

PropelNext In Action

Youth Alliance

"Sometimes our systems don't know how to respond to our high-promise young people," said Diane Ortiz, executive director of Youth Alliance in Hollister, California. "The actions taken impacting these young people are often well-intentioned, but these actions don't necessarily yield the anticipated outcomes they're looking for and they don't know why."

Founded in 1995, Youth Alliance strives to create thriving and equitable communities through comprehensive, innovative, and culturally relevant services that equip youth and families to transform their own lives and community. Youth Alliance began as a grassroots effort of committed volunteers and has evolved into an organization that benefits over 8,500 children, youth, and their families each year.

Youth Alliance aims to provide a range of support that includes afterschool, summer, and late-night prevention programs; early intervention bilingual counseling and case management; and intervention programs serving youth in the juvenile justice system, teen parents, and others in high-need rural and suburban communities.

"We want to create systems that provide positive youth development with tailored services and supports that acknowledge where young people come from and their amazing promise and talent."

"We want to create systems that provide positive youth development with tailored services and supports that acknowledge where young people come from and their amazing promise and talent," Ortiz said.



propelnext

an initiative of the
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation



With the help of PropelNext, Youth Alliance is becoming a more data-driven organization, looking deeply at its systems, data collection, and model to strengthen and expand its programs. Specifically, Youth Alliance is using data to improve its programming and demonstrate its success.

“Our vision of what’s possible has really expanded with PropelNext.”

“When we found out about PropelNext, one of the opportunities we looked at was how to better tell our story and to better equip our staff and families with the data and statistics that show by working in a compassionate, empathetic, strength-based way that positive success can happen,” Ortiz explained.

Youth Alliance is working with PropelNext on its restorative justice healing school model. Youth Alliance has partnered with traditional education systems and the juvenile justice system for several years, and are now working with alternative education schools and providing tailored and specific supports as a form of diversion from the juvenile justice system.

Under the restorative justice healing school model, youth are supported by a team who use a restorative approach to heal past harms and develop a plan to stay in school and graduate.

According to Ortiz, “with so much need, we have the opportunity to demonstrate how responding to youth with positive and compassionate support instead of a referral to SROs [school resource officers] or police can create a safe ecosystem and disrupt the ‘school-to-prison pipeline.’”

Looking to the future, Youth Alliance plans to take its learnings from PropelNext to develop a new strategic plan, with input and engagement from the community, that deepens and expands its work and gives young people a greater opportunity to experience positive youth development.

“Our vision of what’s possible has really expanded with PropelNext,” Ortiz said. “We are deeply grateful to have been afforded the opportunity to work with such a talented team as we seek to enhance our focus and organizational effectiveness working with high-promise young people.”

PropelNext is a program of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation that helps promising nonprofits convert their passion for serving disadvantaged youth into data-driven insights and practices that increase their impact on young people’s lives. This is a look into Youth Alliance, a PropelNext grantee in their Northern California 2021 cohort, and the organization’s experience thus far in the program. The David & Lucile Packard Foundation is the co-investor for Youth Alliance.