

# Youth Philanthropy

## Studying Outcomes of Community Engagement



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## Acknowledgments

### Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

The Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy in Indianapolis is dedicated to improving the world by training and empowering innovators and leaders to create positive and lasting change. The school offers undergraduate, graduate, certificate and professional development programs, and research and international programs through The Fund Raising School, the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, the Mays Family Institute on Diverse Philanthropy and the Women's Philanthropy Institute. [About the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy](#)

### Three Pillars Initiative

Three Pillars Initiative (TPI) is a US-based 501(c)(3) philanthropic service organization whose mission is to work with communities to develop and launch programs that teach the art, science and business of philanthropy to the next generation by providing hands-on experiences in fundraising, grantmaking and community service. Through the Three Pillars Philanthropy (TPP) program, TPI's vision is that communities across the country are providing youth philanthropy leadership opportunities that inspire teens to change the human condition during their lifetime. [About Three Pillars Initiative](#)

### Funder Acknowledgments

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### Community Partner Acknowledgments

This research project was made possible by the participation of the community-based affiliate programs who implemented the youth philanthropy program, distributed the survey to youth participants, and engaged young people in learning about, contributing to, and shaping the future of philanthropy. [About Three Pillars Community Partners](#)

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## Abstract

This report shares results from a study of youth philanthropy programs designed to increase community engagement. The study is designed to answer this research question: Does participating in a youth philanthropy program foster positive outcomes for young people? Data are from a youth philanthropy program hosted within 12 community organizations in 7 US states. The program is two years in duration: youth participate as juniors and seniors in high school. Data were collected through surveys with graduating youth who had completed both years of the program ( $n=180$ ). Findings indicate that the program “works” in fostering engagement in philanthropic activities, gaining prosocial orientations, and having rewarding program experiences. When available, youth outcomes from program participants are compared to national or global data on comparable measures to assess whether youth in this program appear to be participating in philanthropic activities at rates greater than average. Results show that youth participants are high on philanthropic activities and prosocial orientations, and their rates are 30-50% higher than comparable rates. Additionally, youth demonstrate positive growth in targeted philanthropic learning and skills, and youth participants gain a greater network of engaged peers and supportive mentors. The implication is that this youth philanthropy program is successful in fostering positive youth development.

## Background and Significance

Youth philanthropy programs are significant for two primary reasons. First, participating in youth programs is consistently found to be a reason for civic engagement later in life, and many civic and philanthropic leaders learned to give back to their communities by participating earlier in their formative years within such a program (Horn 2012; Metzger et al. 2019; Seider et al. 2012; Song and Hur 2022; Thomas et al. 2021). For example, Cicognani and colleagues (2015) found that civic participation fostered positive wellbeing. Ballard (2014) found that civic knowledge and skills were acquired through youth leadership programs, and engaged young people were more likely to feel like they belong in their community, express social responsibility, and feel obligations to help others. Plus, participating in civic engagement, giving, and volunteering, can enhance economic and educational opportunities (Benenson 2017). One important way that this path occurs is through young people gaining a sense of agency that their efforts can make a difference (Christoph et al. 2014).

Second, youth philanthropy programs are among a broader set of youth mentoring programs, and research findings consistently indicate that mentoring relationships have a positive impact (Bayer et al. 2015; Culyba et al. 2016; DuBois et al. 2002, 2011; Erickson and Phillips 2012; Goldner and Ben-Eliyahu 2021; Grossman and Tierney 1998; Haddad et al. 2011; Higley et al. 2016; Renick Thomson and Zand 2010). For example, in a national longitudinal study with more than 15,000 respondents, young people who had mentors reported more positive life outcomes over time than those who did not (Samuels et al. 2023). Additionally, in a meta-analysis of 70 studies on mentoring, with a combined sample size of more than 25,000 youth, Raposa and colleagues (2019) found statistically significant and positive effects across all the measured youth outcomes, including better academic performance, emotional wellbeing, autonomy, problem-solving skills, and social skills.

## Aims and Hypotheses

The core aim of this project is to study answers to the question: Does this youth philanthropy program “work” in fostering positive outcomes for young people? The survey questions are designed to understand program impacts, including the experiences that participants have in the program, the background of participants and their families, and potential impacts of the program on participants.

**First**, the survey measures the extent of engagement that youth participants have in philanthropic activities: charitable giving, volunteering, helping, fundraising, grantmaking, and voting (Aydinli et al. 2016; Bennett and Einolf 2017; Beyerlein, Trinitapoli, and Adler 2011; Body and Breeze 2016; Bokoff and Dillon 2014; Gavelin, Svedberg, and Pestoff 2011; Wray-Lake and Hart 2012).



### Hypothesis 1. Youth participants highly engage in philanthropic activities.

**Second**, the next set of survey questions are designed to measure the prosocial values and orientations that youth can have, which could eventually lead to civic engagement outcomes later in life. These include identifying with philanthropic and leadership qualities, having social trust, feeling a sense of agency or efficacy in making a difference, and developing prosocial personality characteristics (Beugelsdijk and Welzel 2018; Ciavolino et al. 2017; Glanville, Andersson, and Paxton 2013; Johnson and Mislin 2012; Kahne, Crow, and Lee 2013; Maki et al. 2017; Minkov, van de Vijver, and Schachner 2019; Paxton and Glanville 2015; Salvatore et al. 2020; Smith 2003; Thalmayer and Saucier 2014).

## Hypothesis 2. Youth participants have high prosocial orientations.

**Third**, in addition to these measures designed from existing scholarship, this study also includes a number of original survey questions informed by the content and approach of this particular youth philanthropy program. The questions were designed based on the curriculum that is implemented within the regular youth philanthropy meetings, including philanthropic knowledge, competencies, and skills. Examples include learning to raise funds, distributing funds, coming to consensus as a group, and addressing root causes. Open-ended questions also facilitate participants in expressing if and how the program has helped them to become a better community member and leader, as well as most and least liked program aspects.

## Hypothesis 3. Youth participants learned philanthropy knowledge and skills.

**Fourth**, another set of survey questions measure social demographic characteristics found in existing research to explain variations in how people experience social encounters, including gender, race and ethnicity, parental educational level, parental marital status, closeness with parents, religiosity, and technology use (Bennett, Maton, and Kervin 2008; Burdette, Hill, et al. 2018; Burdette, Webb, et al. 2018; Elliott and S. Beverly 2011; Elliott and S. G. Beverly 2011; Fredricks et al. 2016; Hargittai 2010; Hout 2008; Jones et al. 2010; Smith and Snell 2009; Spiel, Haimson, and Lottridge 2019; Vorderer, Krömer, and Schneider 2016). Also included are analyses of engagement in other activities, such as academics, sports, and extracurriculars. The outcomes studied in H1-H3 are analyzed across social demographic characteristics to assess for who the program seems to work best and identify where improvements may be needed.

## Hypothesis 4. Youth outcomes differ by social demographic characteristics.

**Fifth**, a final set of analyses focus on the different program affiliates. There are currently 12 community affiliates participating in hosting this youth philanthropy program. Nine of these program sites have cohorts that have completed two years and thus were eligible for data collection between the years 2020 and 2024. The youth outcomes of H1-H3 are analyzed across program-level data to assess whether youth outcomes differ based on program, cohort years, or the state and region of the country in which the program is located. This last set of analyses is the most applied in offering program community partners an impact evaluation.

