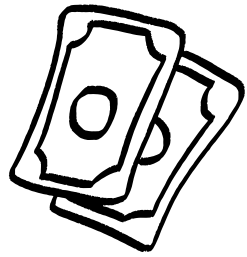


**What We Learned from Students:
Experiences, Root Causes, and Ideas for Solutions**



Affordability for All: Root Causes Driving Youth Experiences

Systemic affordability gaps force families and youth into impossible tradeoffs that ripple into hunger, stress, and exclusion.



Wages Have Not Kept Pace with the Cost of Living



**"Even when having multiple jobs, the cost of living is so high that keeping a roof over your head and food in your fridge is a struggle."
- Alexandria 8th Grader**



Food system affordability gaps"

"Some families can't afford to pay for their kids' lunch every day, so some kids are hungry for the whole school day."

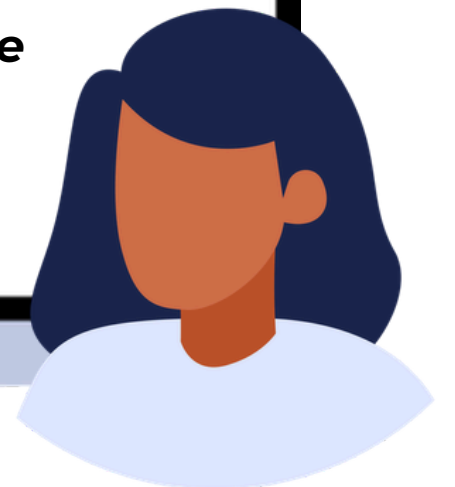
- Alexandria 8th Grader



Healthcare and Childcare Costs Force Impossible Tradeoffs

"...it has become a nightmare to balance eating food and healthcare, ultimately leaving you to choose between the two. With the rising costs of childcare and health care, it has grown increasingly harder for people to get the essential necessities for their kids."

~Alexandria 8th grader



High Housing Costs Drive Instability

"My parents have to borrow money from family to pay their rent."

~Alexandria 12th grader





Affordability for All: Root Causes Driving Youth Experiences

Systemic affordability gaps force families and youth into impossible tradeoffs that ripple into hunger, stress, and exclusion.



Families Don't Know What Help Is Available or May Not Feel Safe Asking

"Families are often unaware of existing resources and assistance programs."

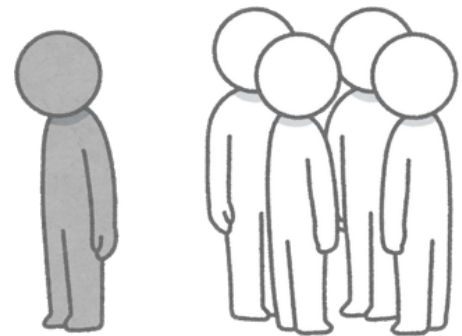
~Alexandria 12th grader



Financial Stress Harms Mental Health, Learning, and Family Wellbeing

"Many students tend to come to school tired due to worrying about money or food."

~Alexandria 8th grader



Costs Exclude Students from School and Community Life

"Some students can't pay for school activities, so they miss out on fun things everyone else does."

~ Alexandria 8th grader



"My mom can't take me to dance class sometimes because she has to save gas. So I have to take two busses to dance and the commute takes away from my homework time."

~Alexandria 12th grader



"I want to take some of the stress off (my mom)."

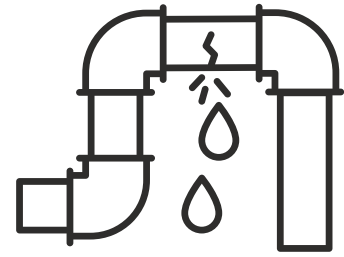
~Alexandria 12th grader



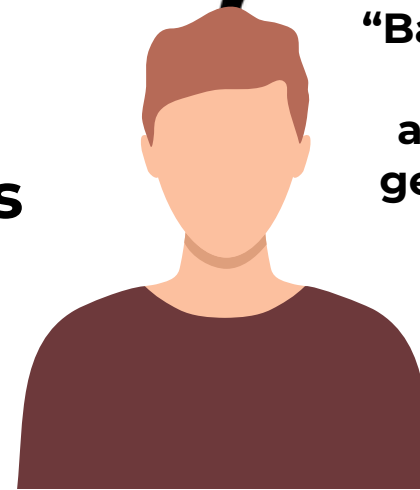


Supportive & Responsive School Conditions: Root Causes Driving Youth Experiences

Under-resourced systems and inconsistent adult practices create environments that undermine trust, regulation, and learning.



