



Junior
Achievement®



empowering young people to
own their economic success

JA Graduation Pathways

Prepared by: The Bridgespan Group

A NATIONAL CRISIS

everyday, *7,000* students
drop out of high school



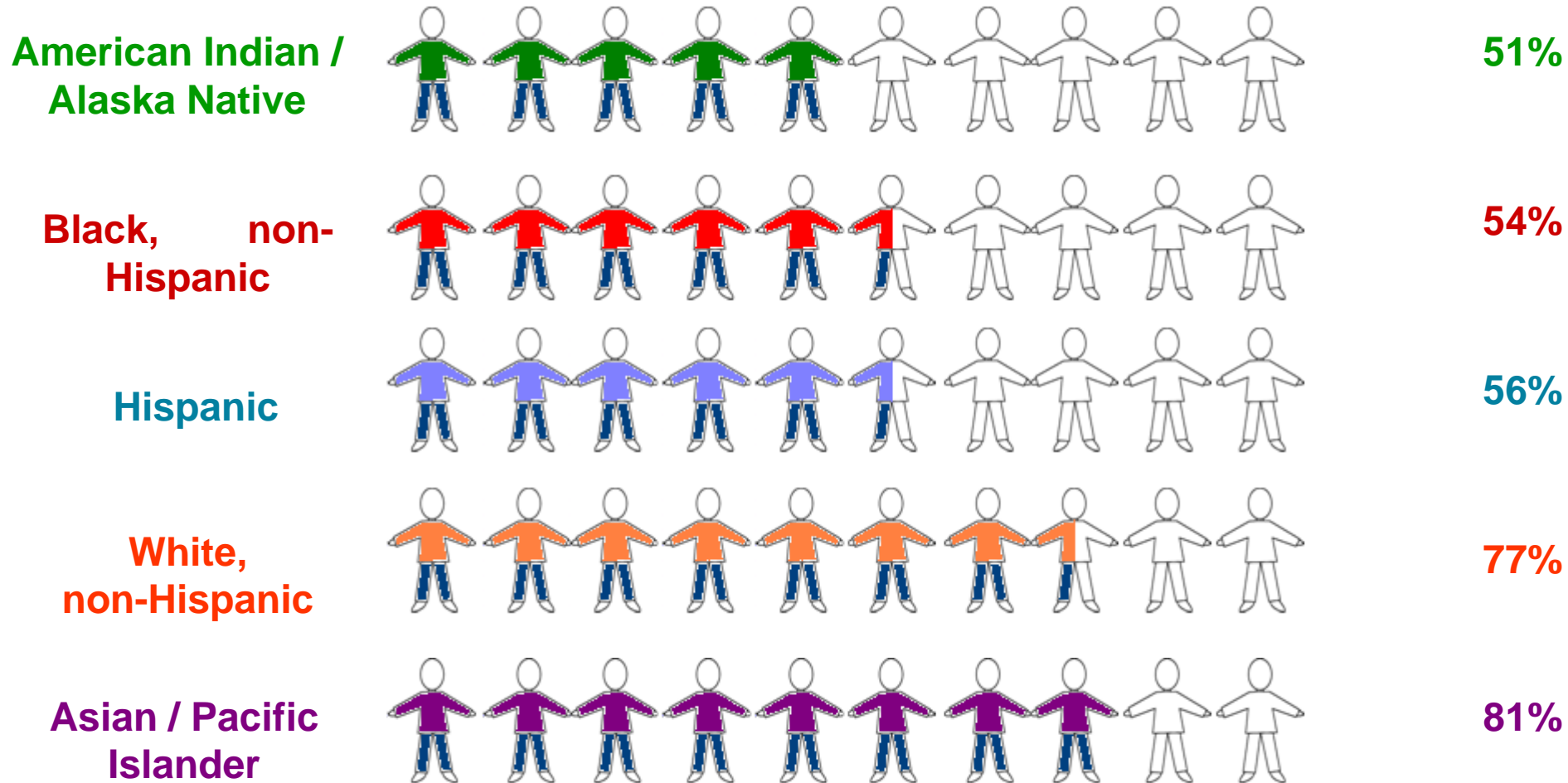
last year, *1.3 million*
students dropped out

by 2020, an estimated
15 million will join them



REINFORCES SOCIAL DIVIDES

Class of 2007 graduation rates by group



NEGATIVELY IMPACTS SOCIETY

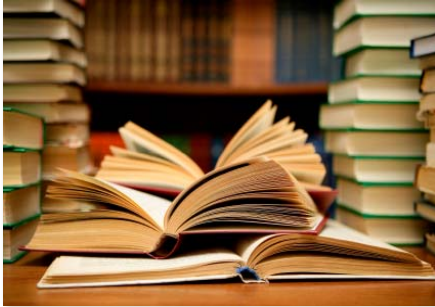
impact on DROPOUTS

- The US could have saved **\$17B** in health care if dropouts from 2006 had graduated
- Raising the graduation rates of minority students to the levels of white students by 2020 would add **\$310B** to the economy

