



Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries, Inc.
Request for Proposals
Consulting Services for the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative

The Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative (GHOYC) requests the services of a consultant to help us engage stakeholders in the formation of Houston's first Opportunity Youth Intermediary organization. The consultant will be responsible for leading a 12-month long planning and engagement process. The Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries, Inc. (ACAM), in support of the GHOYC, has a maximum of \$50,000 available for the consulting services.

RFP Release Date: Monday, February 15, 2021
Full Applications Due: Thursday, March 4, 2021 by 12pm CST
Response Format: Electronic submission to jkulak@acamweb.org

RFP Contact: Joshua Kulak, Resource and Program Development Director
Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries, Inc.
jkulak@acamweb.org

Please note that submission questions may be directed to Joshua Kulak.

Scope of Work/Description of Consulting Services Requested

The GHOYC is interested in supporting a sustainable, systems-focused effort to improving OY outcomes. It is important that the blueprint for Houston's OY intermediary be the result of a community-driven and equity-centered engagement process. At the end of the 12-month contract period, the GHOYC seeks a solidified group of members that are ready to coordinate activities through the intermediary.

Initial questions for this work include:

- How can we accelerate momentum for the intermediary through advisory members, acting in a professional service capacity?
- How can we create an infrastructure that improves OY outcomes through a complex system of partnerships? What approaches will further equitable outcomes?
- What will it take to embed OY within Houston's mainstream vision of a prosperous future?

The scope of consulting services will consist of the following (most activities to be initially completed remotely):

- Design a 12-month engagement process that will activate Houston's first OY intermediary organization.
 - Develop a structure for youth engagement in coordination with advisory members.
 - Facilitate involvement from prospective contributors while supporting continuous learning and working toward deliverables.

- Support two key strands of ongoing work: an external evaluation process and the integration of youth voice in the decision-making structures of the intermediary.
- Recruit diverse advisory members committed to equitable outcomes, in order to 1) guide the intermediary planning work and 2) seed the leadership of the eventual intermediary structure.
- Determine priorities for a needs assessment of the Houston OY ecosystem, centering youth voice. Collaborate with stakeholders to gather data and to act on findings.
- Collaboratively create planning documents that guide budgets, fundraising, intermediary structure, staffing and operations in alignment with GHOYC's equity commitment.

Work and Deliverables

Throughout the contract period, the consultant will work closely with the Houston OY Coordinating Team, as well as OY advisory groups.

We anticipate that the consultant will lead an engagement process, resulting in the following deliverables:

- Guiding documents that allow the intermediary to attract funding and other resources. These documents include a case statement, a business plan and an operating budget.
- A nuanced and detailed description of the intermediary's structure, agreed upon by advisory members. The structure will address the following:
 - Configuration and staffing of the intermediary (i.e., a new organization or an outgrowth of an existing organization) as well as roles and responsibilities for advisory groups.
 - How will decisions be made? What will participation and partnership look like in practice from both an equity and a financial standpoint? How will communication and reporting be organized in order to link partners, staff and community?
 - How will the intermediary be structured to advance equity goals? Include necessary agreements with partners to facilitate youth voice, service and leadership.
- Mission, vision and strategy for advancing the intermediary's equity goals
 - A written plan that contains the framework for the organization. Key elements of the plan will include: strategies for accelerating youth leadership and equitable OY outcomes through the intermediary structure/operations.
- A capacity building agenda for the GHOYC that includes both suggested approaches to strengthening OY collaborative work as well as mechanisms for implementing those approaches.
 - Recommendations for building a long-term, sustainable shared OY data infrastructure.
 - An OY system-level needs assessment; Findings should be translated into population data profiles, a current systems map, an aspirational systems map as well as a coordination agenda that identifies criteria for investment for the intermediary.
- Creative material (youth videos, quotes etc.) for a promotional campaign on OY

In addition to these deliverables, a successful engagement process will enable new leadership for the intermediary, as evidenced by membership commitments and active participation specifically from youth, funders, and communities of color.