Physical Conditions Signal Whether Students Are Valued

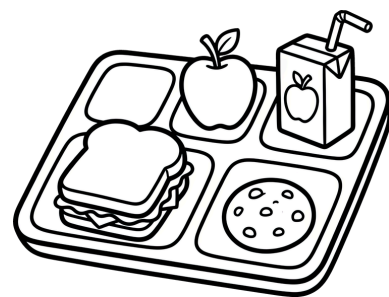


"Bathrooms were locked at King Street all the time last year. I always had to walk really far to get to the unlocked bathrooms; it made me late for class. And then I get yelled at a security guard."

~Alexandria 12th grader

"Bathrooms at King Street are sometimes horrible to get into. Too many students or when it absolutely reeks, I'd rather just hold my urine."

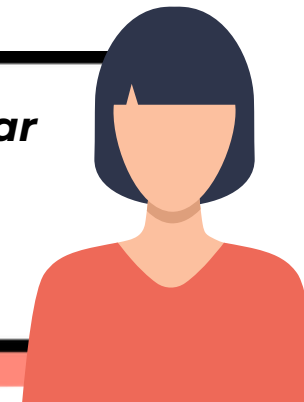
~Alexandria 12th grader



Tight budgets make serving healthier, delicious foods challenging

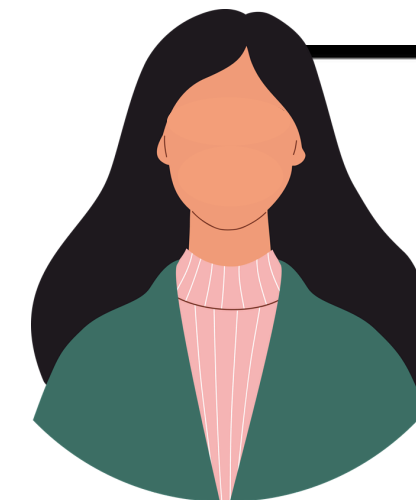
"Lunch is not good - it's near terrible some days."

~Alexandria 12th grader



"Sometimes kids just get through the day without eating."

~Alexandria 12th grader



Operational constraints & rigid schedules



"There have been times when the bell rings and we're immediately yelled at by the security guards. I've had to miss Dr. appointments because they won't let me leave. I feel like there's no trust and they don't really care about the students here."

~Alexandria 12th grader

"Short lunch periods give me no time to eat, so hunger distracts me from learning."

~Alexandria 8th grader





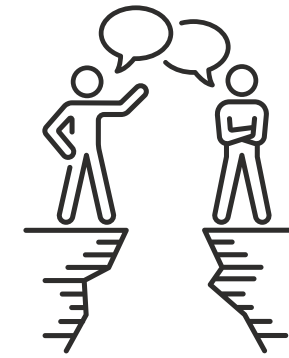
Supportive & Responsive School Conditions: Root Causes Driving Youth Experiences

Under-resourced systems and inconsistent adult practices create environments that undermine trust, regulation, and learning.



Transportation and Campus Logistics Create Daily Barriers

**"I'm always late because
of the school buses."
- Alexandria 12th Grader**

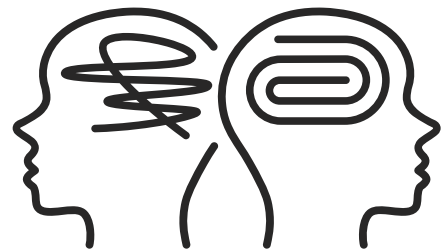


Inconsistent Rules and Adult Relationships Shape Trust

**"We don't like how
they treat us."
~Alexandria 12th grader**



**"[We need] more consistent
enforcement of policies at both
Minnie Howard and King Street –
it's way more lenient at King
Street than Minnie Howard."
~Alexandria 12th grader**



