

Nashville Public Library Foundation Organizational Profile

When Andrew Carnegie helped Nashville establish four public libraries more than a century ago, books were the only story. A proud recipient of the 2010 National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the mission of today's Nashville Public Library (NPL) is to inspire reading, advance learning, and connect our community. In 2017, more than 350,000 Nashville residents owned a library card and visited the Library's 21 branches nearly 4 million times per year. NPL programs travel outside the Library walls and into Nashville schools, community centers, hospitals, housing developments, and nonprofit organizations to alleviate transportation barriers and maximize its reach.

As a department of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, the Library depends on public funding to support operations and maintenance; however, it thrives because of private investment. The Nashville Public Library Foundation (NPLF) was founded in 1997 as a 501(c)3 organization with a mission to raise private funding to enhance the programs, facilities, and collections of the Nashville Public Library. Since then, it has raised more than \$46 million in total revenue and support to provide free educational programs, arts and cultural experiences, building revitalization, and significant collection enhancements for Nashville residents and library patrons.

In June 2017, *Library Journal* named the Nashville Public Library the Library of the Year. A majority of the programs highlighted by the award are funded by the Library Foundation and would not be possible without private investment. They include early literacy programs for teachers, parents and students; mentor-led maker workshops and after-school programs for teens; collection sharing innovations with Metro Nashville Public Schools; employment resources, digital skills training, and citizenship guidance for adults; civil rights programs for community, faith, corporate, and student groups; health and wellness opportunities for whole families; and a variety of lifelong learning opportunities through cultural events, author series, and more than 2 million books and items in the NPL collection. The total annual operating budget of the Nashville Public Library is \$29,789,105; the total annual operating budget of the Library Foundation is \$4,086,769.

The Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) became part of NPL in 2014, five years after it was founded in the Mayor's Office. Karl Dean and his team made a decision to permanently house NAZA in NPL to sustain the city's commitment to youth development as well as to leverage library resources to structured out-of-school time programs. As it appears in NAZA's 2016-2020 strategic plan, which was approved by NAZA's Leadership Council in September of 2016, the mission of NAZA is "to strengthen free, high-quality expanded learning opportunities that prepare Nashville public school students to succeed in middle school and beyond."

NAZA seeks to expand the network of youth service providers that are able to create environments where students feel socially and emotionally safe, where positive youth development principles prevail over punitive measures, and learning is fun and engaging, thus fostering an out-of-school time culture where youth develop to their full potential and feel empowered to achieve more, to participate, and voice their concerns. NAZA funds middle school afterschool programs and high school summer programs across Nashville and Davidson County. Programs are offered based on the highest need in northeast, southeast, northwest, south central, and McGavock areas of Nashville. These areas have some of the highest populations of children from economically disadvantaged families, immigrant and refugee families who are limited English proficient, as well as schools with low achievement (based on TNReady standardized test scores). Annually, NAZA serves around 1500 public school students from 26 middle schools in afterschool programming, 550 high school students through a summer learning experience at five locations, and is now launching a summer STEAM initiative for 400 students.

Strategic Plan Summary

The Nashville Public Library (NPL) completed its 2018-2020 strategic plan in 2017 and the Board approved the new plan in September of 2017.

NPL's mission is "to inspire reading, advance learning, and connect our community." NPL's vision is that "All members of our diverse community are empowered through limitless learning opportunities to enrich their lives."

The Library has capitalized on fostering the culture of excellence, increasing access for all, and engaging the community.

NPL's vision and mission statements emphasize its commitment to establishing continuous and holistic learning opportunities for children and adults with the core principles of engaging the community through outreach and convening and empowering community stakeholders around shared and common goals of lifelong learning.

NPL's Community Engagement and Education Department, where NAZA is represented, has delineated its outcomes in three buckets: children, youth, and adults/seniors. Across all the age groups, NPL emphasizes the intent to inspire its patrons to learn and advance their skills so that patrons of all age groups can navigate through career and life choices.

In summary, the Library recognizes its importance as an established institution in the community that creates innovative ways of learning for all age groups. It focuses on equipping patrons of all ages with access to high-quality learning opportunities and engaging programs and activities that will help patrons build the most critical knowledge and skills.

NAZA created its 2016-2020 strategic plan in 2016 and the Leadership Council approved the new plan in September of 2016.

In the new strategy, NAZA chose to move from expanding access to out-of-school time (OST) programs to strengthening the quality of programs and expanding partnerships so that the youth development resources that NAZA has developed or adopted over years are available to a larger number students.