## Hypothesis 5. Youth outcomes differ by program, cohort, state, or region.

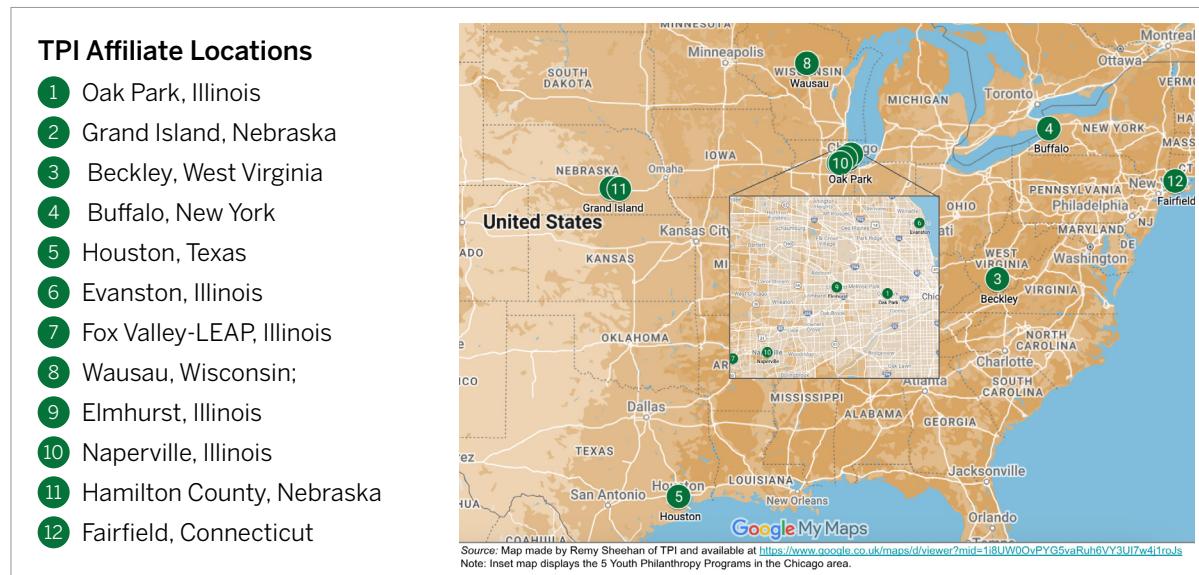
In summary, the primary aim is to assess if the program works and for which youth. Additionally, applied analyses offer impact evaluation data that can be utilized by participating community partners to enhance excelling areas and improve areas in need of further attention.



## Study Design and Methods

This is a study of a youth philanthropy program designed by the Three Pillars Initiative, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization (TPI 2024). The Three Pillars Philanthropy Program (TPP) is implemented by affiliated community organizations located in 12 U.S. cities in 7 states within these US regions: Midwest East and West North Central, Northeast Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, West South Central. Figure 1 displays the locations of these 12 community affiliates.

**Figure 1. Locations of Youth Philanthropy Programs**



The community affiliate sites listed in Figure 1 include: (1) Oak Park, Illinois; (2) Grand Island, Nebraska; (3) Beckley, West Virginia; (4) Buffalo, New York; (5) Houston, Texas; (6) Evanston, Illinois; (7) Fox Valley-LEAP, Illinois; (8) Wausau, Wisconsin; (9) Elmhurst, Illinois; (10) Naperville, Illinois; (11) Hamilton County, Nebraska; and (12) Fairfield, Connecticut.

Through the TPI community affiliate youth philanthropy programs, high school juniors and seniors are provided with hands-on, community-based philanthropy experiences. Taught by adult program volunteer mentors who deliver the curriculum, this approach also provides an intergenerational experience for both the teens and community stakeholders. About 20-30 youth participate in each location, resulting in hundreds of engaged youths each year.

Participants in the youth philanthropy program are invited to complete a survey distributed annually to seniors graduating from the program after two years of participation. Surveys are administered online via Qualtrics, and all identifying information is kept confidential in order to ensure youth participants feel comfortable to express their views of the program and be honest with the independent researchers regarding their experiences. Responses are tallied across cohort years and program locations, and data are compared to existing studies to provide national and global normative benchmark comparison rates and to limit possible self-selection effects.

The survey instrument was designed to collect data on the effectiveness of the youth philanthropy program. This was informed by two unique sets of inputs. First, the curriculum and programming materials of the program were analyzed to identify features worth inquiry. Second, existing scholarship on young people, youth philanthropy programs, and other similar youth activities were reviewed to identify comparable data points from other samples. The survey collects data from a total of 50 questions related to the program and its intended outcomes, followed by 25 questions about the social demographic characteristics of youth. Of these, 30 questions were replicated from existing studies in order to design in comparison data points from other samples. The majority of these data can be quantitatively analyzed. Also included are four open-ended questions about youth program experiences that can be qualitatively analyzed.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Indiana University Institutional Review Board (IRB # 21643). The protocol is reviewed annually, and all research assistants with access to identifiable data completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certificate programs for training on Responsible Conduct of Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Subjects Research for Social and Behavioral Researchers, Stage 1. All identifying information has been removed from the data file, resulting in a de-identified dataset that can be analyzed by student researchers with limited possibility of identifying any individuals. Potential participants are provided with a standardized consent form at the beginning of the survey, and if agree proceed onward to survey questions or otherwise are skipped to the end. Participants are assured that their responses will not be shared at the individual-level with the youth philanthropy program leaders or community affiliate coordinators and mentors. This third-party data collection approach protects the ability of youth participants to share their honest input. Participants are also assured that the study is entirely voluntary, can be stopped at any time, any question can be skipped, and only aggregated (grouped) responses will be shared publicly.

## Measures and Outcomes

The survey questions are grouped into five sections that align with the five project hypotheses. These are: (1) Philanthropy Activities, (2) Prosocial Orientations, (3) Program Experiences, (4) Social Demographic Characteristics, and (5) Program Differences. The first three of these are the focus of this report (the latter two are investigated in forthcoming publications).

### Philanthropy Activities

The first section asks about philanthropy activities through a set of questions regarding the frequency of participation in: (a) donating money or goods, (b) volunteering time or talent, (c) helping a person in need, (d) fundraising or soliciting donations, (e) awarding money or grants. Figure 2 displays the block layout of these questions in the survey, along with brief descriptions and examples of the kinds of activities that youth could count when answering each question.



**Figure 2. Philanthropic Activity Survey Questions**

How often, if at all, have you participated in any of the following activities?						
	Never	More than one year ago	6-12 months ago	3-6 months ago	1-3 months ago	Within the past month
<b>Donated money or goods</b> This includes money or goods donated to charitable, environmental, educational, cultural, political, religious, social, or voluntary causes, organizations, or groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Volunteered time or talent</b> This includes time or talent volunteered for charitable, environmental, educational, cultural, political, religious, social, or voluntary causes, organizations, or groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Helped a person in need</b> This includes help given to a neighbor, community member or stranger, not for pay.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Raised funds or solicited donations</b> This includes funds or goods raised for charitable, environmental, educational, cultural, political, religious, social, or voluntary causes, organizations, or groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Awarded money or grants</b> This includes awarding money or grants to charitable, environmental, educational, cultural, political, religious, social, or voluntary causes, organizations, or groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additionally, youth were asked if they plan to vote in the next presidential election, with possible responses including no, maybe, or yes. This is considered a measure of civic engagement.