Desired Skills, Qualities and Attributes

- Candidate must have at least 10 years of experience leading team-based social impact work
- Bachelor’s degree or equivalent, Master’s preferred
- Expertise and relationships in youth services and systems work locally
- Commitment to racial equity and experience creating equitable policies and programs
- Exceptional leadership, collaboration, and relationship/emotional intelligence skills
- Demonstrated ability to drive progress with and for broad and diverse stakeholder groups
- Knowledge of the public policy process on state and municipal levels in Texas
- Ability to support continuous learning and adaptive approaches to complex challenges
- Proven skills in meeting facilitation, strategy development, planning and network building
- Strong project management skills and experience producing robust planning materials that document multiple outcomes.

Please note that Houston-based candidates are preferred given the volume of local meetings.

Budget and Anticipated Timeline

Up to \$50,000 is available for the consulting services.

Activity	Estimated Date
RFP Due	March 4, 2021 by 12pm CST
Application Review (The Coordinating Team may reach out with follow-up questions or clarifications during this time)	March 8-12, 2021
Meetings with Finalists	March 15-26, 2021
Contract Start	March 31, 2021
Notification from the Aspen Institute re: Scaling Grant	April 1-9
Final Deliverables Due	March 2022

Proposal Requirements

In a written document, please include the following (not to exceed 5 pages **single-spaced**, excluding references and examples from prior clients)

- Statement of understanding of the work to be done
- Overarching values and approach
- Proposed approach to the scope of work
 - How you would design and implement an engagement process that would support the deliverables and overarching intended results? What is your theory of change or your assumptions about how to drive progress?
 - What processes/protocols do you use to influence teams and large groups?
 - What data informs your approach?
 - What barriers do you see to achieving the formation of an intermediary and how would you overcome them?

- A budget that allocates resources for key expenses such as youth participation or any intended subcontracting.
- The total budget must not exceed \$50,000. Please provide the estimated number of hours to complete the project and an hourly rate.
- Qualifications for this project. Include information on the project lead and team. If you intend to subcontract, please include subcontractor qualifications and history.
- The level of assistance that will be expected from ACAM staff
- Two references from prior clients that can speak to the proposer’s style and a list of similar clients (prior clients focused on collaborative, systems work)
- Two examples of a work product from a prior client

Please note that consultants selected for interviews will be asked to discuss anticipated project milestones and timelines.

Additional Guidelines (per ACAM)

The Contractor will only be allowed reimbursement to the maximum contracted amount agreed upon by both parties. Any additional expenses above the set maximum agreed-upon fee, unless agreed upon by ACAM in writing, will be the sole responsibility of the Contractor.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by, but not limited to, the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
1. Contractor’s compliance with all specifications and/or other requirements contained in this RFP	15%
2. Relevant experience and qualifications	35%
3. Proposed plan for accomplishing the scope	35%
4. Reasonableness of contract price	15%
Total	100%

During the application evaluation, ACAM may ask for supplementary information and/or may request to meet with consultant. Contractors should be prepared to discuss the proposed scope of work, including availability of equipment and staffing, consulting and payment procedures, schedules, qualification of subcontractors proposed for portions of the work, and such other items as are directly related to the proposal.

References/ Links:

Houston's Opportunity: Reconnecting Disengaged Youth and Young Adults to Strengthen Houston's Economy: Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research, September 2016.

<https://kinder.rice.edu/research/houstons-opportunity-reconnecting-disengaged-youth-and-young-adults-strengthen-houstons>

Attachments:

- 1) Slide Deck: GHOYC Vision & Strategy
- 2) About the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative

Houston's Untapped Talent Pool



Over 100,000 of the region's 16-24-year-old are not in school or employed



78% have a high school diploma, some college or a college degree



Disproportionate share of OY are people of color (48% are Hispanic, 23% Black)



65% reside in households with less than \$50,000 annual income



Focus groups reveal OY have goals and aspirations for their future and could **achieve them with some help**

Source: Kinder Institute

Reconnection Strategy #1

Recruit High School Graduates and build programming that leads to college/career.