In the new strategy, NAZA has capitalized on the importance of investing in social and emotional learning and holistic development of children and youth with the commitment to create a shared community vision and framework for youth development outside of formal education. The assets documented in the strategic plan empower NAZA's team to utilize its reputation and local and national partnerships to take the OST work to the next level and meaningfully engage the community in discussion and implementation of non-academic youth outcomes.

An external firm, which facilitated the development of the strategic plan, engaged a number of community stakeholders in strategic plan interviews and summarized the findings mentioned below regarding NAZA's reputation as well as perceived assets:

Reputation

- NAZA has built a solid foundation for continued growth and development. It is highly regarded by local and national stakeholders.
- NAZA has benefitted greatly by affiliation with and mentoring from The Wallace Foundation, the Forum for Youth Investment, the National League of Cities and Every Hour Counts. Through its national relationships, NAZA has access to significant data and national research/current learning on best practices for expanded learning systems across the nation.
- NAZA is widely respected for its role in coordinating a system of afterschool partners who share a common commitment to quality and use of data to achieve real benefits for students.
- The network is recognized for its public/private partnership with the Mayor, MNPS, NPL, network partners and others coming together to maximize use of resources to benefit students.
- The move to NPL is viewed as an innovative partnership with many mutual benefits including enrichment of literacy content.
- NAZA partners value being part of a city-wide system that provides professional development and emphasizes quality.

Strengths and assets identified as important for NAZA's continued growth and development are:

- NAZA's evidenced-based rationale for focusing on youth and programming
- Infrastructure for quality and data collection: MOU with MNPS; evaluation and quality partners; professional development
- Measurable program fidelity and improvements in youth indicators; correlation of youth outcomes with longer-term likelihood of success in high school
- Strong support from public sector: Mayor, Council, MNPS, NPL, other Metro departments
- Local leadership engagement and foundation support
- Collaborative network relationships with Anchor Partners, Coordinating Agencies and Enhancement Partners; all of these partners express feeling appreciated for their role and contributions
- NAZA is well grounded in the Four Elements of Afterschool System Success: Leadership, Coordination, Data and Quality - *Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered About Building Afterschool Systems* (Brown, 2015)
- MNPS partnership provides significant resources: coordinated schedules, meals/snacks, transportation, other in-kind support
- NPL opens new doors to literacy content and resources
- Partners at all levels are proud to be a part of a quality expanded learning system
- The professional development, structure, tools and support offered to partners are highly valued and appreciated
- NAZA partners recognize the importance of student retention for optimal benefits
- NAZA's reputation within education and youth development arenas
- Consistent messaging; updated use of social media

1. Statement of Need

In America, public K-12 schools serve as the primary institution that grant children and youth universal and free access to education. Given that children and youth aged 6-18 only spend 20 percent of their waking hours in school,¹ “our mindset has to change – not about the importance of school – but about the value of learning that happens outside of school. Eighty percent of learning happens informally in families and in communities!”² As experienced and highly esteemed providers of informal education, educational institutions such as libraries and museums have a tremendous opportunity to shape learning outcomes for children and youth in informal education settings--both directly through programming and services (practice) and by convening community stakeholders to engage in dialogue and collaboratively envision and adopt a shared framework of intended outcomes (theory).

Considering that 80 percent of youths’ waking hours take place outside of school, providers of informal education (afterschool and summer programs, libraries, parks, museums, athletic organizations, enrichment providers, etc.) bear a great deal of responsibility to ensure that they are intentionally applying a holistic, whole-child approach that helps cultivate the development of youths’ “intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative, and spiritual potentials.”³ These providers typically have greater flexibility than is the case during the school day to offer youth social and emotional learning opportunities and other experiential learning opportunities that help youth develop 21st century soft skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and innovation. However, without a roadmap that outlines the vision for what youth should gain as a result of engaging in informal learning and some direction as to how to measure, track, and achieve those gains, efforts to support youth in informal education settings may not fully leverage the power of this time of opportunity. Investing in a shared framework for youth outcomes in informal education settings could help equip and empower communities to maximize the impact of the learning experiences offered to youth outside of the school day.