### Prosocial Orientations

The second section asks about prosocial orientations through four sets of questions. The first set asks how much youth agree or disagree across a 7-point Likert scale with seven philanthropy identity questions. These are: (a) "I am a philanthropist;" (b) "I am a fundraiser;" (c) "I am a grant-maker;" (d) "I am a donor;" (e) "I am a volunteer;" (f) "I am an engaged community member;" and (g) "I am part of making civil society happen." Responses were subsequently combined into a single scale of Philanthropic Identity Scale (Cronbach's alpha: 0.7425).



Based upon a highly utilized measure of social trust, participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: "Generally speaking, most people can be trusted." Additionally, a common measure of agency or efficacy was asked about through a reverse-coded (to diminish any potential for social desirability) agree-disagree with the statement: "Trying hard is useless because you cannot affect what will be." Responses were also a 7-point agree-disagree scale.

Utilizing a short form of the well-studied personality characteristics, the next set of questions in this section asked a question each for the personality leanings of extroversion ("I enjoy being with people."), conscientiousness ("I waste my time." reverse-coded), agreeableness ("I hate waiting for anything." reverse-coded), originality ("I can handle a lot of information.") resiliency ("I recover quickly from stress and illness."), and honesty/propriety ("I would never take things that aren't mine."). Responses were collected on a 7-point, agree-disagree, Likert scale and were subsequently combined into a single measure that counted across prosocial personality measures with a range of 0-6, such that higher numbers indicate agreement with many of these qualities.

### **Program Experiences**

The third section asks about program experiences through five sets of questions. The first set focuses on the learning that young people perceive themselves as having gained from the program. In a select all that apply format, youth are asked "As a result of this program, I learned how to..." with possible checkmarks for: (a) distribute funds, (b) run a request for proposal process, (c) write an annual appeal letter, (d) ask individual donors for contributions, (e) raise awareness for a program, (f) run a fundraising campaign, (g) raise funds on social media (such as GivingTuesday), (h) use a crowdfunding platform (such as GoFundMe), (i) make decisions about what programs to support, (j) come to consensus as a group, or (k) make a difference for a cause. Subsequently, a combined program learning measure was created that counts across these 11 options.

A second question is based on a key aspect of the youth philanthropy curriculum, which also aligns with existing studies regarding the importance of this attitude in the general public. Youth were asked: "Which of the following statements best describes what you think the goal of helping is: (a) to make sure people can eventually take care of their own needs, or (b) to make sure that people have their immediate needs met." The program seeks to have youth learn to emphasize the former more than the latter such that philanthropy empowers recipients.

Another set of questions focuses on the program intervention by asking a series of yes or no questions, including: "Do you think this program changed you?" "Do you think this program helped you to become a better leader?" "Do you think this program helped you to become a better community member?" "Is this program worth foundation support?" "Would you encourage your best friend to participate in this program?" and "If you had it to do all over again, would you join this program again?" Responses were also subsequently combined into a count measure ranging from 0-6, with higher indicating agreement across many of these questions.



Recognizing the social benefits of participating in youth programming, two questions asked youth participants whether they made new friends in the program and met people from another school that they would not have met otherwise. These were also combined into a count measure. Additionally, youth were asked how many community volunteer mentors their program had, whether they feel close to any of those mentors, and if they felt welcomed by the program coordinator. The number of mentors was dichotomized into (0) none to five, and (1) six to ten. These three mentor questions were combined into a count measure ranging from 0-3.

The program experience section also included open-ended questions that are qualitatively analyzed. These included: "Do you think this program is worth ongoing support from community foundations?" Youth could answer yes or no and complete text boxes for yes-in what ways? And no-why not? The next two questions asked for favorite and least favorite aspects of the program. The last asked: "What changes would you recommend to improve the program experience?"

### Social Demographics

The fourth section asks youth about their social demographic characteristics. Gender: male, female, non-binary. Race and ethnicity (select all that apply): (1) White or Caucasian, (2) Black or African American, (3) Latinx, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, or Cuban, (4) American Indian,

Native American, or Alaska Native, (5) Asian or Asian American, (6) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, (7) Other: specify.

**Comfort:** Another set of questions asked about: (a) speaking before a large group of people, (b) meeting new people, and (c) making decision on their own. These were answered using a scale from 1-10 with 10 being the highest degree of comfort with each social experience. Scaled, the Cronbach's alpha score is: 0.7036.

**Parent Marital Status:** "Which of these best describes your parent's marital status?" (1) Married, (2) Remarried, (3) Divorced or Separated, (4) Widowed, (5) Single-never married.

**Figure 3. Parental Closeness Questions**

When thinking about your relationship with your <b>mom</b> (or mother figure), how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I look up to my mom.	<input type="radio"/>					
I can go to my mom for help.	<input type="radio"/>					
My mom doesn't know me very well.	<input type="radio"/>					
I enjoy spending time with my mom.	<input type="radio"/>					

When thinking about your relationship with your <b>dad</b> (or father figure), how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I look up to my dad.	<input type="radio"/>					
I can go to my dad for help.	<input type="radio"/>					
My dad doesn't know me very well.	<input type="radio"/>					
I enjoy spending time with my dad.	<input type="radio"/>					

**Parent Closeness:** Responses from Figure 3 were averaged across mom and dad scores and then combined into an 8-item parental closeness scale (Cronbach's alpha score: 0.9078).



**Socioeconomic Status (SES):** Youth were asked their mom's and dad's highest level of education, with response options: (1) Less than a high school degree, (2) High school degree, (3) Some college, (4) College degree (ex. BA, BS, BSE), (5) Graduate degree (ex. MA, MS), (6) Professional degree (ex. MD, JD, EdD, PhD). Responses were combined across parents as is conventional in SES studies, such that the highest level of education across either parent was recorded. Given the low number of youths with low parental education, the categories were combined into: (0) Less than Bachelor's degree, (1) Bachelor's degree, and (2) Advanced degree (graduate or professional). Youth were also asked: "Which of these best describes your family's social class? (1) Lower class, (2) Working class, (3) Middle class, (4) Upper class." Lastly, youth were asked if they have a savings or bank account in their name. Responses were then combined into 3-item socioeconomic status index ranging from low, middle, to high.