Student Behavior Reflects Environmental Stress

**"When it's overcrowded
and the security guards are
yelling at you, you can't be
shocked there are fights."
- Alexandria 12th Grader**



**"I think they should bring recess back
as it was a time for us to take a chill
pill from the rest of the day,
and it was a nice mental break."
~Alexandria 8th grader**



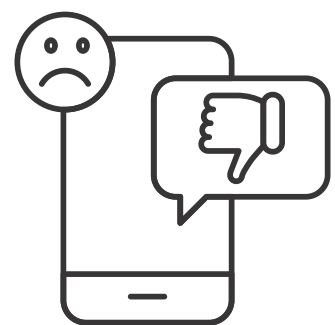
**"Teachers and students aren't told
anything. Communication and
transparency is a really bad issue."
~Alexandria 12th grader**





Safety & Belonging: Root Causes Driving Youth Experiences

Unaddressed trauma, weak relationships, and limited supports escalate conflict rather than prevent it.



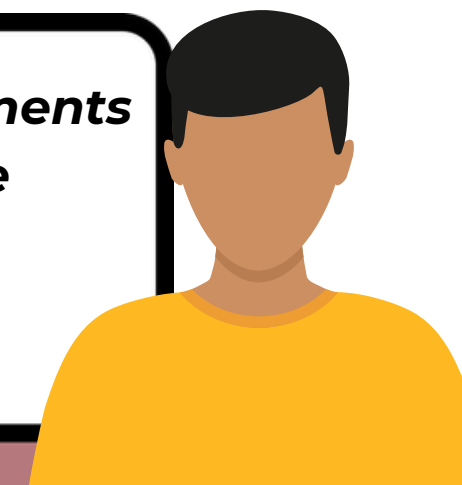
**Unmoderated
peer conflict &
online
escalation**



*"Social media has a
big contribution to
fights."*

*"People fight because of mean comments
said to each other, or they want to be
suspended, or they were provoked."*

~Alexandria 8th grader



**Unaddressed
stress, trauma,
and emotional
overload**

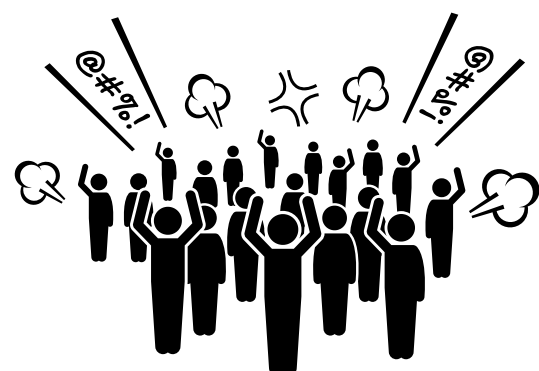
*"Students are balancing a lot of
priorities - makes us feel like we
should give up."*

~Alexandria 12th grader



*"May be bringing family violence to
school. Doesn't help to punish but to
try to understand where
violence is coming from."*

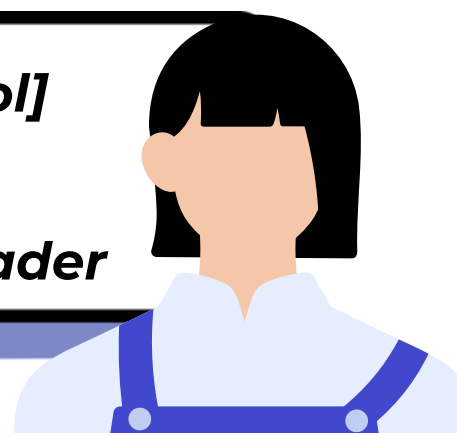
~Alexandria 12th grader



**Environments that
intensify conflict rather
than prevent it**

*"The halls [at school]
feel out of control."*

~Alexandria 8th grader



*"The negative environment
forces you to feel on edge."*

~Alexandria 12th grader





Safety & Belonging: Root Causes Driving Youth Experiences

Unaddressed trauma, weak relationships, and limited supports escalate conflict rather than prevent it.