The Nashville Public Library, the 2017 Gale/*Library Journal* Library of the Year, is uniquely positioned to fulfill this opportunity. NPL has been nationally recognized for its informal education initiatives, including Studio NPL, the library’s makerspace program for teens, and the Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA), a city-wide expanded learning system for youth.⁴ In 2009, NAZA was born out of the work of a citywide task force which sought to significantly increase middle school youths’ access to high-quality afterschool programs as both a long-term strategy to reduce the high school dropout rate and a means to keep youth safe, supported, and engaged in meaningful learning experiences after school. NAZA functions as a collaborative of over 20 youth-serving organizations that have mobilized around shared principles of positive youth development and agreed to continuous quality improvement, data tracking, activity coordination, and much more, in an effort to enhance youths’ access to high-quality expanded learning programming. For the proposed project, NAZA will draw upon its own institutional knowledge as an entity that has coordinated a cross-sector collaborative with

¹ “This is Afterschool in Tennessee.” *National Afterschool Association*, 1 May 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/y9u3p9ad>

² Lenz, Bob and Kingston, Sally. “The 80/20 Rule: Changing Mindsets About the Where of Learning.” *Partnership for 21st Century Learning*, <https://tinyurl.com/y9jv75fd>. Accessed 1 May 2018

³ Kochhar-Bryant, Carol & Heishman, A. (2010). *Effective Collaboration for Educating the Whole Child*. Corwin Press, 2010, p. 1-34. Accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/yd8zcnfa> on May 1, 2018.

⁴ Berry, John. “2017 Gale/LJ Library of the Year: Nashville Public Library, TN.” *Library Journal*, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y7cw4djc>. Accessed 1 May 2018.

Nashville Public Library Foundation

a common agenda, shared measurement systems, activity coordination, and capacity building supports.

NAZA's work is built on Nashville's "Five Principles of Positive Youth Development," a set of principles that were developed collaboratively and adopted in 2009 by representatives of 30 community-based organizations and eight Metro agencies that founded the Nashville Youth Coalition. The principles outline a vision in which youth participate meaningfully in community and school life, create positive relationships with peers and adults, develop a sense of belonging and sense of self, and are supported in safe and supportive environments. The Nashville Youth Coalition committed to collaborate to "give all of Nashville's young people a consistent experience of the 5 Principles of Positive Youth Development at home, at school, in their neighborhoods, and wherever they go."⁵ In 2010, former Nashville Mayor Karl Dean assembled the Mayor's Task Force, a work group comprised of more than 50 community leaders, to develop a *Child and Youth Master Plan for Nashville and Davidson County* that sought to provide a blueprint on how to improve the wellbeing of children and youth. The 2010 *Child and Youth Master Plan* outlined fourteen outcome areas with respective strategies and actions designed to improve the social, educational and physical well-being of children and youth in the community. NAZA was cited as one such strategy. Since the plan's release, NAZA has implemented all of the recommended activities and many programs and initiatives have been launched to expose children and youth to creative and innovative expanded learning programs that help them develop positive relationships with peers and adults, a sense of purpose, and grit.

Nearly 10 years later, NAZA is now a nationally-recognized expanded learning system that is now part of the Nashville Public Library, engaging 2,200 youth annually through afterschool and summer learning experiences in partnership with Metro Nashville Public Schools, the Mayor's Office and over 20 youth-serving organizations. As a collaborative, NAZA has primarily focused on shared program-level indicators of quality for expanded learning programs, and as such, has diligently and continuously evaluated program quality both through student surveys and pre- and post-assessments. The proposed project will build on this work to collaboratively develop youth-level indicators of quality for informal education settings.

NAZA seeks to engage its existing partners, organizations that it has not historically funded (such as faith-based organizations and fee-based providers), other community stakeholders, and families and youth to reassess the needs of community youth almost a decade after the release of the *Child and Youth Master Plan*. Specifically, NAZA will work with Vanderbilt University's Peabody College to conduct a needs assessment and engage in focus groups with the abovementioned stakeholders to understand what assets or skills local youth need in order to thrive in life and concurrently engage these stakeholders in participatory asset mapping to identify local community assets that support youth in developing these needed assets or skills.⁶ NAZA will also facilitate a process through which key stakeholders will utilize the needs assessment findings and other pertinent data to frame youth-level learning outcomes for informal education settings and align measurement tools, support services, and professional development to help promote the new outcomes framework and build the capacity of the broader community to cultivate skill development opportunities with youth. The framework will be shared widely with community youth-serving agencies and help inform the next version of Nashville's *Child and Youth Master Plan*. As a result, the theoretical framework will have significant

⁵ Mayor's Child and Youth Master Plan Taskforce. *Child & Youth Master Plan for Metropolitan Nashville & Davidson County: Taskforce Report to Mayor Karl Dean*. Mayor's Office of Children and Youth, 2010. Print.

⁶ Burns, Janice, Paul, Dagmar Pudrzynska, and Paz, Silvia R. *Participatory Asset Mapping: A Community Research Lab Toolkit*. Advancement Project, 2012. Accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/y8uh5jxk> on May 1, 2018.

implications for the collective practice of youth development in Nashville.