**Religiosity:** The first well-cited measure asked about frequency of religious service attendance: "Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? (1) Seldom or never, (2) A few times a year, (3) Once or twice a month, (4) Once a week, (5) More than once a week." The second is also a highly utilized measure about importance of faith: "How important or unimportant is your religious faith or spirituality in shaping how you live your daily life? (1) Not important at all, (2) Not very important, (3) Somewhat important, (4) Very important, (5) Extremely Important." Lastly, religious tradition was asked via this question: "Which of these religious traditions do you affiliate with? Select all that apply: 1) Christianity, mainline Protestantism (ex. Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian), (2) Christianity, evangelical Protestantism (ex. Baptist, Seventh day Adventist), (3) Christianity Pentecostalism, (4) Christian, just Christian or non-denominational, (5) Catholicism, (6) Islam/Muslim, (7) Judaism/Jewish, (8) Hinduism, (9) Buddhism, (10) Atheism: I do not believe in the existence of God, (11) Agnosticism: I do not know if I believe in the existence of God, (12) Spiritual but not affiliated with a religious tradition, (13) Not religious or spiritual." Responses across these measures were then combined into a 3-item religiosity scale (Cronbach's alpha score: 0.7489).

**Technology Use:** Frequency of social media use was asked about with this question: "In the past 30 days, how often have you interacted on social media sites (for example: Instagram, Snap Chat, TikTok, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook)? (0) Never, (1) Less than once a week, (2) Once a week, (3) A few times a week, (4) Every day, (5) A few times a day, (6) Every hour." Technology skill was asked about with a 7-point agree-disagree with this statement: "I am very skilled at using the computer, Internet, and digital technology." Digital identity was asked about with 7-point agree-disagree with the statement: "I am a digital native." Responses were combined into a 3-item technology use scale (Cronbach's alpha score: 0.6128).

**Activity Engagement:** Academic engagement was measured by GPA. Sports engagement was measured with the question: "Do you participate in athletic activities?" with some examples. Extracurricular engagement was asked about via this question: "Aside from this program, how many extracurricular activities are you involved in?" Responses ranged from 0-10 or more and were combined as a count across the 3-item activity engagement measures (0-3).

### **Program Differences**

The fifth set collects program-level data about which community affiliate, cohort years (2020-2022, 2021-2023, etc.), and which US state and census regional division is the program location.



## Data and Results

This report focuses on analyses of Hypotheses 1-3. Results for Hypotheses 4-5 are forthcoming.

### H1. Philanthropy Activities

The first set of results focuses on Hypothesis 1: Youth participants highly engage in philanthropy activities. To assess this hypothesis, the rates of participation in the youth program sample are compared to national or global averages across a range of existing studies. Rates were compiled from several sources reporting representative data from non-program, self-selected samples, and rates are averaged across studies to limit any sampling biases and increase reliability (Rooney et al. 2018; Thayer & Feldman 2016; Beyerlein et al. 2011; Herzog 2022; Steinberg & Wilhelm 2003; Aydinli et al. 2016; Gavelin et al. 2011; IU 2018; Bennett & Einolf 2017; Griffith 2010; Body & Breeze 2016; Bokoff & Dillon 2014; Fang et al. 2018; Flanagan et al. 2015; Gaby 2017).

**Donating:** Analyzing generational changes in giving, Nonprofits Source found that about 83% of the youngest generation were givers (NPS 2021, as cited in Rooney et al. 2018; Herzog 2022). In a study conducted by Blackbaud, the youngest generation giver rate was 60% (Thayer & Feldman 2016; Herzog 2022). In the Philanthropy Panel Study, the youngest generation giver rate was 53% (Steinberg & Wilhelm 2003; Herzog 2022). In a nationally representative study of teenagers, the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) found that 40% give (Beyerlein et al. 2011). These rates are averaged to form the comparison rate for donating.

**Volunteering:** Analyzing data from the World Values Survey (WVS) with nationally representative samples of more than 1,000 people per country across 126 countries, about 60% of people volunteered unpaid on average across countries (Aydinli et al. 2016; Gavelin et al. 2011). Within the United States, the Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS) of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) reports that about 18% of people ages 31 and younger volunteered (IU 2018). Speaking to possible self-selection effects, among a convenience sample selected from a professional network of researchers who study volunteering, the volunteering rate was 71% (Gavelin et al. 2011). In a nationally representative study of teenagers, the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) found that 67% formally volunteer (Beyerlein et al. 2011). These rates are averaged to form the comparison rate for volunteering.

**Helping:** On average, 47% of people around the world helped a stranger in the past month. This is based on nationally representative surveys in 126 countries with 179,000 people (Bennett & Einolf 2017). In a nationally representative study of teenagers, the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) found that 74% volunteer informally (Beyerlein et al. 2011). These rates are averaged to form the comparison rate for helping.

**Fundraising:** Analyzing data from a national sample of 9,500 undergraduate students who performed community service, 24.7% participated in fundraising activities (Griffith 2010). The examples of successful fundraising identified asking, framing the cause, illustrating the cause, empowering supporters, and raising profile through collaboration (Body & Breeze 2016).

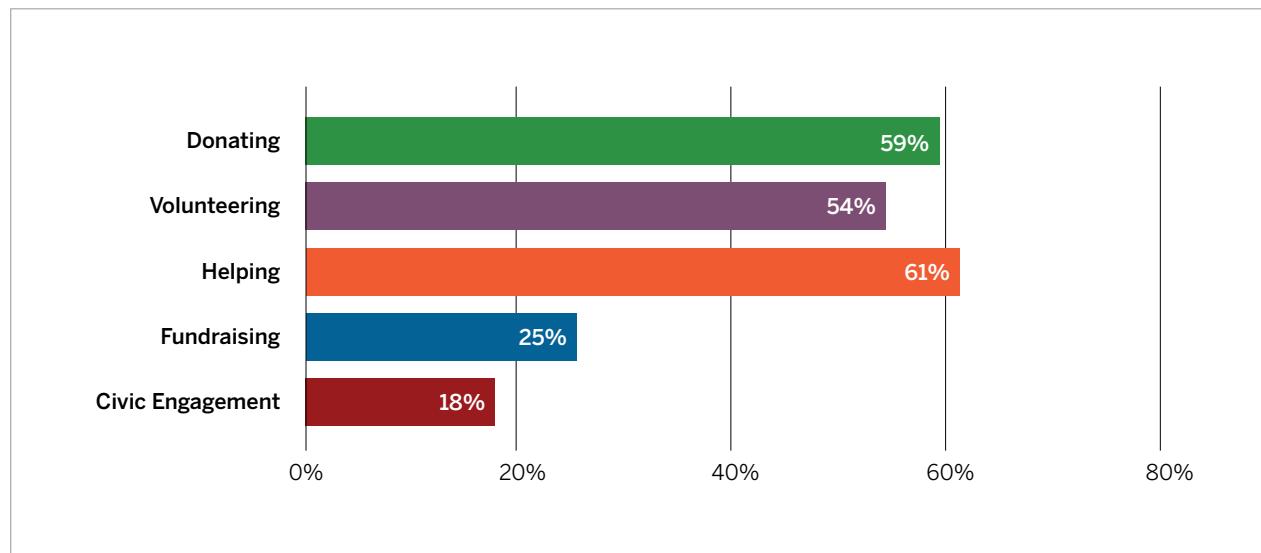


**Grantmaking:** Youth grantmaking is defined as “young people awarding monetary contributions to organizations of their choice through established institutions or governing bodies.” More than 70 community, private, family, and corporate foundations awarded grants to support youth grantmaking programs between 2001 and 2013 (Bokoff & Dillon 2014: 4). No data were found regarding the number of youths who participate in these programs, and thus no comparable rate is reported.