- Over the course of a lifetime, a dropout earns **\$260K** less than a high school graduate
- High school dropouts have more than **2x** the rate of unemployment

impact on SOCIETY

GOALS OF THIS WORK



Understand the problem



Develop the approach



Roll out across the network

PROCESS USED TO SUPPORT THIS WORK

1

Understanding context

- Conducting meta-analysis of over 15 studies to identify the key drivers and indicators of high school graduation and key points for intervention
- Implementing landscape study to understand how drop out crisis is distributed geographically and by race and income

2

Defining JA's assets

- Bridgespan-led assessment of Junior Achievement's program portfolio utilizing the curriculum and evaluations of existing programs
- Interviews with JA stakeholders (staff, Board members, volunteers, school district personnel, and students) at JA sites and JA USA to understand opportunities and challenges

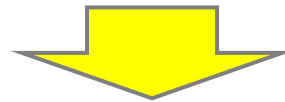
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Developing plan

- In-depth work with four JA locations, chosen by JA USA because many of their schools have some of the highest dropout rates in the country, to develop a model that would be flexible yet scalable
- Analysis of environmental conditions in chosen JA locations to identify implementation opportunities and potential partnering options

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Program assessment affirmed the value of JA programming at *all* grade levels in supporting drivers and indicators identified as key to high school graduation:
 - Elementary school programs engage students in learning
 - Middle schools emphasize relevance of school to success in life
 - High school programs equip students with life skills needed to complete high school and enter the world
- Despite value of programs at *all* levels, research and evidence confirmed the importance of intervening at middle school grades and key transition points (particularly 9th grade) to increasing high school graduation rates



Any successful approach will target intervening in middle grades and transitions *while* continuing solid elementary and high school programming

THE PROMISE OF JA

High school graduation is already core to the JA vision



Education
Development

Youth
Development

Economic
Development

**“To inspire and prepare young people to
succeed in a global economy”**

GRADUATION DRIVERS

Education Development

- Research indicates that education development (specifically, academic performance) is the **most important driver** of high school graduation

Youth Development

- Youth development, comprised of attitudes and behaviors, is **also important** to graduation
- Furthermore, attitudes drive behaviors, and both can **indirectly shape education development**

Economic Development

- Economic development **does not directly drive graduation rates, but is important** to equipping students with the skills necessary to graduate prepared to succeed in the global economy

GRADUATION DRIVERS

Education Development

Youth Development

Economic Development*

Drivers

Academic performance

Attitudes

Behaviors

21st Century Skills

Indicators

- Academic achievement
- Attainment
- Mobility

- Educational expectations
- Perception of utility
- Intrinsic interest
- Goals
- Self-esteem
- Locus of control
- Perception of support

- School engagement
- Deviance (in-school)
- Deviance (out-of-school)
- Extracurricular participation
- Course-taking
- Peer association
- Employment
- Pregnancy

- Knowledge of 21st century themes
- Life and career skills
- Learning and innovation skills
- Information, media, and technology skills

KEY DRIVERS

Education Development

Youth Development

Economic Development

Drivers

Academic performance

Attitudes

Behaviors

21st Century Skills

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- Parenting

- Knowledge of 21st century themes
- Life and career skills
- Learning and innovation skills
- Information, media, and technology skills

Indicators most closely linked to graduation

HOW JA MEASURES UP

Education Development

Youth Development

Economic Development

Drivers

Academic performance

Attitudes

Behaviors

21st Century Skills

Indicators

- *Academic achievement*
- *Attainment*
- *Mobility*

- ***Educational expectations***
- ***Perception of utility***
- ***Intrinsic interest***
- ***Goals***
- ***Self-esteem***
- *Locus of control*
- *Perception of support*

- *School engagement*
- *Deviance (in-school)*
- *Deviance (out-of-school)*
- *Extracurricular participation*
- *Course-taking*
- *Peer association*
- *Employment*
- *Pregnancy*

- ***Knowledge of 21st century themes***
- ***Life and career skills***
- ***Learning and innovation skills***
- ***Information, media, and technology skills***

Bold italics: JA programs having demonstrated impact

Italics: JA programs having potential to demonstrate impact

Indicators most closely linked to graduation

IMPORTANCE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL

Transition into middle grades

- Transition associated with a decline in academic achievement, motivation, and self-perceptions
- Often a time when adolescents are most likely to experiment with at-risk behaviors and begin to make pivotal academic and career decisions

Middle grades

- Polarizing effect; over these years, gap between highest- and lowest-performing students widens considerably
- Represents a catch-up opportunity before students fall severely behind; students who fall off track in 6th grade typically remain in school for ~5 more years
- Environmental challenges emerge, including more competition among peers, less personal environments, more autonomy, and more challenging school work