NAZA's rich history of relationships with local community partners, universities, the school district, the local government, businesses, and foundations in combination with its affiliation with Every Hour Counts, a national cohort of intermediary systems focused on expanded learning, will enable NAZA to foster a collaborative process that will yield a shared youth outcomes framework to guide informal education efforts with youth across Nashville. As a system that is now part of the Nashville Public Library, NAZA will also have ready access to leaders at NPL who helped spearhead the community workgroup that collaborated across sectors to create a "Blueprint for Early Childhood Success," a collective plan that outlines how to ensure that Nashville doubles the number of third-grade students who can read on grade level by 2025. The workgroup was convened by former Mayor Barry, the superintendent of Metro Schools, NPL, and the Nashville Public Education Foundation in early 2017. By year's end, the 22-member working group had engaged in 1600 hours of research, learned best practices from more than 30 national experts, and drawn upon the expertise of over 200 community leaders in order to assemble the blueprint.⁷ NAZA can also draw upon lessons learned from the workgroup which recently assembled their shared vision for high-quality early learning and detailed their plan to ensure that in Nashville, there is a "High Quality Start for All."⁸ Additionally, NPL and NAZA leadership participate on the operating board and various work groups of Alignment Nashville, the city's premier collective impact model focused on improving the education and health of Nashville youth. These are just a few examples of recent and local collective impact approaches from which NAZA can learn.

The proposed project intends to build a mutual understanding about youth development priorities amongst youth-serving organizations and individuals and create a framework of shared goals for youth that will impact the community at large. Creating a systemized approach to supporting community youth in developing essential fundamental skills (social, emotional, organizational) will strengthen informal education providers' capacity to help youth thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. In focusing on academic outcomes for the past several years, NAZA has learned that academic gains are likely to occur if youth have positive values, consistent support from adults, and opportunities to develop their skill sets. Developing a shared framework for youth-level outcomes in informal education settings will help many providers be more intentional about strengthening their role in engaging youth in learning opportunities that create positive value sets and behaviors. This effort will reinforce the concept of holistic child/youth development and will enable stakeholders to unify around a common agenda. The perception of afterschool programs serving as unstructured, drop-in sites where children are babysat is rapidly becoming a relic of the past. Informal learning environments offer opportunities for multi-dimensional youth development that is crucial for youth success in effectively navigating through educational levels and career pathways. Practice has shown that focusing on non-academic outcomes from an early age can help youth create an internal support system that enables them to persevere through challenges throughout their life and experience better economic outcomes.

Momentum for this project is anchored by a number of recent developments. In 2017, NAZA consulted with researchers from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College to conduct an evaluation study on NAZA's effectiveness to date and value to the community. The researchers conducted interviews with 17 NAZA-

⁷The Nashville Literacy Collaborative. *Blueprint for Early Childhood Success*. Nashville Public Education Foundation, 2017. Accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/y9vxqyu2> on May 1, 2018.

⁸The Early Childhood Education Workgroup. *High Quality Start for All: A Roadmap for Strengthening Pre-K and Early Learning Opportunities for All Nashvillians*. Office of Mayor Megan Barry, 2017. Accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/y9w58fuw> on May 1, 2018.

Nashville Public Library Foundation

funded afterschool program staff, six NAZA leadership staff, and 21 community-based stakeholders in addition to holding focus groups with 63 parents/caregivers of students attending NAZA-funded programming. The evaluation report, which was published in November of 2017, cited a number of recommendations, including a recommendation to explore whether NAZA, as an intermediary expanding learning system, should look into evaluating youth-level learning outcomes, an effort that would undoubtedly add value for community youth, their families, organizations, and the school district. The report also indicated that NAZA should consider working from its strengths and focus more on outcomes associated with social and emotional learning and life skill development, rather than endeavoring to impact academic knowledge change that is difficult to attribute to expanded learning programs alone and not necessarily well-suited given that the programs tend not to provide the one-on-one or small group academic tutoring that would be needed in order to yield significant advancement in academic performance.