**Civic Engagement:** A 25-year longitudinal study of 12 graders in Canada found that 75% civically engaged (Fang et al. 2018). In two studies of high schoolers that teased apart extracurricular activities from community service, about 18% were civically engaged (Flanagan et al. 2015). In a nationally representative study of teenagers, the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) found that 11% reported political participation (Beyerlein et al. 2011). In a nationally representative study with more than 53,000 sampled 12 graders, rates were: writing an elected official 12%, donating to political cause 4%, working on a political campaign 6%, participating in a boycott 9% or protest 4% (Gaby 2017). These rates are averaged to form the comparison rate for civic engagement.

In summary, utilizing existing datasets, the national rates are shown in Figure 4 as: 59% donate, 54% volunteer, 61% help, 25% fundraise, and 18% are civically engaged.

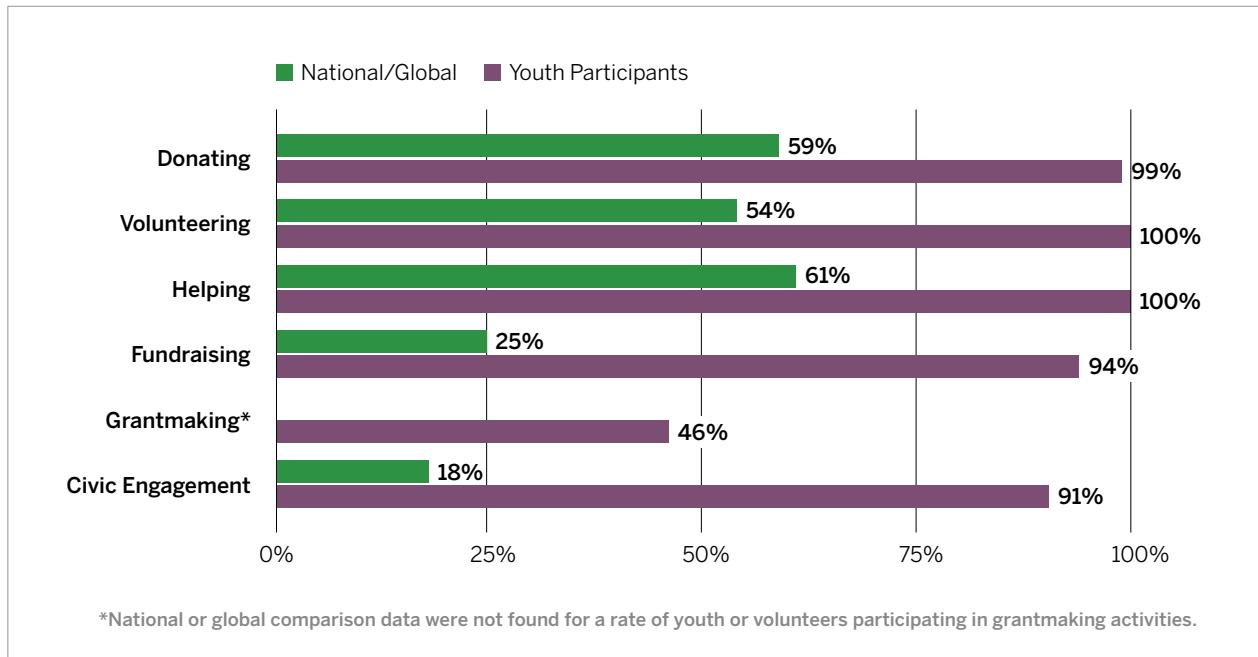
**Figure 4. National or Global Youth Philanthropic Activity Rates**



Youth participants in this youth philanthropy program are higher in every activity: donating 98.89% to 59% national/global, volunteering 100% to 54% national/global, helping 100% to 61% national/global, fundraising 93.89% to 25% national/global, 46.11% grantmaking (no national/global comparison), and civic engagement 90.56% to 18% national/global. Figure 5 displays the national/global rates for each measure (green) compared to the rates for the youth program participants (purple).

In summary, the evidence supports Hypothesis 1. Youth program participants appear to engage significantly more (+ 39-73%) across every comparable measure of philanthropic activity.

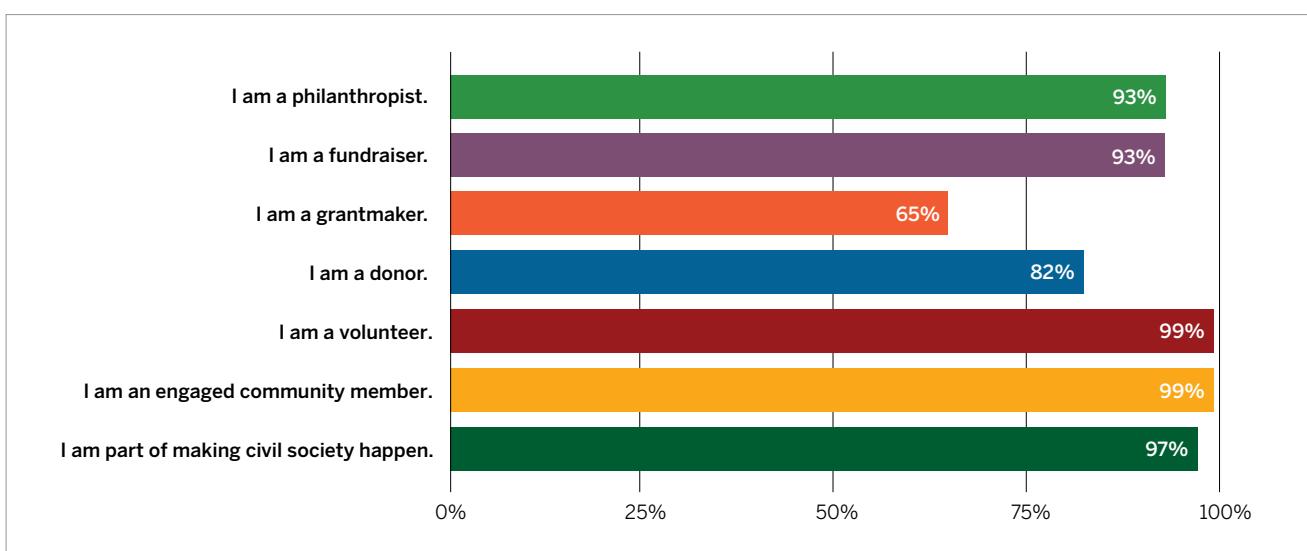
**Figure 5. National/Global Rates for Philanthropy Activities Compared to Youth Participants**



## H2. Philanthropy Identity

The next set of results focuses on Hypothesis 2: Youth participants have high prosocial orientations. Analyzing program-specific outcomes, youth are developing desired philanthropic orientations. Upon completing the program, youth participants overwhelmingly agree with the philanthropic identity statements. Specifically, 93.14% identify as a philanthropist, 92.57% identify as a fundraiser, 64.74% identify as a grantmaker, 82.28% identify as a donor, 99.44% identify as a volunteer, 99.43% identify as an engaged community member, and 97.15% identify as part of making civil society happen. Figure 6 displays youth participant philanthropy identity rates.