- **Target population:** High school graduates from the Class of 2020 who have not enrolled in the military, post secondary education or are not working.
- **Recruitment partners:** Area ISDs
- **Program components:** Outreach, Engagement, Rigorous Career Awareness programming, warm-handoffs to post secondary education institutions
- **Outputs/Outcomes:**
 - # of people contacted
 - # of people engaged
 - # of people enrolling in career awareness programming
 - # of people completing career awareness programming
 - # of people enrolling in post secondary education
 - # of people who earned credentials
- **Goals:**
 - Increased # of people with credentials with value in labor market
 - Increased # of people secure occupations with living wage
 - Creation of a model for other area ISDs to replicate

Reconnection Strategy #2

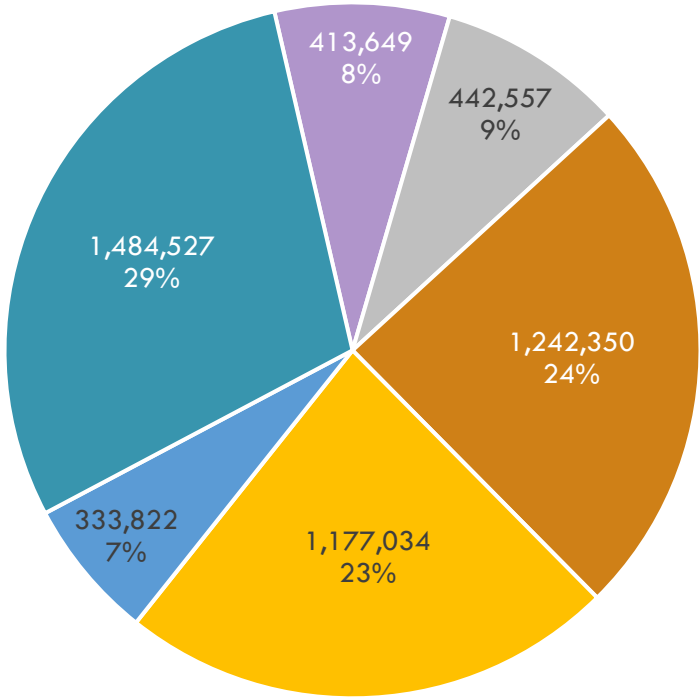
Cultivate employer partnerships in high-growth industry for entry level roles with advancement opportunities.

- **Target population:** High school graduates who have indicated an interest in a healthcare career but are not enrolled in PSE or working in the field.
- **Recruitment partners:** Former Hire Houston Youth health career programming, HCDE's ABE/Healthcare program.
- **Program components:** Outreach, Engagement, Career Awareness/Self Discovery programming, academic/occupational bridging, support services (child care, transportation, emergency funds, training provided by employer, CBO or community college, paid internships.
- **Outputs/Outcomes:**

