Strengthening the Out-of-School Time (OST) Landscape within Cuyahoga County Youth Work Institute (CCYWI)

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CUYAHOGA COUNTY YOUTH WORK INSTITUTE

Background

The Cuyahoga County Youth Work Institute (CCYWI), led by Case Western Reserve University and community partners, is a professional development network supporting youth-serving professionals and organizations throughout Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Since 2008, CCYWI has delivered high-impacting training, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the Out-of-School Time (OST) field.

Population

The population served includes youth workers, program coordinators, site directors, and organizational leaders who work with children and adolescents in after-school programs, recreation centers, summer camps, schools, mentoring programs, and community-based youth organizations. These professionals support young people's social, emotional, and personal development through enrichment activities, mentorship, and safe, supportive environments. CCYWI also supports organizations seeking to strengthen staff skills, improve program quality, and build their capacity to meet the changing needs of youth and their communities.

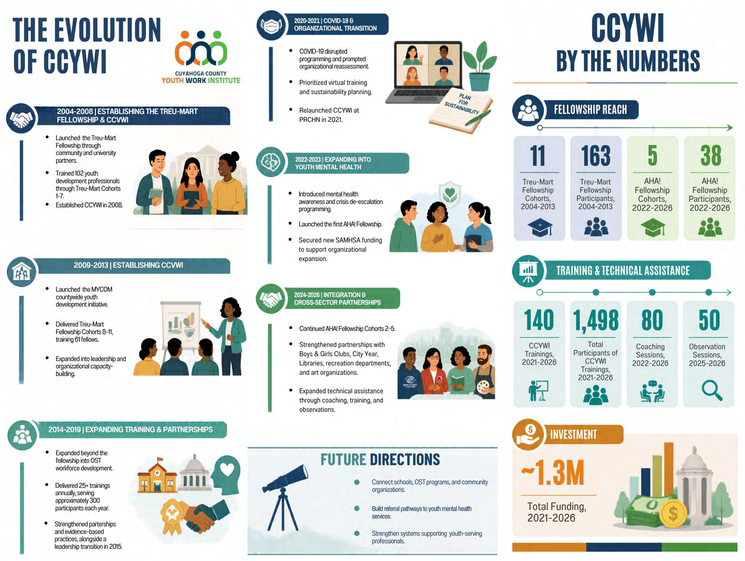
Activities

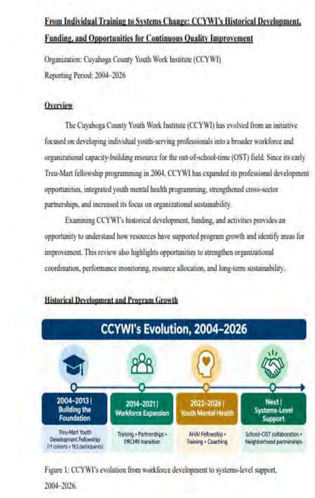
- Participated in management team meetings and contributed to strategic planning discussions.
- Developed training modules and materials for summer OST staff.
- Assisted with the delivery of trainings for OST professionals.
- Conducted literature reviews on OST workforce development and academic partnerships, as well as the role of OST programs in promoting healthy behaviors among youth.
- Assisted with writing the 2026 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant proposal focused on youth mental health initiatives and partnerships between schools and OST organizations.
- Supported the implementation of the Adolescent Health Advocate (AHA!) Fellowship, which equips OST professionals with knowledge and skills to promote healthy youth development and support youth mental health.
- Contributed to the development and submission of an abstract highlighting the AHA! Fellowship's work for the 2026 American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting. The abstract was accepted for presentation.
- Attended Starting Point's 2026 OST symposium on professional development.

Deliverables 1 and 2

This infographic uses a visual timeline and key statistics to illustrate CCYWI's major milestones, fellowship participation, training activities, partnerships, and future directions. It provides a quick overview of the initiative's growth and accomplishments over time.

This data brief examines CCYWI's historical development, funding, and program activities from 2004 to 2026 to identify opportunities for continuous quality improvement (CQI). It highlights how CCYWI has evolved from individual workforce training to broader systems-level development.




From Individual Training to Systems Change: CCYWI's Historical Development, Funding, and Opportunities for Continuous Quality Improvement

Organization: Cuyahoga County Youth Work Institute (CCYWI)
Reporting Period: 2004–2026

Overview

The Cuyahoga County Youth Work Institute (CCYWI) has evolved from an initiative focused on developing individual youth-serving professionals into a broader workforce and organizational capacity-building resource for the out-of-school-time (OST) field. Since its early Treu-Mart fellowship programming in 2004, CCYWI has expanded its professional development opportunities, integrated youth mental health programming, strengthened cross-sector partnerships, and increased its focus on organizational sustainability.

Examining CCYWI's historical development, funding, and activities provides an opportunity to understand how resources have supported program growth and identify areas for improvement. This review also highlights opportunities to strengthen organizational coordination, performance monitoring, resource allocation, and long-term sustainability.

Historical Development and Program Growth

CCYWI's Evolution, 2004–2026

2004–2013 | Building the Foundation — Treu-Mart Youth Development Fellowship (11 cohorts • 163 participants)
2014–2021 | Workforce Expansion — Training • Partnerships • PRCHN transition
2022–2026 | Youth Mental Health — AHA! Fellowship • Training • Coaching
Next | Systems-Level Support — School-OST collaboration • Neighborhood partnerships

Figure 1: CCYWI's evolution from workforce development to systems-level support, 2004-2026.

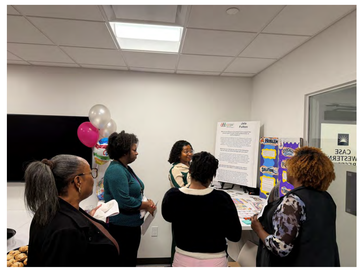










Figure 1. ***AHA! Fellowship Cohort 4 Graduation, 2026: Poster Gallery Walk and Certificate Presentation.***

Lessons Learned

- I learned how workforce development and professional training can strengthen the quality of youth programs.
- I recognized how mental health promotion and healthy behaviors support positive youth development.
- I gained a better understanding of how strategic planning, grant writing, and organizational capacity-building support the long-term sustainability of public health initiatives.

Learning Objectives

- Applied program planning, leadership, and resource management skills through training development, grant writing, and strategic planning.
- Supported organizational growth and sustainability through literature reviews and AHA! Fellowship implementation.
- Identified opportunities to improve program quality and coordination among youth-serving organizations.

Public Health Implications

- Improved recognition of youth mental health concerns and connections to appropriate support services.
- Reduced barriers to health resources for youth, especially in underserved communities.
- Increased opportunities for young people to develop healthy behaviors and coping skills.
- Stronger collaboration among schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations to address youth health needs.

Acknowledgements

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