**Figure 6. Philanthropy Identity for Youth Participants**



Alongside those agreements with philanthropy identity statements, the study also collected data on other key aspects of philanthropic orientations. In particular, multiple studies have shown the importance of general trust and agency as orientations that support engaging with others. This approach to studying prosocial orientations is informed by the idea that young people may not yet be able to fully actualize their philanthropic tendencies at this young age. For example, it often takes the ability to earn an income to be a donor, and it can be challenging to gain grantmaking experience in advance of having the necessary credentials to be hired in a professional role in a grant-making foundation. With these realities in mind, we are also interested in learning about young people's developing sense of self as a prosocial person. Social trust and personal agency are key aspects of a tendency to engage in social and civic actions.



**Social Trust:** Since the study included a well-utilized measure of social trust, it is possible to compare the rates from these youth program participants to national and global averages. Specifically, about 48% of Americans said they trust others based on studies using the General Social Survey (GSS), which included 2,000 individuals in the US. Additionally, American college students said that they moderately trust in others (the average value of trust is 5.45 on 0–10 scales) based on a laboratory experiment with 200 participants in the US (Paxton & Glanville 2015). This longitudinal analysis found that both general and specific forms of socialization lead to increased generalized trust (Glanville et al. 2013). On average, about 30% of individuals around the world said most people can be trusted, based on the World Values Survey (WVS) from over 250,000 respondents across 80 countries (Johnson and Mislin 2012). According to the European Values Survey (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS), studying 495,011 people in 110 countries, about 44% of people said that most people can be trusted (Beugelsdijk and Welzel 2018). To increase the reliability by not relying on the rate from only a single study, these rates are averaged, resulting in a comparison rate of 40.67% reporting they trust other people.

**Of the participants in this youth philanthropy program, 71.01% reported having trust in other people, which is about 30% higher than the global averages for the same measure.**

**Agency/Efficacy:** A sense of agency is crucial in fostering one's ability to engage in seeking change on issues and results alongside a rejection of a tendency toward passivity (Salvatore et al. 2020: 112). In an analysis of US National Center for Education Statistics data from 16,749 students as they progressed

from 8th grade through high school, Horn (2012) found that community service of any kind boosted youth prosocial orientations, and specifically participating in humanitarian organizations that engage youth in service activities resulted in a 24% increase in engagement. Reviewing newspaper articles in Greece, Italy, UK, Romania, Malta, and Cyprus, Salvatore and colleagues (2020) found that agency was part of the semantic structure for sense-making in community engagement. Likewise, Kahne and colleagues (2013) identify agency as a key aspect of motivation to participate in responding to a sense of injustice. The researchers found that the efficacy of civic learning opportunities is fostered in youth service-learning programs providing young people with meaningful agentic experiences: seeing tangible results from their participation and thus underscoring that the exertion of social change effort makes a difference. In sum, agency/efficacy is a key aspect of participatory citizenship. With this in mind, the View of Context (VOC) instrument examined the meaning context for several organizations: school, higher education, health, local community, local development, urban mobility, workplaces, gambling, professions (Ciavolino et al. 2017). One of the measures on this instrument focuses on the agency-fatalism continuum by asking about the level of [dis]agreement with the statement: "Trying hard is useless because you cannot affect what will be" (Ciavolino et al. 2017: 607). In that study of a stratified random sample of the UK population, the rate of agency was about 37.5%.

**Of the participants in this youth philanthropy program, 93.45% reported having agency, which is about 55% higher than global averages for civic agency/efficacy in social change efforts.**

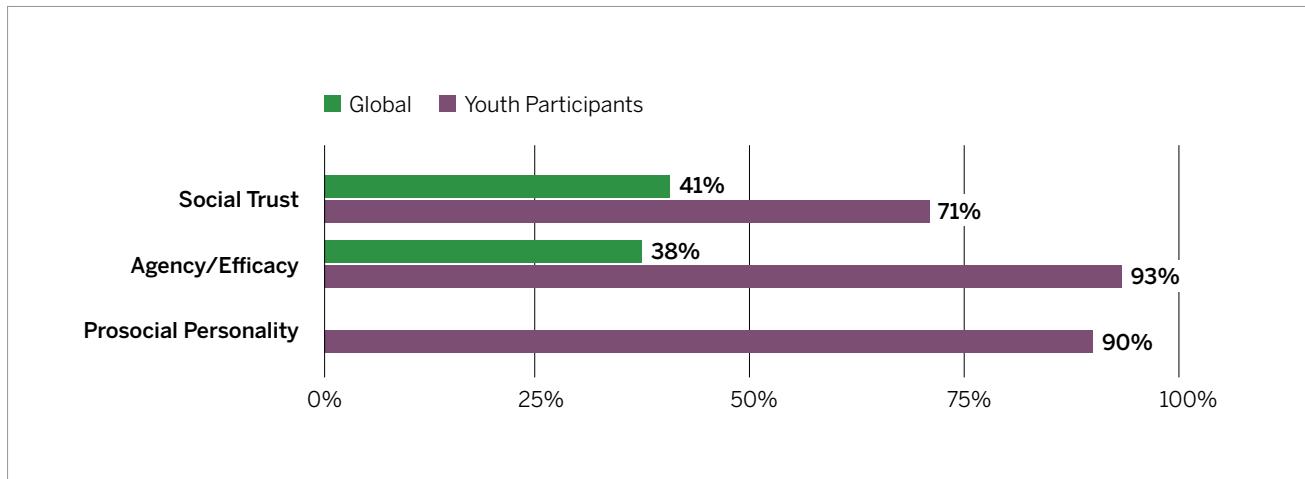
**Prosocial Personality:** In a global study across a diverse set of 26 nations spanning all continents, Thalmayer and Saucier (2014) analyzed Survey of World Views (SWV) data from 7,378 participants and validated that six personality characteristics are relevant across diverse cultures. These are: Extroversion (gregariousness and positive emotionality), conscientiousness (making use of time), agreeableness (patience in getting along with others), originality (talent in handling high information load), resiliency (versus internalizing negative emotionality), honesty (propriety in respecting the belongings of others). While the study did not report the rates for each personality characteristic, it does validate that the personality traits fit diverse cultures, and the measures utilized in that study are replicated within this survey of youth participants. Additionally, a study by Minkov and colleagues (2019) further validates similar measures (extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness) in a study with 27,748 people spanning 19 countries: Belgium, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, UK, US, and Vietnam. Rates of each personality characteristic are also not reported, though the factor structure is again validated. In consideration of these young people developing their emerging personality tendencies, and implementing a social perspective on orientations being dynamic across different contexts, the rate shown here counts across agreement with each of the six prosocial personality orientations.

**In total, 90.30% of youth participants agreed with all six of the prosocial personality statements.**

Figure 7 displays youth participant rates of social trust and agency compared to global rates, alongside youth participant's rate across well-studied prosocial personality characteristics.



**Figure 7. Global Rates for Trust and Agency Compared to Youth Program Participants**



In summary, the evidence supports Hypothesis 2. Youth program participants have high prosocial orientations, and in comparable data these are significantly above (+ 30-55%) global rates for comparable rates from representative and non-program, self-selected samples.

