Youth on Their Own


This report represents Youth on Their Own's responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of BBB Wise Giving Alliance, GuideStar USA Inc, and Independent Sector. Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

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Mission:
Youth On Their Own (YOTO), a 501(c)(3) dropout prevention agency, is dedicated to supporting the high school graduation and continued success of homeless youth by providing financial assistance, basic human needs, and guidance. Our vision is to create stability in the lives of abandoned young people and empower them to become productive citizens of our community by completing their high school education. YOTO serves students in grade 6-12 throughout Pima County, Arizona.

The content of this Charting Impact Report is the sole product and responsibility of Youth on Their Own. This report does not in any way represent an endorsement from Independent Sector, BBB Wise Giving Alliance, or GuideStar, nor does it represent fulfillment of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance's Standards for Charity Accountability. For more information on Charting Impact, visit www.guidestar.org/chartingimpact
1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

YOTO seeks to make a significant difference in the quality of life of youth often forgotten. We truly believe that it “takes a village to raise a child,” but sadly, homeless youth frequently fall by the wayside. These young people are the most difficult sub-population of homelessness to reach: many of them are embarrassed or feel guilty about their circumstances, and others fear they will end up in the child welfare system if they come forward. Feeling hopeless and burdened with financial obstacles, many of them are afraid that they only have one option: to drop out of high school and get a job. However, with YOTO’s help, these forgotten youth are provided with meaningful guidance and the assistance that they need to stay enrolled in school to their graduation. YOTO remains true to its mission by meeting the increasing demand for student programs and services through strategic decision-making, innovative community collaboration, and sound fiscal practices and management – all while retaining a client-centered attitude that has been its strength since inception.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

In its “Framework to End Youth Homelessness” (2013), the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness outlined four core outcomes for reducing and ultimately eliminating youth homelessness: stable housing, permanent connections, education and/or employment, and social and emotional wellbeing. YOTO is unique to other nonprofits serving this demographic of young people in that it is the only education-focused nonprofit utilizing this multi-layered strategy by working directly with the school districts and youth housing providers. Our ultimate goal is keeping homeless and at-risk students in school while mitigating dropout due to students' attendance. We accomplish this through five key values: 1. Education: A high school diploma is crucial to achieving future success. 2. Empowerment: Youth are given tools for success, direction for their future and guidance, while being held accountable. 3. Integrity: Prudent fiscal management ensures that all resources directly further our mission, benefiting more students. 4. Respect & Compassion: All individuals assisted are treated with dignity and encouraged to reach their full potential and goals. 5. Responsiveness: Each student's needs are approached with a consistent sense of urgency and appropriate action for their specific situation. To implement the program, YOTO also partners with other reputable service providers to best serve homeless youth. This model of practice not only benefits YOTO's clients, but it also allows the agency to be fiscally responsible by not duplicating services readily available throughout the community. Some local partners include the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, Our Family Services, Assistance League of Tucson, Goodwill of Southern Arizona, Foster Ed, Teenage Outreach Pregnancy Services, Hope Gospel Mission, and many more. These partnerships, among many others, are truly collaborative and symbiotic. Numerous nonprofits who provide services that YOTO does not offer will accept referrals of YOTO students. Additionally, YOTO often donates surplus food and other in-kind donations that the agency cannot utilize or store to local organizations, such as the Assistance League and Hope Gospel Mission.

3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?

According to a 2014 report from the Arizona Mayors Education Roundtable, each high school dropout costs Arizona $421,300 over his or her lifetime due to lost earnings, higher criminal activity, poorer health status, higher reliance on government programs, and tax distortions. By graduating 387 homeless students in 2014-2015, YOTO saved the state over $163 million. In helping this forgotten but extremely susceptible youth graduate from high school, we are ensuring a safer, better educated, and more productive citizenship in our community. To continue meeting the agency's goals, YOTO will: - Identify and support of as many youth as possible and assess growth into other areas of Arizona - Increase enrollment of youth in need by identifying expansion opportunities - Ensure that the office environment is fully capable of supporting all aspects of current and growing enrollment trends as they relate to technology, balanced workloads and employee expectations - Have sufficient staff to achieve general defined goals in all disciplines and offer competitive benefits and compensation - Adapt to trends of supply and delivery as they relate to mission and services
4. How will we know if we're making progress?

Success of YOTO is determined by the number of students who remain enrolled in and ultimately graduate from high school. Over the years, we have lessened our emphasis on graduation rates because we realize that it is not entirely indicative of the YOTO Program's success. Whereas graduation rates track only participating seniors, in reality YOTO serves a mixture of students in grades 6-12. Additionally, many seniors who withdraw or become ineligible are counted as non-graduates but it does not mean that they did not graduate somewhere else (for example, in another city or another state). Finally, as a dropout prevention agency, our primary goal is to help keep students in school so that their educators can teach them. Thus, program outcomes include: • Less than 10% of enrolled students drop out due to poor attendance; and • A minimum 75% program retention rate of enrolled students at the end of the school year. Both of these outcomes directly relate to increased graduation rates because if students are enrolled in YOTO, then they are actively working towards graduating. While YOTO considers it to be a positive withdraw if a student drops out to move in with an extended relative in another city or state, the agency strives to minimize dropouts due to poor school attendance. Attaining a retention rate of 75% or greater among YOTO students is also an impressive goal considering the level of transiency among this demographic. Outcomes are measured by monthly grade reports and attendance records submitted by YOTO students to their School Liaisons. We also gather data through student applications, student satisfaction surveys, diplomas, and tracking referral requests.

5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?

In the 2012-2013 academic year, YOTO served 1,137 students. In the 2013-2014 academic year, the agency served 1,231 students. In the 2014-2015 academic year, the agency served 1,468 students. In the 2015-2016 academic year, the agency served a record 1,588 students. For the 2016-2017 academic year, YOTO has served a staggering 1,631 youth to date (figures will be finalized in June 2017). To this end, the agency has budgeted $2,581,978 to support these students through all facets of the program: financial assistance, basic human needs, emergency financial assistance, guidance, etc.