

TOYN Innovation Fund Initiative Highlights

Background:

Texas is home to over 480,000 young adults who are not plugged in to school and work. These young people, also known as opportunity youth, often have faced significant obstacles in their quest to achieve their potential and represent a huge, untapped talent pipeline for many high-demand fields that feed the Texas Miracle.

Across the state many community organizations offer critical and tailored support that re-engage opportunity youth but these organizations struggle to achieve the scale needed to grow their regional economies.

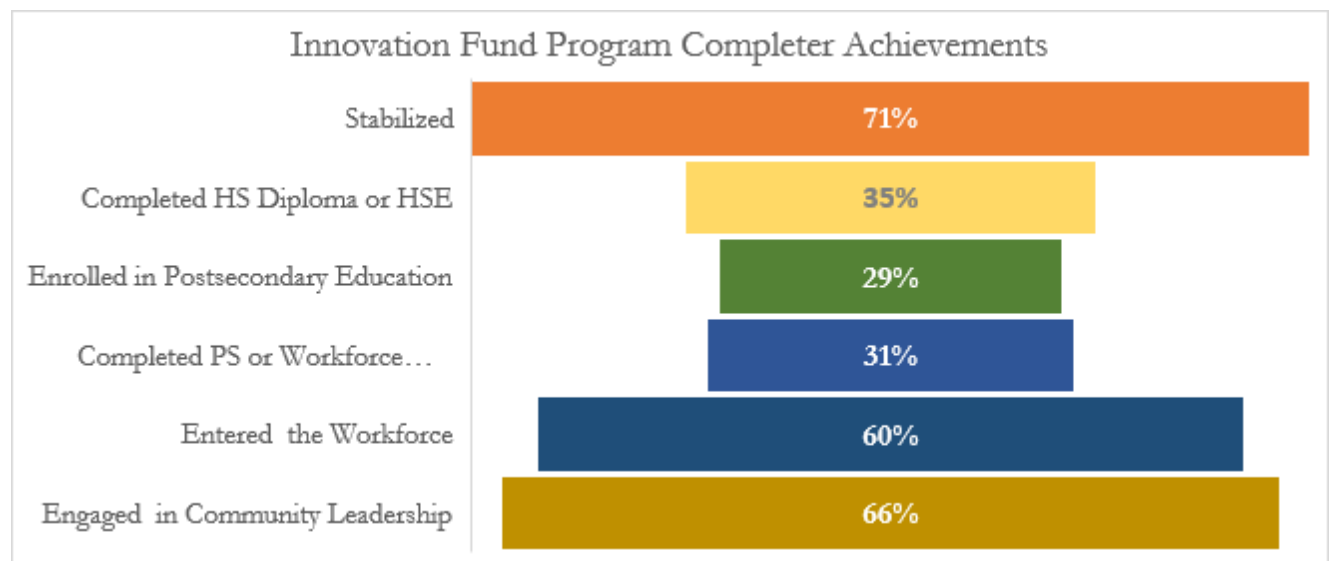
In 2022, TOYN launched the Innovation Fund designed to help community partners build their capability in using public-private financial partnerships to launch, leverage and scale pathways to prosperity for their opportunity youth and young adults. The initiative offered three stages to plan, pilot and launch their programs. Private donors seeded the Innovation Fund: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Greater Texas Foundation, Paso del Norte Health Foundation, Texas Mutual, Trellis Foundation and The William Stamps Farish Fund.

Since its inception, Innovation Fund partners have leveraged close to \$1.5 million in already available public funding to achieve extraordinary results in their communities.

Outcomes:

In our Pilot and Launch Phases, our community partners achieved extraordinary results: **Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, San Antonio, Waco**. Across these communities over 4,500 young adults were served, and over 1,800 enrolled in programing and over 1,100 achieved a positive outcome. In addition, our programs were able to leverage public funding even in a year of federal restructure that left many public funding streams uncertain or discontinued.

Total Public Funds Awarded in Launch	\$	1,443,289
Projected Match (at 50% of Aspen Award)	\$	360,000
Exceeded Projected Match by	\$	1,083,289
Percent Exceeded the Projected Match		301%



Developed the [*Texas Guide to Public Funding for Opportunity Youth*](#). Due to the changes in the federal landscape, we will continue to update the funding sources to keep the document relevant.

Participant Stories

Alissa from San Antonio:

Alissa began her journey at Restore Education with the goal of completing her GED. She achieved that milestone in October of 2024 and quickly took the next step of enrolling in our Medical Assistant with Phlebotomy course. She also welcomed a new baby in January 2025 and, in spite of this major life event, she continued in program.

Through hard work and dedication, balancing both school and home life, she quickly rose to the top of her class. In March 2025, she successfully earned her certifications as a Clinical Medical Assistant and Phlebotomy Technician. Her training advisor said, “Alissa regularly engaged with me by asking thoughtful questions during class and actively participating in hands-on activities. She often stayed after class to review material or seek clarification, demonstrating a genuine desire to fully understand the course content. Her proactive communication and willingness to learn make her stand out as a committed and engaged student.”



Upon completion of her CMA and PT Certifications, she entered an externship with University Health System and was so successful and dedicated that she was hired full time in their OBGYN division.

Josh from El Paso:

Centre Future is a re-engagement center located in El Paso Public Library’s recently renovated Main Branch. The Centre was designed by and is primarily run by Youth Fellows. Since its launch in April of 2025 it has enrolled 194 young adults. Here is the story of Josh.

Josh came to Centre Future through another participant who brought him by to see the space and meet the team. He was homeless living at an all-boys’ shelter in the area at the time and as we learned more about him, he shared his hopes and dreams. He currently has a landscaping business that he pioneered on his own, business cards and pitch included. He also has a young daughter on the East Coast that he works to send money to and support. After leaving his business cards at the space, he would continue to visit the Centre Future biweekly to monthly to talk about his dreams of being his own boss and the ways he could continue to pursue entrepreneurship.

We encouraged him to brainstorm what other businesses he could start, and he shared how he loves to cook. The next time we saw him, he asked if we knew anyone who could draw. He commissioned another participant to create a menu to promote his services. Once he had the menu, he started serving food at local businesses and during the nightlife. Eventually, he started getting participants from Centre Future asking for when he would sell his food. As he continued to get traction, he asked for help coming up with a name and printing more flyers. “The Spot” still sells plates and now works with the local organization Food Not Bombs, who he also met at Centre Future, to feed the community at no cost.

After some time, Josh returned to share that he now has his own apartment now through a housing voucher and is going to the University of Texas at El Paso for Civil Engineering. Josh continues to shine, as not only an example of Centre Future’s mission, but as proof that young adults can bring agency, grit, and resilience for their future.