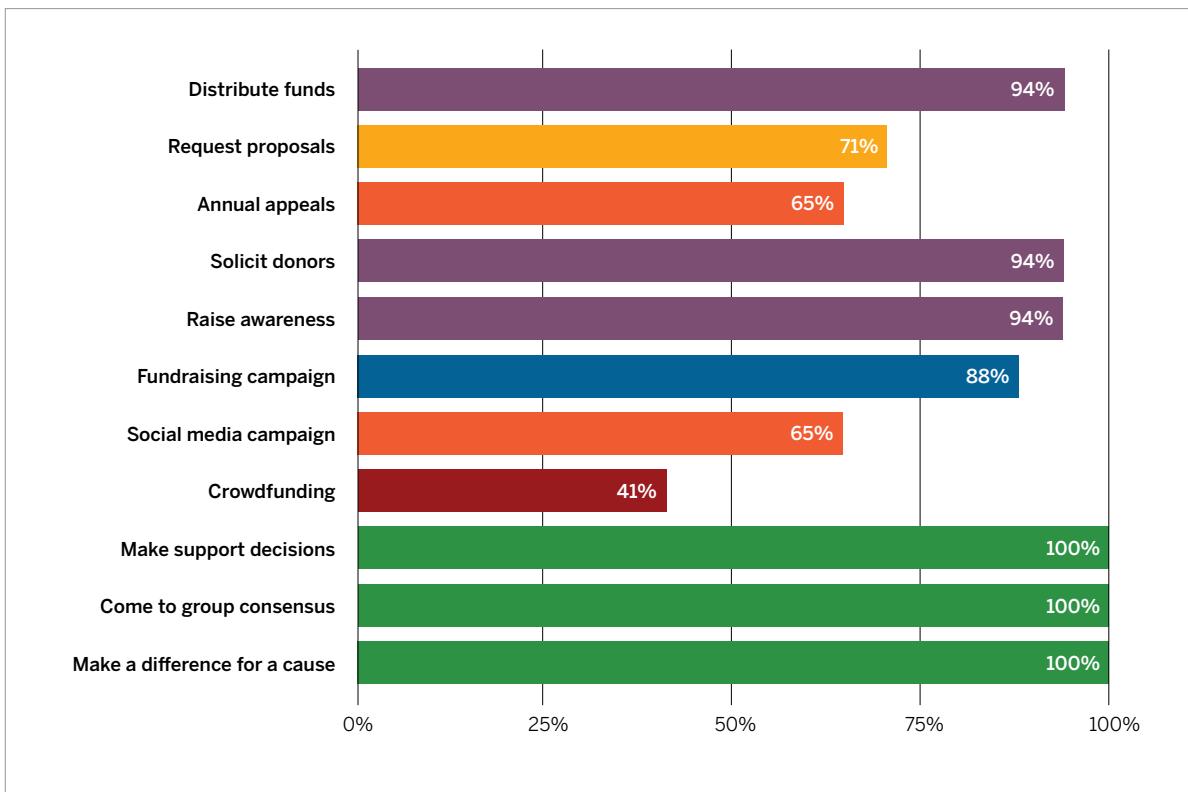
### H3. Program Learning and Skills

The next set of results focuses on Hypothesis 3: Youth participants learned philanthropy knowledge and skills. This set of analyses delves into the specific targets of the philanthropy curriculum that was designed by the Three Pillars Initiative and shared with each community affiliate to be implemented within their regular youth philanthropy sessions.

**Knowledge and Skills in Philanthropy Tasks:** The youth philanthropy program is designed to include exposure to 11 types of typical tasks in philanthropy and as a result increase participant's knowledge of and skill in conducting these tasks. A few of the tasks were affirmed by 100% of the participants (green). Other tasks did not have total participation but still had a high number of youth reporting knowledge/skills in that task (purple, blue). Still others had a majority but notably lower participation rate (yellow, orange, red). Specifically, youth participants reported gaining knowledge and skills in the following tasks: 94.12% distributing funds, 70.59% requests for proposals (RFPs), 64.71% writing annual appeals, 94.12% soliciting donors, 94.12% raising awareness, 88.24% running a fundraising campaign, 64.71% hosting a social media campaign (such as GivingTuesday), 41.18% utilizing a crowdfunding platform (such as GoFundMe), 100% making support decisions, 100% coming to consensus as a group, and 100% making a difference for a cause. Figure 8 displays knowledge and skills in these philanthropy tasks.



**Figure 8. Program Learning and Skills in Philanthropy Tasks**



**Root Cause Analysis:** The youth philanthropy curriculum attends to a root cause analysis that is designed to emphasize help that empowers recipients. Upon completion of the program, 16.22% of youth participants said the goal of helping is to ensure a person has their immediate needs met, while 83.78% said it should be to ensure a person can take care of their own needs. The latter is the goal of the program, which 8 in 10 young people reflected in their learning.

**Worthy Program:** All responding participants said the program changed them, helped become a better leader and community member, and is worthy of support from community foundations. Additionally, all respondents said they would encourage their best friend to participate, and all but one said that if they could go back and do it all over that they would join the program again. In the open-ended responses, youth participants followed up on why the program is worthy of ongoing support by stating:

- “It’s such a unique experience!”
- “It is a fantastic program that shapes leadership and helps the community at the exact same time.”
- “I learned a lot from the program, and it will continue to teach others.”
- “Because it is helpful for teens to know how they can be philanthropists in their community.”
- “The program is incredibly impactful in the community and on those who participate and should stay running for years to come.”
- “It is important to teach younger generations how to be philanthropists.”
- “Yes, because it teaches great life-long lessons for those in the program.”
- “Yes, this program has an impact on many people in the community whether they are in the program or not.”
- “Yes! It helps out so many organizations and helps build leadership skills in high schoolers.”
- “Youth focused leadership is very valuable, especially when they are helping the community.”

**Favorite Aspects:** When asked about their favorite aspects of the program, youth participants listed:

- “Community contribution”
  - “Forming friendships with other amazing and inspirational teens in my community”
  - “Getting to work with others from the community”
  - “Group focused and operating like a class”
  - “I loved the small groups, and having a mentor.”
  - “Site visits”
  - “Visiting non-profits and learning how to grant money”
  - “I liked the fact that we got to work with such a large sum of money and do site visits.”
  - “I loved conducting site visits because I really felt like I got to know those we were giving grants to.”
- It is notable that multiple youth participants reported site visits, without the survey having a specific prompt asking about this feature of the program. For programs not yet integrating site visits, the implication is that this is a well-valued feature that would benefit youth if included.

**Least Favorite:** Though youth participants were overwhelmingly positive, they also shared feedback on areas for improvement. For least favorite aspects, one youth participant said:

- “Our actual meetings felt pointless most of the time.”
- “Seeing so many non-profits in need in the community and not being able to help them all.”
- “I wish there was more guidance within the program rather than having us sort out a way to give or donate.”
- “I think there could've been more diversity within groups and the organizations I worked with.”
- “Having ‘cut’ some organizations from being funded.”
- “The videos at the end of the meeting.”
- “Even though the worksheets were helpful, they were my least favorite part.”
- Additional comments were specific to the time period during the Covid-19 pandemic when many of the programs had to migrate online. For example, a youth stated: “I didn’t like doing it online. It would have been a lot easier to do it in person. I totally understand why it was done online though.” Likewise, a second said: “The long lectures were particularly hard to follow (especially on zoom).”

