

YMI CREATES NETWORKS, BUILDS CAPACITY, AND GIVES YOUTH A VOICE

Metis Associates’ June 2014 report, “The New York City Young Men’s Initiative: Working to Improve Outcomes for Black and Latino Young Men,” presents findings from a cross-program evaluation of the Young Men’s Initiative (YMI). It examines the influence of YMI on New York City agency programming and practices and identifies best practices in serving the needs of young men of color. In addition, it presents recommendations for strengthening YMI.

The evaluation is based upon qualitative assessments of six YMI programs that had been up and running for at least one year and that were not undergoing other evaluation activities: AIM, Arches, and Justice Scholars (Department of Probation); IMPACT Peer Mentoring (City University of New York); Cure Violence (Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Health and Hospitals Corporation) and the Teen Health Improvement Program (Health and Hospitals Corporation).

What is the NYC Young Men’s Initiative?

Launched in August 2011, YMI is a cross-agency enterprise to address disparities between young Black and Latino men and their peers across numerous outcomes related to education, employment, health and the justice system. Funded by \$60 million in private investments over three years from Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Campaign for Black Male Achievement at the Open Society Foundations, as well as an ongoing investment of \$23 million annually in city tax levy dollars, YMI has undertaken an ambitious agenda to break down legislative and institutional barriers to achievement for young men of color. It has implemented or expanded a host of programs that connect young men to education, employment, and mentoring opportunities; improve health outcomes; and reduce criminal justice system involvement.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Changes in Agency Practice

- **Prioritizing Young Men of Color.** YMI has helped to give a place of prominence on the City’s agenda to the needs and outcomes of Black and Latino young men. Through YMI’s placement in the Office of the Mayor, the involvement of Commissioners and Executive Leadership within agencies, and regular performance monitoring and assessment, YMI has brought increased attention to major issues affecting young men of color.
- **New Networks.** YMI has enhanced networks within city government, between city agencies and service providers, and among service provider organizations. Agencies have collaborated on the implementation of programs, and service providers have connected to share best practices and collaborate on program activities. Agency staff report closer and more direct relationships with provider organizations, while providers report more receptive and collaborative relationships with city agencies.

Participant Outcomes

- **Attitudinal and Behavioral.** Staff at service provider organizations and YMI program participants report a range of positive personal outcomes, including increased self-efficacy, improved interpersonal and conflict mediation skills, and a greater sense of personal and community responsibility.
- **Economic Opportunity.** Staff and participants also report improved education and employment outcomes, including high school and HSE degree attainment, improved job readiness and increased focus on post-secondary education and career goals.

Best Practices

- **Partnership.** Cross-provider sharing and community partnerships have improved provider capacity and enhanced the coordination and quality of services and resources delivered to participants.
- **Connection.** Caring and consistent one-to-one relationships are key to participant success. By design, several programs employ staff and mentors with backgrounds similar to participants, which providers cite as contributing to strong relationships.

Recommendations

- **Enhance Collaboration.** YMI has resulted in the implementation of new programming and targeted neighborhood investment, as agencies have developed infrastructure and expertise to serve the needs of young men of color. Agencies and service providers now want greater collaboration across the initiative to increase opportunities for sharing of best practices and lessons learned, and to better connect the menu of YMI programs within communities and across services.
- **Build Capacity.** At City agencies and service provider organizations, there remain opportunities for targeted professional development and technical assistance provision to enhance services and further improve outcomes for young men of color.