Data shared by the National League of Cities illuminated that across the nation, employers are increasingly highlighting the important role that fundamental skills/"soft skills" play in workforce development. Expanded learning systems have been identified as one of the most effective strategies for supporting youth in intentionally developing those skills.⁹ NAZA's leadership team, which is comprised of nine experienced and specialized youth development professionals, have indicated their support for engaging in a collaborative process to define youth-level non-academic learning outcomes and to build upon the system's strengths in fostering social and emotional learning and life skill development. In the spring of 2018, NAZA's Coordinator presented the idea of conducting a needs assessment with the intention of coming to consensus on youth-level outcomes to NAZA's Leadership Council, which is co-chaired by the Mayor and the director of the Nashville Public Library, and comprised of leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sector. NAZA will continue to involve the Leadership Council as the work progresses.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, NAZA is a member of Every Hour Counts, a national organization that is on the frontlines of testing innovative strategies in expanded learning settings. For some time, NAZA's leadership has been following the work of Boston After School & Beyond (BASB), Boston's expanded learning system. BASB has worked for over 10 years to develop and improve its youth outcomes framework, entitled the Achieve, Thrive, and Connect (ACT) framework.¹⁰ As a fellow intermediary, NAZA has had the opportunity to follow BASB's progress in this arena over the course of semi-annual meetings. NAZA's leadership team is interested in studying the ACT framework and potentially adapting components of the process utilized to develop the framework and/or the components of the framework itself to create a framework that is organic to Nashville. BASB's executive director has indicated his willingness to consult with NAZA on this proposed project.

Since joining the library in 2014, NAZA has had the opportunity to leverage NPL programming and services to enhance the quality of NAZA-funded afterschool and summer programs, including Limitless Libraries, which ensures that youth have access to books after school, and Studio NPL, which provides opportunities for youth to explore mobile maker labs with the support of mentors, among others. The library has positioned itself as a critical public institution in the community with a wide range of diverse services intended to improve the social and economic wellbeing of the community at large. In addition, NPL serves as a unique educational institution which specializes in providing creative, non-academic informal education programming and

⁹ Hutchinson, Audrey and Shah Spooner, Bela. "Mayor Stodola: Afterschool and Summer Learning Absolutely Critical to Hone 'Soft Skills' in Workforce Development. National League of Cities, <https://tinyurl.com/y9ynalw3>. Accessed 1 May 2018.

¹⁰"ACT Skills." *Insight Center by Boston Afterschool and Beyond*, May 1, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/yadyulpv>.

Nashville Public Library Foundation

services that are designed to improve the educational outcomes of the children/youth it serves. This project will support the Nashville Public Library in one of its strategic goals for 2018-2020, namely to establish measurable outcomes for the majority of NPL programs and services.¹¹ NPL will be able to utilize the youth outcomes framework to strengthen its informal educational programming with youth and can advocate for other Metro departments, such as Metro Parks and Metro Arts, to consider utilizing the framework. The project also aligns with objectives 2 and 3 of NAZA's Strategic Plan, which focus on strengthening the capacity of youth-serving organizations and expanded partnership opportunities, both of which would be realized through the creation of a youth outcomes framework.

As a component of this project, NAZA and the key stakeholders involved in this process will determine how to ensure that the framework and associated supports which are developed through this process become widely accessible to other community stakeholders, as a means to maximize the number of spaces in which youth are supported with a consistent approach. An example of a potential outreach strategy could be to create youth development teams in each of the four quadrants of Nashville's Davidson County that would include representatives of youth serving agencies, schools, police and local churches. These teams would meet regularly to discuss youth-related issues in their communities and ways to collectively address youth development issues. Another possibility is to create an Alignment Nashville collective impact workgroup that will focus on embedding the framework, associated measurement tools, and professional development into the broader youth-serving community.

2. Impact

As previously mentioned, this project is informed in part by an evaluation conducted in 2017 by Vanderbilt University's Peabody College. Researchers interviewed or held focus groups with over 100 community members including program staff of NAZA-funded afterschool programs, NAZA leadership staff, community-based stakeholders, and parents/caregivers of students attending NAZA-funded programming. Based on the interviews and focus groups, the researchers recommended that NAZA consider evaluating youth-level learning outcomes, among other recommendations. NAZA-funded programs serve students that are representative of the school district's demographics. Of 86,745 public school students in Nashville, 46 percent are economically disadvantaged; in terms of ethnic breakdown, 41.9 percent are black or African American, 28.6 percent are white, 24.9 percent are Hispanic/Latino, 4.3 percent are Asian, and .3 percent are American Indian or Pacific Islander. NAZA funds programs that are available to youth county-wide, including a 46-square-mile, federally designated "Promise Zone" area that includes neighborhoods just south, east and north of Nashville's central business district. This designation gives the "Promise Zone" area priority for grants and other federal assistance.