**Recommendations:** Despite the program having a number of benefits, there are also expectedly a few aspects that could be refined and improved for future cohorts. Participants offered recommendations.

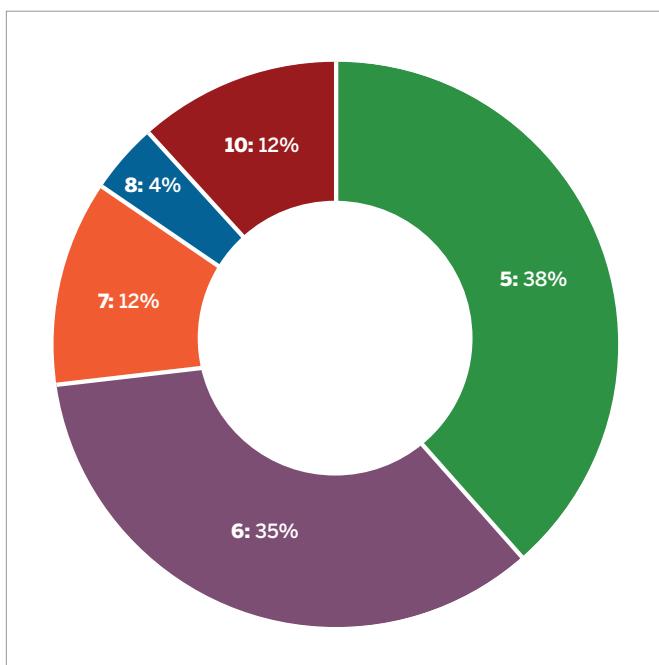
- “Group building so we feel comfortable talking. A lot of us don’t know each other.”
- “I would like to have met all of the non-profits instead of just a few.”
- “I think spending time doing more hands-on like site visits, talking with nonprofit people, volunteers.”
- “More freedom and more guidance so that the kids understand what needs to be done.”
- “Maybe breaking up the longer lessons with more interactive activities.”
- “Stop teaching us the definition of integrity for an hour.”
- “If we had more speakers, that would be interesting.”

**Peer Network:** A social “side effect” of group-based programming is that people come together with others and have the opportunity to form connections and lasting friendship bonds.

**In response to questions asking whether participating in the program grew youth’s peer network, 92.86% said they made new friends in the program and 96.43% said they meet people from other schools that they would not have met otherwise outside of this program.**



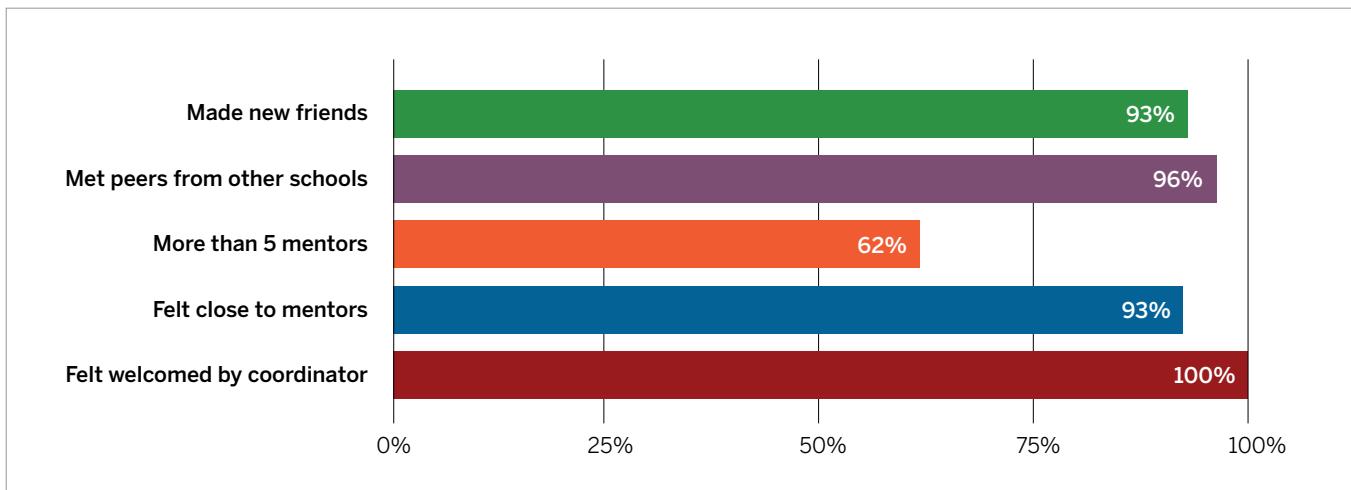
**Figure 9. Number of Mentors in Youth Philanthropy Program**



**Adult Mentors:** Another social benefit of the program is the exposure to extra-familial adults. Research consistently finds that having a supportive adult outside of one's family is a protective factor related to numerous positive youth development outcomes. All the youth philanthropy programs included mentors, yet there were differences across programs in how many mentors were part of the program. The range of mentors spanned from 5 to 10: 38.46% of youth participants reported having 5 mentors, 34.62% had 6 mentors, 11.54% had 7 mentors, 3.85% had 8 mentors, none reported having 9 mentors, and 11.54% had 10 mentors. Figure 9 displays the breakdown of youth mentor numbers, with 61.54% reporting having more than 5 mentors.

**Mentor Closeness:** Beyond having mentors, an important feature is the quality of the relationship, specifically whether young people feel close to the mentors they have. With this context, it is a notable success of the program that 92.59% of youth participants report feeling close with at least one mentor. Additionally, 100% reported feeling welcomed by the program coordinator. Figure 10 displays these social support benefits of the youth philanthropy program.

**Figure 10. Growth in Social Support from Peers and Mentors from the Youth Program**



In summary, the evidence supports Hypothesis 3. Youth program participants appear to have learned the philanthropy knowledge and skills (41-100%) that the curriculum is designed to increase. Additionally, youth participants gain a prosocial network, with more peers and mentors.



## Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, results indicate the program fosters positive youth outcomes, and at rates that are well beyond comparable rates for national and global norms.

- 1** Participants leave the program with higher rates of charitable giving, volunteering, fundraising, helping, and engaging than comparable national rates for these measures. Specifically, youth participants demonstrate rates 39% to 73% higher than national rates. The implication is that the program fosters greater philanthropic action in young people.
- 2** Participants leave the program with high prosocial orientations. Youth identify highly with philanthropic identities such as viewing themselves as engaged community members, volunteers, and fundraisers. Youth also have high levels of social trust and agency, which are 30% and 55% respectively higher than global rates for these measures. This implies that the program develops greater prosocial orientations in young people.
- 3** Participants leave the program with 41% to 100% more philanthropy knowledge and skills and a 93% to 100% larger network of engaged peers and supportive adults. The implication is that the program achieves its aims and succeeds in benefiting youth.

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# Youth Philanthropy

**Studying Outcomes of Community Engagement**



**LILLY FAMILY SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY**  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS