

Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC, assessed five (mostly) southern communities that have invested in strategies or policies that emphasized Black male achievement, reduced violence or increased violence prevention, supported youth development for young Black men, promoted employment policies in neighborhoods, and leveraged measurable outcomes to drive funding priorities and alignment of outcomes. While no one example covers all these issues, each provides reference points, which can help other communities drive their own local conversations.

Key Elements

ACS identified 10 critical threads that are present in each city that helped to shape their strategies for Young Boys and Men of Color. They are:

1. **Data-driven decision-making** – Use data to identify the challenge (Lansing), target populations or neighborhoods (Lansing, Orlando, Memphis), or adjust strategies (Orlando).
2. **Shared vision and detailed plan** – Establish a shared vision, measurable goals, and a clear plan for making and tracking progress (Lansing, Memphis, Orlando).
3. **Neighborhood-based strategies** (Orlando, Memphis [to scale up]).
4. **Strong city leadership and commitment** brings issues to light and can be a catalyst for change (Atlanta, Birmingham, Memphis, Lansing).
5. **Community engagement** (Memphis, Orlando).
6. **Leveraging of key city assets and agencies** (Atlanta, Memphis).
7. **Identification of and leveraging of community-based efforts** and key stakeholders already working toward these outcomes (Orlando, Lansing, Memphis).
8. **Establishing a partnership** between existing coalitions, organizations or communities, and city leadership (Orlando, Lansing, Memphis).
9. **Alignment of diversified funding sources** – Public-private investments from federal, state, local, private and philanthropic (Lansing, Orlando).
10. **Alignment or modification of policies**, with a focus on systems change (Memphis, Lansing).

Summaries of each city initiative

Summary 1: Atlanta, GA

Project focus: Youth employment

The Mayor's Youth Program – College Unit is a post-secondary education program dedicated to providing Atlanta youth with support, mentorship, work experience and financial aid for successful post-secondary life. There are several youth workforce opportunities available to Atlanta youth through the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency, including:

1. **The Pathfinders Program**, started in 2013, is a year-round workforce readiness and post-secondary education program for Atlanta youth who are currently enrolled in high school. In addition to earning summer jobs through the Summer Work Experience Program, students who are active participants of the Pathfinders attend fall and spring Saturday workshops that address both post-secondary education readiness and workforce skills development.
2. **New Directions (Out-of-School Youth) Enrichment Employment Program** serves youth 21 years of age or younger and not enrolled in school. The program includes ongoing afternoon tutorial sessions to assist youth with GED preparation and the Georgia High School Graduation Test, and provides support services to assist with GED testing. New Directions is designed to help youth develop life skills, while preparing for post-secondary, certification and employment opportunities.
3. **Atlanta YouthBuild** aims to provide students with a positive work ethic, a lifelong love of learning and a sense of responsibility for themselves, their family and the community.

Summary 2: Birmingham, AL

Project focus: Educational achievement, wrap around youth services

Birmingham's Division of Youth Services aims to address teen pregnancy, education and literacy, youth gang violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and unemployment problems affecting Birmingham's youth. There is also an active Breakthrough Collaborative in Birmingham that launched in 2013. Breakthrough Collaborative Birmingham aims to increase academic opportunity for highly motivated, underserved students and put them on the trajectory of a successful college path, while inspiring and developing the next generation of teachers and educational leaders.

Summary 3: Lansing, MI – E=(MC)²

Project focus: Increasing educational attainment, aligning community resources

In 2014, the Mayor's Youth Lansing Commission and Partnerships (MY Lansing) created the MY Lansing Action plan in partnership with the city of Lansing Mayor's Office of Community and Faith-based Initiatives and One Love Global, a grassroots community group addressing the challenges of young men of color. E=(MC)² (Equality=Mayor's Coalition for Males of Color) is a multi-sector coalition of partners committed to working with the City of Lansing, collectively, to ensure males of color and other disadvantaged children are thriving from early childhood to school, career, community and family life. E=(MC)² uses the National League of Cities' City Leadership to Promote Black Male Achievement strategies and outcomes as the foundation for the effort. In summer 2014, E=(MC)² launched the Saving Our Sons Campaign. The goal of

Saving Our Sons is increasing graduation rates and post-secondary success for Black males by dismantling systemic and policy barriers, better aligning community resources and increasing the efficacy of supports from birth through age 25. The initiative tracks family, education and workforce indicators.

Summary 4: Memphis, TN

Project focus: Youth violence prevention and reduction

In 2011, the City of Memphis developed its Youth Violence Prevention Plan. The plan includes goals and strategies for violence prevention, intervention, enforcement and re-entry. Five-year target outcomes of the plan include: 25% reduction in violence committed by youth under age 24, as measured in violent offenses by people under age 24, delinquency offenses, status offenses, school disciplinary incidents, truancy and young gang crime. From this plan, the Mayor's *Gun Down* initiative was created in 2013. It aims to make neighborhoods safer and includes 5 targets:

1. *Suppression* – Placing laser focus of law enforcement efforts on the small percentage of young men who are committing gun violence.
2. *Community mobilization* – Pulling together young people, neighborhood residents, community organizations and law enforcement to shift community perception away from a culture of acceptance toward one in which gun violence is simply not tolerated.
3. *Youth opportunities* – Promoting jobs and opportunities, as well as placing emphasis on building the educational and technical skills of young people.
4. *Intervention* – A coordinated approach to intervening at the first sign of potential violence in the streets, schools and hospitals.
5. *Organizational change and development* – Transforming policies, practices and systems in Memphis to reduce youth gun violence.

Summary 5: Orlando, FL – Parramore Kids Zone

Project focus: Youth violence prevention, Black male achievement

The Parramore Kids Zone initiative was launched in 2005 in Orlando. It is modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone to invest in, enhance and scale up the neighborhood's existing services and institutions, and designed to connect youth with essential services, education and opportunities. Parramore Kids Zone aims to lower teen pregnancy, reduce arrest rates, reduce high school dropout rates and improve students' academic performance in Orlando's highest poverty, highest crime neighborhood in downtown Orlando. Parramore Kids Zone has several strategic partnerships with community organizations to ensure that youth are accessing and using services. Outcome data is used continually to assess programs and provide evidence for changes in city strategy.