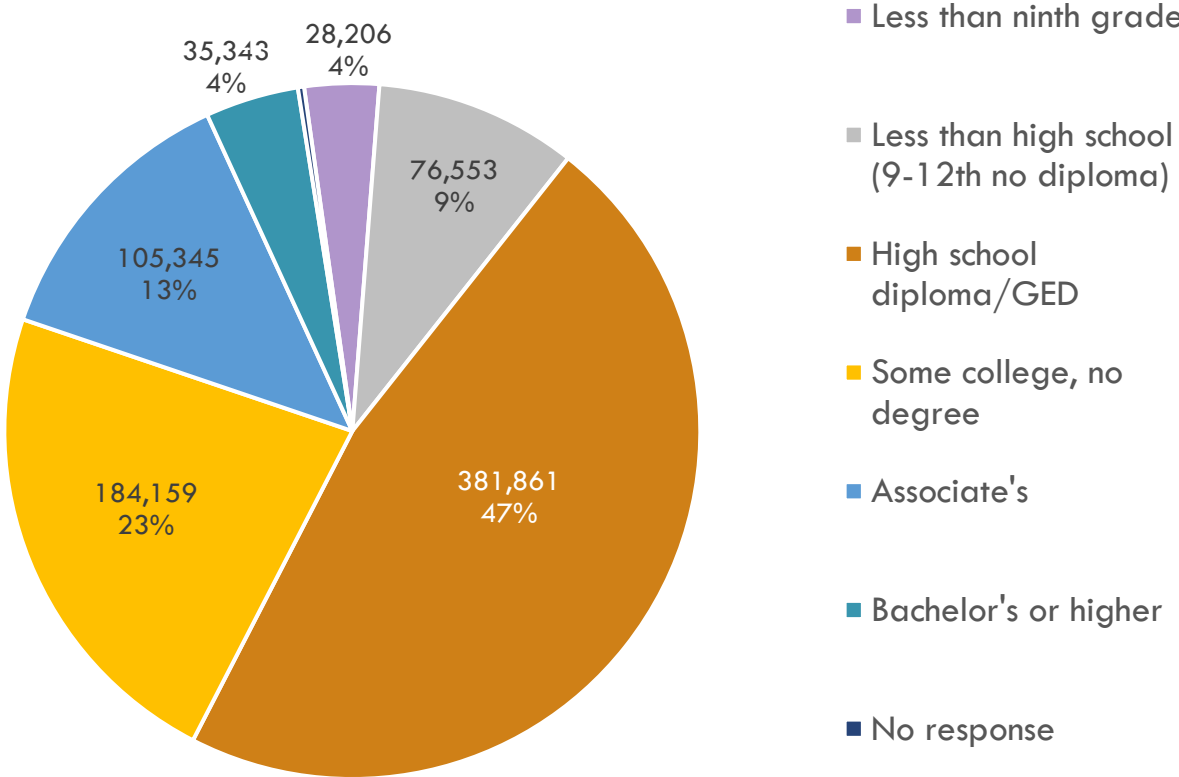
- # of people contacted	- # of people completing training
- # of people engaged	- # of people employed
- # of people enrolling in career awareness programming	- Retention rate at 90 days
- # of people completing career awareness programming	- Average starting wage
- # of people enrolling in training	- Cost per participant
- **Goals:**
 - Increased # of people with credentials with value in labor market
 - Increased # of people secure occupations with living wage
 - Creation of a model for employers in other industries to replicate

Gulf Coast Region Total Population vs. UI Claimants by Ed. Attainment

Gulf Coast Population Age by Ed. Attainment (ACS 2018)



Gulf Coast UI Claimants by Ed. Attainment (TWC 3/1 to 7/18 2020)

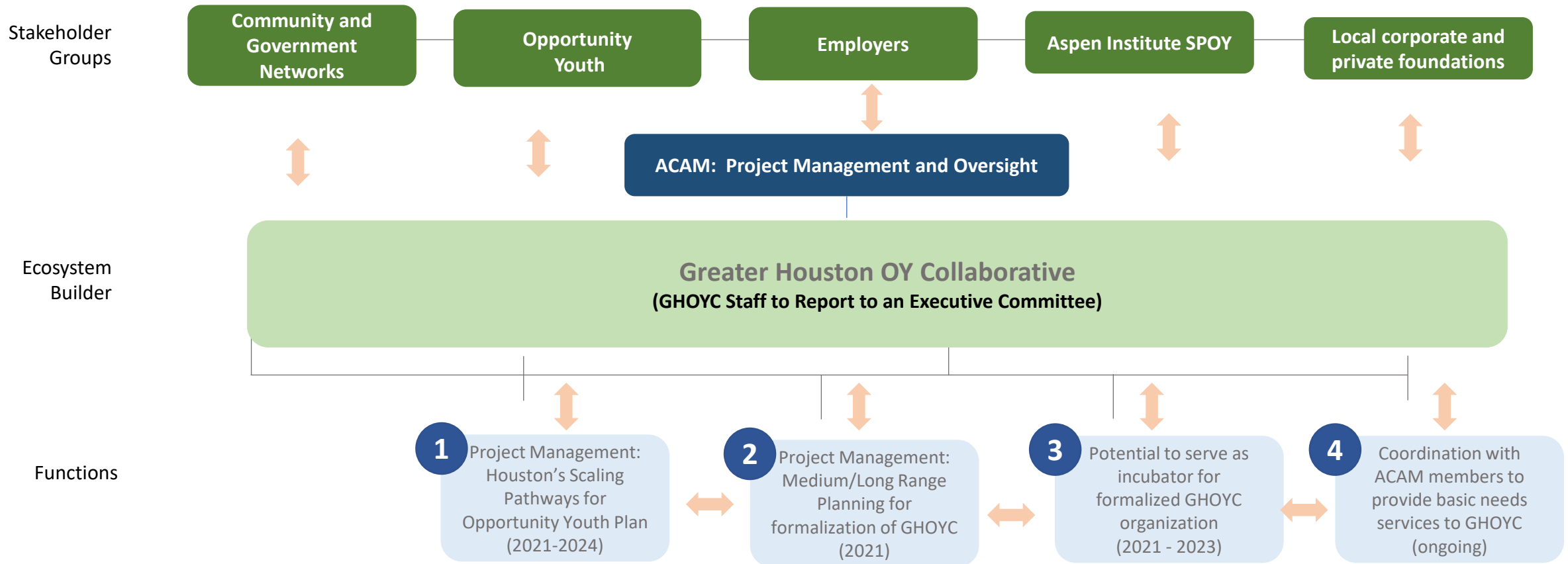


- Less than ninth grade
- Less than high school (9-12th no diploma)
- High school diploma/GED
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's
- Bachelor's or higher
- No response

Source: Workforce Solutions

Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative

The mission of the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative is to transform the career horizon for disconnected youth by investing in career on-ramps, learning and advancement.



Hypothesis



Short Term

Aspen Institute's Scaling Pathways Proposal

If we can strengthen and formalize our relationships with a subset of ISDs, CBOs and healthcare employers, through MOUs and education on effectiveness, then we can scale OY recruitment of HS Graduates and OY participation along a high demand pathway in Houston.

Medium Term

Assess feasibility of creating an intermediary

How can we create an infrastructure that improves OY outcomes through a complex system of partnerships?

Long Term

Redefine the finish line

What will it take to embed OY within Houston's mainstream vision of a prosperous future?

Programming



- A subset of interested **healthcare employers**
- **Education on OY** for CBOs, EDUCATION PARTNERS, and EMPLOYERS
- More **rigorous career awareness**
- **Dynamic Recruitment** Mechanisms
- An (initial) Framework for Pathway Alignment
- **Pathways Model Development**
- Development of **Equity Targets**

- Intermediary to serve multiple **coordination and management** needs
- Access to wrap-around supports
- Tap community roles
- Inclusive, proactive practices for serving marginalized OY
- Ongoing review of **Equity Targets**
- A long-term visioning process/strategic plan (that defines the role of an intermediary organization)
- Strengthen the role of community colleges

- A large, willing, **cross-industry pool of employers**
- Next Level Education on OY and Training Supports for EMPLOYERS and All Partners
- **Sustainable, Funded OY Advisory Council**
- Positive messaging on OY
- Multiple OY **Advisory Structures** (to Steer Progress)
- Investment in Research/Data Partnerships
- Re-engagement Center

Policy



- Tracking of OY Served through Scaling Pathways to gauge effectiveness (RMC)
- Tri-City OY Data Tracking through the RMC to develop baseline
- Development of state policy and funding targets for OY

- Tracking of OY/effectiveness data (RMC)
- Access to public funding streams
- Local and state equity agendas for education and employment

- Champions in Every Arena (Elected officials, community, entertainers, youth etc.)
- Integration of OY interests into policymaking bodies
- Changes in policy and practice

Resources:

- **Now:** Aspen planning grant
- **Near Future:** Texas Mutual grant, CARES funding for employment
- **Long-term:** Increased focus on OY for WIOA youth services, Partner Staffing



About the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative (GHOYC)

Five years ago, Opportunity Youth were not on the radar in Houston. There were few programs aimed toward helping opportunity youth find education or employment, but no coordinated effort. In 2016, research by the Kinder Institute for Urban Studies at Rice University highlighted a great need for interventions, and a series of community meetings raised the profile of the population and spurred community-wide interest in digging deeper.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, a 3.7% unemployment rate meant that the workforce was close to saturated and people had myriad choices for job opportunities. However, data shows that many of the greater Houston area's youth were left out of that equation. Now, the population has undoubtedly expanded dramatically, as young adults are crowded into service jobs that are facing massive lay-offs – and Opportunity Youth have traditionally been last to be hired after a recession. There is an enormous need for re-engagement opportunities as well as a need to address large equity gaps.

The Kinder Institute study pointed to the need for additional resources to engage youth with a high school credential, but no connection to post-secondary education or the employment pipeline.

There were additional findings from the report that are still relevant today:

- 1) Some of the largest numbers of Opportunity Youth live outside of the urban core in the surrounding suburbs, identifying the need for an approach to engagement in a broad geographic footprint, while navigating a limited public transportation system that does not reach into those geographies.
- 2) 78% of the identified youth have completed high school credentials, but never connected to post-secondary education or the workforce. “This suggests a critical need for on-ramps to post-secondary/training programs leading to credentials with value in the labor market” (Kinder, 2).
- 3) The good news is that, while they have had difficulty connecting, many youth are optimistic about their opportunities for engagement, based on surveys with focus groups.

The overarching goal of the GHOYC is to build a powerful ecosystem of pathways for and with Opportunity Youth (“OY”) that enable them to accelerate to in-demand careers and lifelong learning and civic engagement. The GHOYC is an expansion of the Bridge to College and Career Success (BCCS) Advisory Board which includes representatives from local youth-serving community-based organizations, community colleges, the regional workforce board, economic development organizations and multiple industry groups and employers, in addition to previously unengaged young leaders, municipal leaders, additional CBOs, and employers. At the end of 2020, participation in the GHOYC included, among dozens of others, the City of Houston (Mayor’s Office of Education), the Houston Independent School District (HISD), the Greater Houston Partnership, Eight Million Stories, BakerRipley, JPMorgan Chase, United Way and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

ACAM served as the fiscal management partner and organizational facilitator for the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative’s Scaling Pathways for Opportunity Youth 2020 planning grant provided through the Aspen Institute. A coordinating team that includes ACAM, the Harris County Department of Education, and the Gulf Coast Workforce Board formed to oversee the Aspen planning grant. This

coordinating team is guiding the development of the GHOYC. ACAM will continue to act as fiscal management partner and organizational facilitator for the planning and formation of Houston's OY intermediary organization.

The Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM) is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit management support organization (MSO) that assists a network of community assistance ministry nonprofits (the ACAM Network) with improving their organizational and program effectiveness. ACAM has a challenging role with responsibilities to two sets of clients: the nonprofits to which ACAM provides organization development assistance and the funding community, which expects measurable results from their investment in these programs. As one of its program activities, ACAM offers Management Support to organizations and networks outside of its Network.

Background on Recent GHOYC Planning

Houston's collaborative work grew exponentially as a result of a 2020 planning process funded by the Aspen Institute. This six month planning grant (August 2020-January 2021), Scaling Pathways for Opportunity Youth (SPOY), was designed to scale local collaboration and ultimately to scale OY services and outcomes. One outcome from the planning period was a short, medium and long term draft vision for the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative. This shared agenda centers the creation of Houston's first OY intermediary organization. It is within this context that the GHOYC seeks a consultant to channel existing momentum into an engagement process that results in a formal intermediary structure and operating plan.

The Scaling Pathways for Opportunity Youth planning process gathered input from a variety of stakeholders through advisory groups focused on OY systems, service provision, youth lived experience and funding. The outcome of this engagement pointed to a fundamental need for the Houston collaborative – coordination. There is consensus among the collaborative that creating an intermediary organization, charged with aligning collaborative activities as well as long-range strategic planning, will transform OY outcomes. Strong support for an intermediary means that Houston can get focused on building the infrastructure that will ultimately facilitate scaling.

The recent Aspen collaborative planning process also identified a focus for OY advancement that is deeply tied to Houston's economy: our quickly growing healthcare sector. Through labor market research, healthcare quickly rose to the top as an in-demand field with a range of entry-level, mid-level and leadership positions. Through a series of youth focus groups, we heard that youth respond positively to potential careers in health and healthcare. Developing a model for healthcare employer partnerships and learning from the experience is the first step toward expanding the pool of employer partners, ultimately coordinated through the OY intermediary.