Lack of trust in adults and inconsistent system responses



"Students do not trust adults at school so they do not tell anyone about problems or conflict."

~Alexandria 12th grader



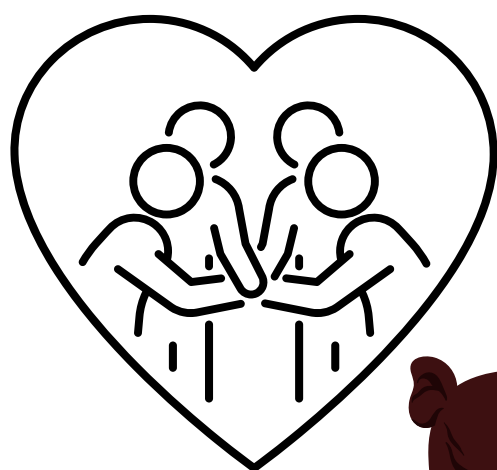
"My friend had a conflict with security guard. She felt stalked by the guard and stopped coming to school. She had to go to the police because he sent many messages threatening her. She transferred."

~Alexandria 12th grader



"Different treatment from security guards depending on how students look. If I'm wearing a black hoodie, I get stopped all the time. Different students – like Hispanic students – get stopped all the time and treated differently. That's racial profiling."

~Alexandria 12th grader

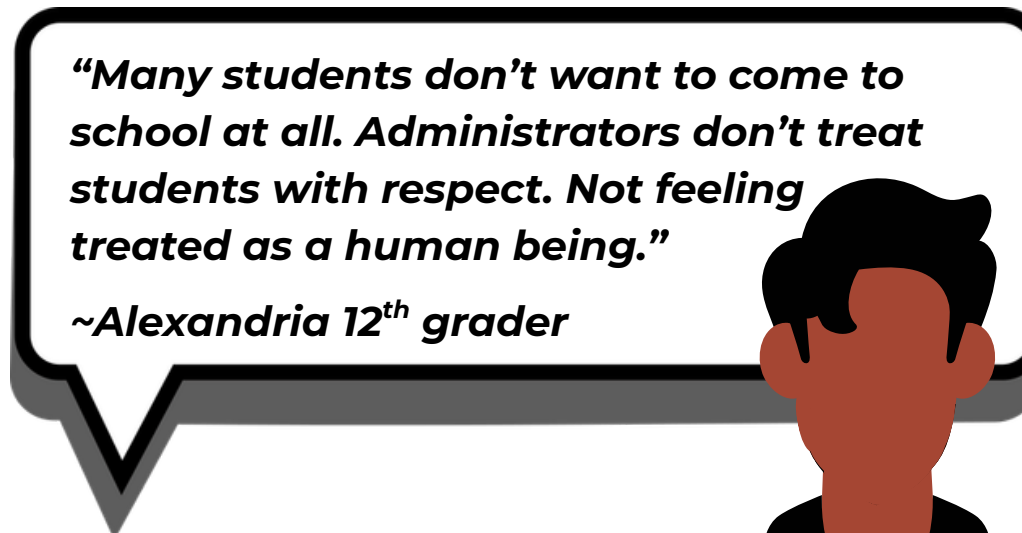


Limited opportunities for belonging, connection, and positive engagement



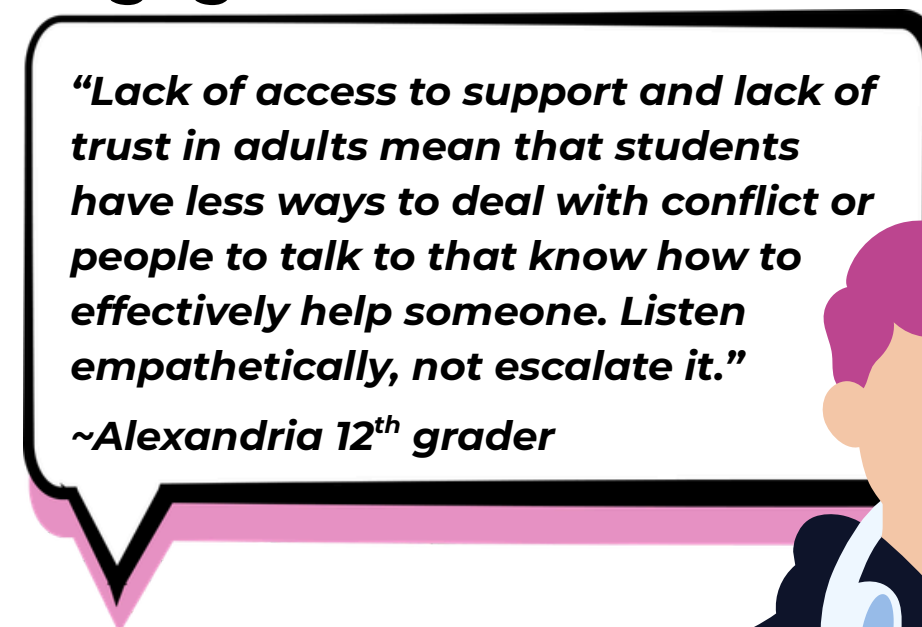
"There's lots of violence in many schools. Violence doesn't make ACHS unique. But the administration is not helpful. They like to treat us like children, so when we act like children, they get mad and ask us to behave like adults."

~Alexandria 12th grader



"Many students don't want to come to school at all. Administrators don't treat students with respect. Not feeling treated as a human being."

~Alexandria 12th grader



"Lack of access to support and lack of trust in adults mean that students have less ways to deal with conflict or people to talk to that know how to effectively help someone. Listen empathetically, not escalate it."

~Alexandria 12th grader



Draft Strategic Directions (Overview)

These strategies reflect youth-identified root causes.

They are intentionally broad to allow multiple actions and partners.



“Affordability for All” Strategic Directions: *What would help improve conditions?*

#1. Make sure cost is never the reason a student can’t participate, belong, or succeed.

Why: Youth repeatedly described being excluded from opportunities like field trips, sports, clubs, school supplies, lunch, and even daily attendance because of cost or transportation barriers.

#2. Make it easy for families to find help, understand their options, and feel welcome asking for support.

Why: Many families don’t know what supports exist or how to access them. Youth and caregivers talked about complicated processes, language barriers, and stigma that keep people from seeking help.

#3. Support young people as leaders in caring for their community and shaping long-term solutions.

Why: Youth want to be part of the solution. They proposed food drives, clothing closets, toy drives, and fundraisers that ensure their peers are cared for with dignity and respect.



“Supportive & Responsive School Conditions” Strategic Directions: *What would help improve conditions?*

#1. Create community-based environments where students feel respected, heard, and supported by adults.

Why: Youth emphasized that relationships with adults/staff members shape their sense of safety and belonging.

#2. Embed youth input into organizational operations, policies, and culture.

Why: Youth repeatedly said they want to be included in the decision making process. It also creates more relevant, effective programs, fosters a sense of belonging, and makes organizations truly responsive to youth needs.

#3. Improve communication and coordination across youth-serving systems in Alexandria.

Why: Prevents children from “slipping through the cracks,” reduces duplication of efforts, breaks down silos, and creates a unified support network to ensure that youth access resources that will help meet their complex needs.



“Safety & Belonging” Strategic Directions: *What would help improve conditions?*

#1. Expand access to safe afterschool and enrichment opportunities

Why: Youth see boredom, isolation, and lack of structure as contributors to conflict.

#2. Build conflict-resolution and coping skills among youth

Why: Youth repeatedly said many peers “don’t know how to resolve conflict.”

#3. Expand youth leadership and peer-led solutions

Why: Youth emphasized that solutions work best when created with youth.

#4. Expand mental health and therapeutic supports

Why: Youth directly connect untreated stress, stigma, and emotional overload to violence.

Small Group Activity: Ownership & Energy Mapping



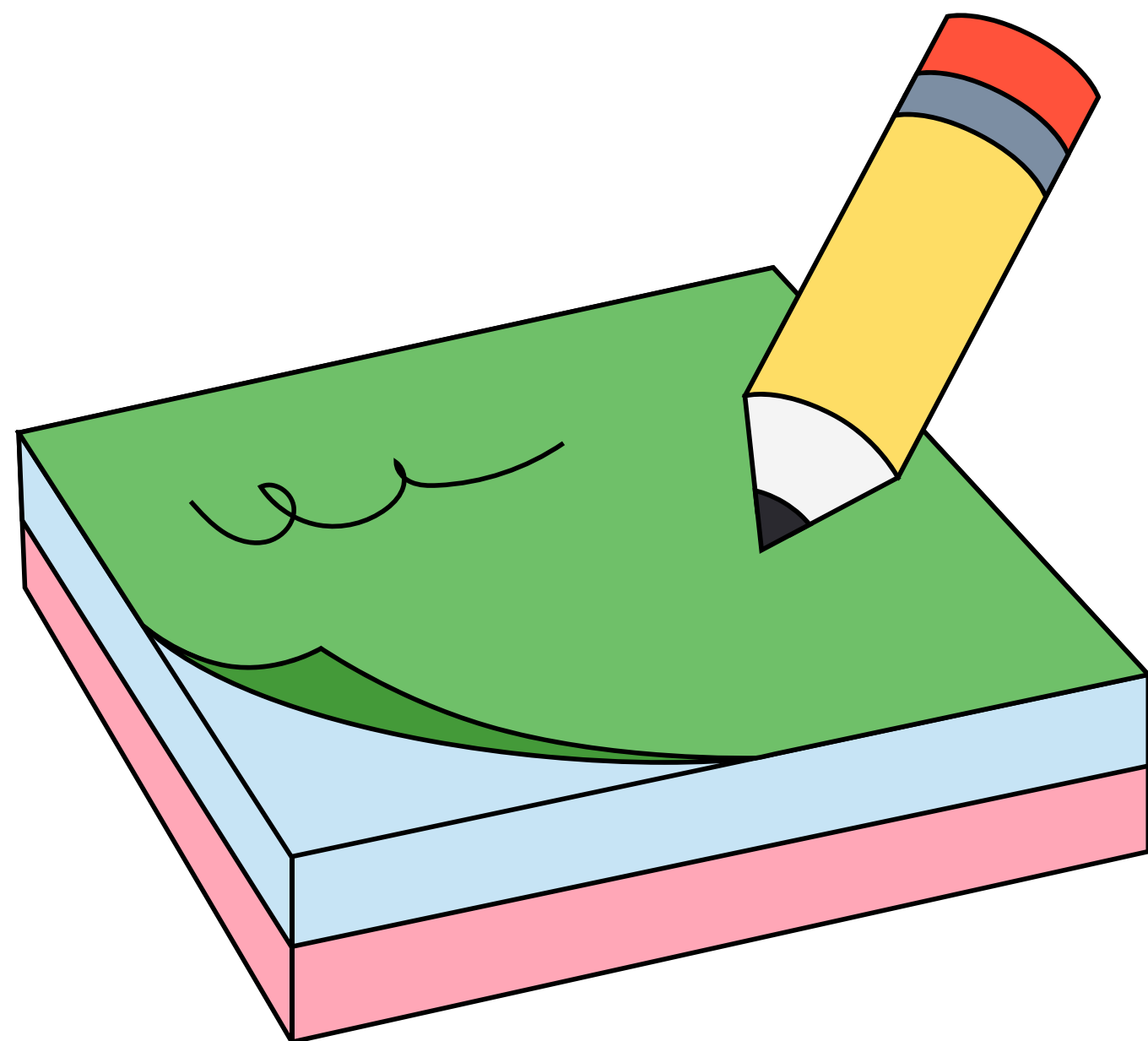
3 Rounds, 15 minutes each.

Looking at the strategic directions:

Which feel most important to improving current conditions?

Where do you or your organization already see yourselves contributing?

Which spark energy or curiosity, even if the path isn't clear yet?



How to Capture Feedback

Please Capture Notes As:

- “Already working here”
- “Could play a role”
- “Want to explore further”



Whole Group Share-Out

What We're Hearing

- Where is energy emerging?
- Where are we seeing alignment with existing work?
- Where might partnership form?
- Is there work we can do together?



What Comes Next

Next Steps

- Follow up with interested partners
- Convene smaller working groups by strategic direction
- Assess feasibility, alignment, gaps, and implementation pathways
- Draft action plans