NAZA will convene a workgroup with representatives from youth-serving organizations across the city, with which it already has established relationships, as well as reach out to organizations with which it has less experience, for example faith-based organizations and organizations providing fee-based afterschool or summer programming. NAZA will also invite representatives from the school district, Alignment Nashville, the Tennessee Afterschool Network, the Mayor's Opportunity NOW initiative, as well as partners of the library to help define the questions asked in the needs assessment and participatory asset mapping

¹¹"Nashville Public Library Strategy Map 2018-2020." *Nashville Public Library*, May 1, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/yaogfodt>.

Nashville Public Library Foundation

focus groups. Local funders will also be invited, as they have expressed the need for a mobilization effort, and seek to ensure the highest possible return for their investments in community wellbeing. Accordingly, active involvement of local funders who support child/youth development/educational programs will be instrumental in this proposed project. Convening representatives from the abovementioned groups will ensure that a wide variety of partners are involved in defining the questions that guide the needs assessment and asset mapping.

A considerable amount of this grant will be directed towards engaging local consultants in assessing the needs of the youth in partnership with the abovementioned community stakeholders, as well as businesses, caregivers, and youth, and consulting with national experts to inform a pathway to ensure that the broader community understands what skills or assets youth need to succeed, how to measure whether youth are making gains in those skills or assets, and how community stakeholders can more intentionally design informal learning experiences with those skills or assets in mind. NAZA will partner with faculty and students from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College to facilitate focus groups with the above cited stakeholders, with the overall goal to assess what skills or assets youth need in order to thrive and what resources currently exist in the community to help youth gains these skills or assets. Peabody faculty and students either from the Master's program in Community Development and Action or Community Research and Action will be involved in the needs assessment design and implementation to ensure that process utilizes best practices in community development and yields data that can be put into action.

The workgroup will work with researchers from Peabody to review the needs assessment and asset mapping findings and any secondary data analysis from the 2017 evaluation, and determine which skills or assets should be included in the final set of mutually agreed upon youth-level outcomes for learning in informal education settings. From there, the NAZA leadership team, with the support of consultants from Peabody and Boston After School and Beyond, and interested individuals from the convened group will create a framework that links the intended outcomes to measurement tools, professional development, and other support services.

NAZA's operations are grounded in meaningful, in-depth community involvement and partnerships. NAZA has created a culture that highly values community voice and participation at the student, program, and organizational level, which is a valuable asset in continuous improvement of the services provided to youth. The Leadership Council that governs NAZA represents the broader Nashville community, from mayoral staff to school district senior leaders, from community organizations to local philanthropic organizations, from businesses to academia. Since NAZA's inception, its Leadership Council has been instrumental in studying and deliberating about the intermediary's future strategic directions and systemic changes. Historically, NAZA has continuously involved frontline staff from its funded programs in brainstorming, co-planning, and sharing feedback.

With this initiative, NAZA seeks to be more inclusive and involve non-traditional partners in this important community dialogue. It is in the community's best interest to create an environment where community stakeholders can come together to talk about challenges that youth face and how community organizations and individuals working with youth outside of the school day can best prepare to address those challenges. Working together to establish a mutual understanding of non-academic learning outcomes for youth in informal education settings will facilitate a more comprehensive conversation

among diverse informal education providers. The school district is also an essential partner in this exercise because they are equally interested in the social and emotional development of youth and understand that in many cases, a youth's academic achievement is conditioned by the social and emotional state of the youth. NAZA anticipates that once it initiates the dialogue on the impact of youth development on youth learning in informal environments, over time the conversation will expand to engage formal educators and other professionals who support youth, such as law enforcement, juvenile court, social workers, etc.

In alignment with the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) vision of "A nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities, this proposed project seeks to transform the lives of youth by strengthening the intentionality of learning experiences in informal education settings.¹² The project most strongly aligns with IMLS' strategic goal to "place the learner at the center and support engaging experiences in libraries and museums that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society" as measured by the performance goal to "support communities of practice." The project also aligns well with the IMLS' strategic goal to "promote museums and libraries as strong community anchors that enhance civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality" as measured by the performance goal to "strengthen museums and libraries as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities." The proposed project fits within the following areas of interest associated with this special IMLS initiative: Adaptable Models for Joint Efforts to Engage and Service a Local Community, Broadening Reach into New Communities with Existing and Potential Partners, Community Buy-In and Asset Mapping, and Sharing Findings and Project Evaluation. Please see the below which outlines the overall goal, objectives, outcomes, and how those outcomes will be tracked.

Goal: To strengthen Nashville's capacity to provide informal learning environments which are intentionally designed to support youth in developing skills or assets that they need to thrive.

Objective: Improve youth-serving professionals' readiness to design informal learning experiences that support youth in developing skills that they need to thrive, through the development of a youth-level outcomes framework for informal education settings, associated measurement and tracking tools, professional development, and other support services.

Outputs:

- **Year 1**
 - NAZA convenes a workgroup that represents diverse stakeholders at least three times to inform the needs assessment work, review the needs assessment results, and adopt shared youth-level outcomes for informal education settings.
 - At least 20 focus groups are conducted with diverse stakeholders including youth, families, and representatives from NAZA partner organizations, the school district, funders, faith-based organizations, fee-based providers, and other previously mentioned partners to assess what assets or skills local youth need in order to thrive in life and concurrently engage these stakeholders in participatory asset mapping to identify local community assets

¹² "About Us." *Institute of Museum and Library Services*, 1 May 2018, <https://www.imls.gov/about-us>.

that support youth in developing these needed assets or skills .

- Needs assessment and asset mapping completed, which will inform the eventual framework that will include associated measurement and tracking tools, professional development, and support services.
- NAZA workgroup adopts youth-level outcomes for informal education settings.

- **Year 2**

- In consultation with Boston After School and Beyond, Peabody College, and other interested stakeholders, NAZA develops a youth-level outcomes framework that details associated measurement and tracking tools, professional development, and support services.
- NAZA convenes the workgroup that represents diverse stakeholders at least once to adopt the shared youth-level outcomes framework for informal education settings.
- A professional development plan is created to support the implementation of the youth outcomes framework for informal education settings.
- 100 youth-serving professionals attend the pilot version of the professional development focused on the youth outcomes framework for informal education settings.

Outcomes:

- In year 1, 75% (or 38) of approximately 50 workgroup or focus group participants will report that they agree or strongly agree with the following statements after participating in the workgroup or a focus group (will report an aggregate average across the statements): “The museum or library offers programs, services, or resources that address community needs” and “The museum or library is an active contributor to problem solving in the community.”
- In year 2, 75% (or 75) of 100 youth-serving professionals will report that they agree or strongly agree with the following statements as a result of participating in the piloted version of the youth outcomes framework professional development session (will report an aggregate average across the statements): “My understanding has increased as a result of this program/training,” “My interest in this subject has increased as a result of this program/training,” and “I am confident I can apply what I learned in this program/training.”

NAZA will share its project progress with the convened workgroup and can also share updates with the broader community via its website or e-newsletters. Additionally, the broader youth-serving community will be invited to professional development focused on the youth outcomes framework. In terms of evaluation data collection, NAZA will administer a survey that includes the statements cited in the outcomes related to year 1 during the last convening of the workgroup in year 1. In year 2, NAZA will administer a survey that includes the statements cited in the outcomes related to year 2 immediately after each professional development session focused on the youth outcomes framework. Typically, NAZA maintains hard copies of evaluations such as these, enters the data into an Excel spreadsheet, and analyzes the data utilizing Excel formulas to create customized reports. Ultimately, the outcome data cited above will be collected and stored in a manner that IMLS deems appropriate. If funded, (and IMLS funds are available for this purpose), NAZA will also work with a third-party evaluator that is collectively evaluating all of the grantees associated with this special initiative.

The process utilized by NAZA to develop a framework of youth-level learning outcomes for informal education settings in Nashville and associated measurement tools, support services, and professional

Nashville Public Library Foundation

development (designed to help promote the new outcomes framework and build the capacity of the broader community to cultivate skill development opportunities with youth) as well as the framework itself could be a helpful foundation from which other library systems could draw to develop similar localized solutions. If funded, NAZA would gladly share the findings of its project with IMLS, the informal education field, and other grantees of this initiative. To date, NAZA has benefited tremendously from sharing best practices with its intermediary partners involved in Every Hour Counts. In this same spirit, NAZA would be very willing to share about its work at library convenings if IMLS deems this appropriate. NAZA would also be open to consulting with other libraries that are interested in undertaking similar work.

3. Project Design

In following with its objective to improve youth-serving professionals' readiness to design informal learning experiences that support youth in developing skills that they need to thrive, NAZA will engage in the following activities to ensure project success:

Year 1

Activity 1.1. NAZA will convene a workgroup that represents diverse stakeholders (schools, youth-serving agencies, funders, business representatives, faith-based organizations, Metro departments, etc.) to introduce the concept of the youth-level outcomes framework and finalize the questions to be asked in the focus groups which will serve as a means to both assess needs and map assets (possible questions include "What skills or assets do youth need in order to thrive in school, work, and life?" and "What resources currently exist in the community to help youth gains these skills or assets?").

Activity 1.2. NAZA will contract with Vanderbilt University's Peabody College to facilitate at least 20 focus groups centralized on what skills the participants think youth need in order to be successful in different stages of their life and resources in the community that enable youth to gain those skills. The focus groups will also provide an opportunity to gauge the learning needs of the youth-serving community. Focus group participants will include representatives from the abovementioned stakeholder groups as well as youth and their caregivers. NAZA will include students and caregivers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as language traditions in the focus groups. It is critical that these students and families' voices also be heard in this process. As such, the researchers will utilize interpreters as needed to co-facilitate the focus groups in the languages that are most commonly spoken in Nashville public school student's homes.

Activity 1.3. Vanderbilt's Peabody College will analyze the focus group results (and possibly complete a secondary analysis of the data collected for the 2017 evaluation report) and present the needs assessment and asset mapping data to the workgroup.

Activity 1.4. The workgroup will convene once more to formally adopt shared youth-level outcomes for informal education settings. NAZA will administer a survey that includes the statements cited in the outcomes related to year 1 during the last convening of the workgroup in year 1. NAZA will maintain hard copies of the survey data, enter the data into an Excel spreadsheet, and analyze the data utilizing Excel formulas to create customized reports for IMLS.

Year 2

Activity 2.1. NAZA will consult with Every Hour Counts and Boston After School and Beyond to receive technical assistance in linking the adopted youth-level outcomes to a framework that details associated measurement and tracking tools, professional development, and support services.

Activity 2.2. NAZA will work with Peabody College and other interested stakeholders from the workgroup to translate the learnings from the technical assistance with Every Hour Counts and Boston After School and Beyond and develop a youth-level outcomes framework for informal education settings (that includes measurement and tracking tools, professional development, and support services).

Activity 2.3. NAZA will convene the workgroup at least once to formally adopt the shared youth-level outcomes framework for informal education settings and envision an outreach strategy to ensure that the framework and associated supports which are developed through this process become widely accessible to other community stakeholders, as a means to maximize the number of spaces in which youth are supported with a consistent approach. An example of a potential outreach strategy could be to create youth development teams in each of the four quadrants of Nashville's Davidson County, which would include representatives of youth serving agencies, schools, police and local churches. Another possibility is to create an Alignment Nashville collective impact workgroup that will focus on embedding the framework, associated measurement tools, and professional development into the broader youth-serving community. Yet another is for NAZA to hold community discussions focused on how to support youths' asset or skill development.

Activity 2.4. NAZA will pilot professional development focused on the youth outcomes framework for informal education settings with 100 youth-serving professionals. The intent of the training is to improve youth-serving professionals' readiness to design informal learning experiences that support youth in developing skills that they need to thrive. NAZA will administer a survey that includes the statements cited in the outcomes related to year 2 immediately after each professional development session focused on the youth outcomes framework. NAZA will maintain hard copies of the survey data, enter the data into an Excel spreadsheet, and analyze the data utilizing Excel formulas to create customized reports for IMLS.

Activity 2.5. NAZA will implement the outreach plan mentioned above, possibly in partnership with a local firm that specializes in widely disseminating strategic communications with multiple audiences.

Since 2009, NAZA has infused over \$12 million dollars and leveraged assets across Nashville's diverse community to align efforts to improve the quality of afterschool and summer learning experiences for Nashville youth. Since that time, at least 9,000 students have engaged in NAZA-funded afterschool and summer programs. In an effort to build the capacity of the youth-serving community, NAZA has provided over 16,090 hours of professional development to partner agencies and other interested individuals since the beginning of its operations. This project is an organic evolution with a significant amount of momentum. In the last couple years, stakeholders at a number of levels (governance, organizational, and partner level) have been asking "what exactly are we trying to do?" in terms of the intended impact on Nashville youth. These stakeholders have committed to utilize a positive youth development approach to guide their work, they believe in the importance of quality programming and align their work with quality standards, but they seek more guidance into how they can maximize their impact on youth. Creating a youth-level outcomes framework will support Nashville youth-serving organizations in sharpening their capacity to significantly impact youth. The framework will also serve as a powerful resource for informal educator providers across the city. Cities that seek to holistically support youth whether in school or out of school will be able to draw from the Nashville library's engagement in developing a youth outcomes framework. While design of such a framework should be localized, the overall process and aspects of the framework can be adapted to significantly scale up the amount of communities that are intentional about what they seek to help youth learn in informal education settings, places where youth spend a majority of their time.