Transition into high school

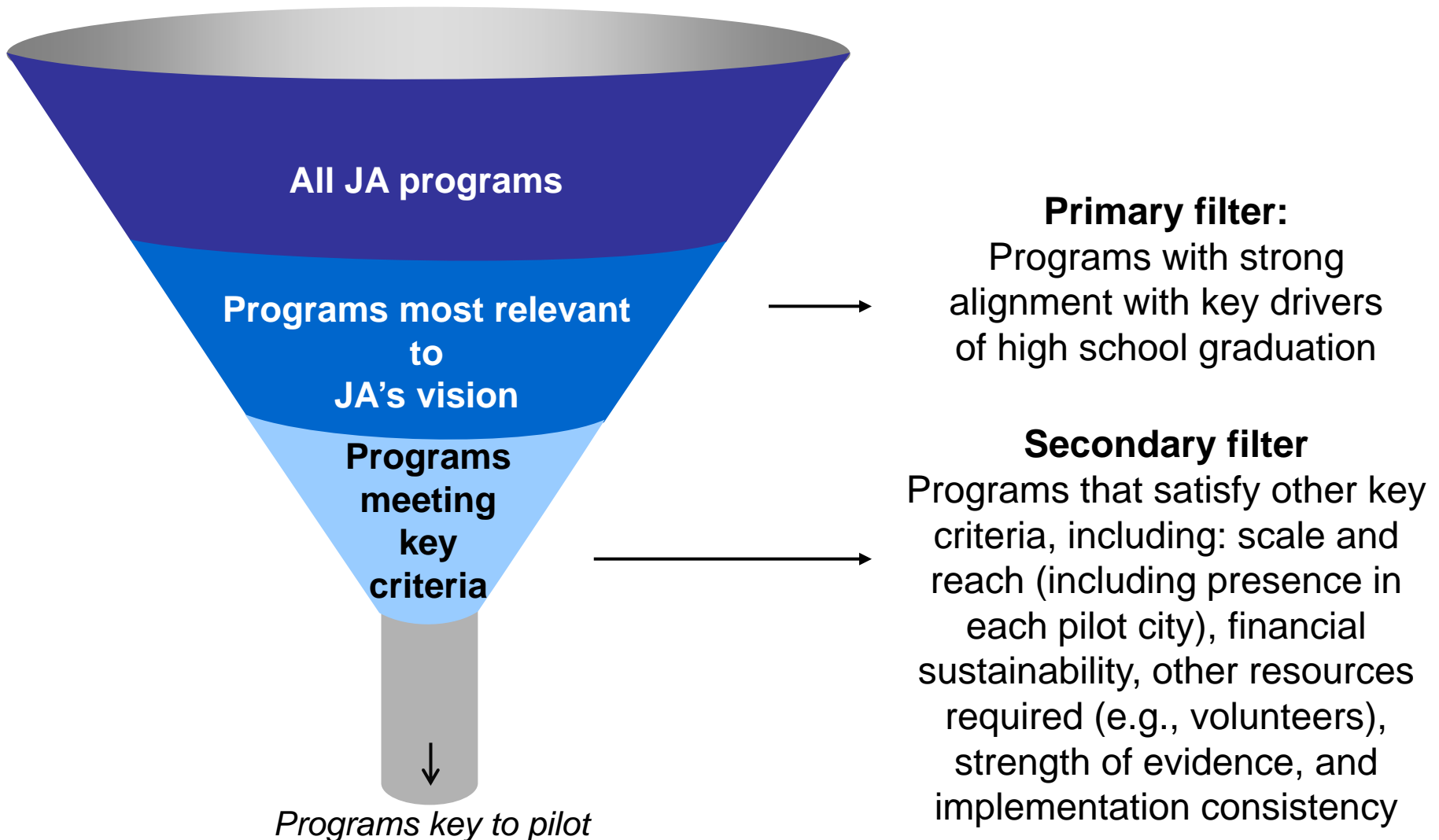
- Failure to transition to HS linked to decline in academic performance and greater risk of dropping out, especially for low-income and minority students
- More students fail ninth grade than any other; poor and minority students are twice as likely to be retained

THE PROMISE OF JA

JA programs have demonstrated impact on subset of key indicators, with potential to impact others



ASSESSING PROGRAMS



HIGHEST POTENTIAL PROGRAMS

- JA Economics for Success
- JA Company Program
- JA Success Skills
- JA Finance Park
- JA Job Shadow
- JA Personal Finance



Our assessment of the national evaluations of these six programs suggested all have significant potential for direct impact on high school graduation, but three have *demonstrated* the most impact to-date: **JA Finance Park, JA Job Shadow, and JA Personal Finance.**

Sequential programming at the elementary school level was not assessed; assessment of this program implementation model is needed as potential for impact is anticipated

SETTING A VISION



**Focusing on
the middle
years and
transitions**



**Scaling
programs
with highest
potential**



**Strengthening
the link
between JA
programs**



**Engaging
partners,
parents, and
volunteers**

APPROACH TO DEVELOP PILOTS

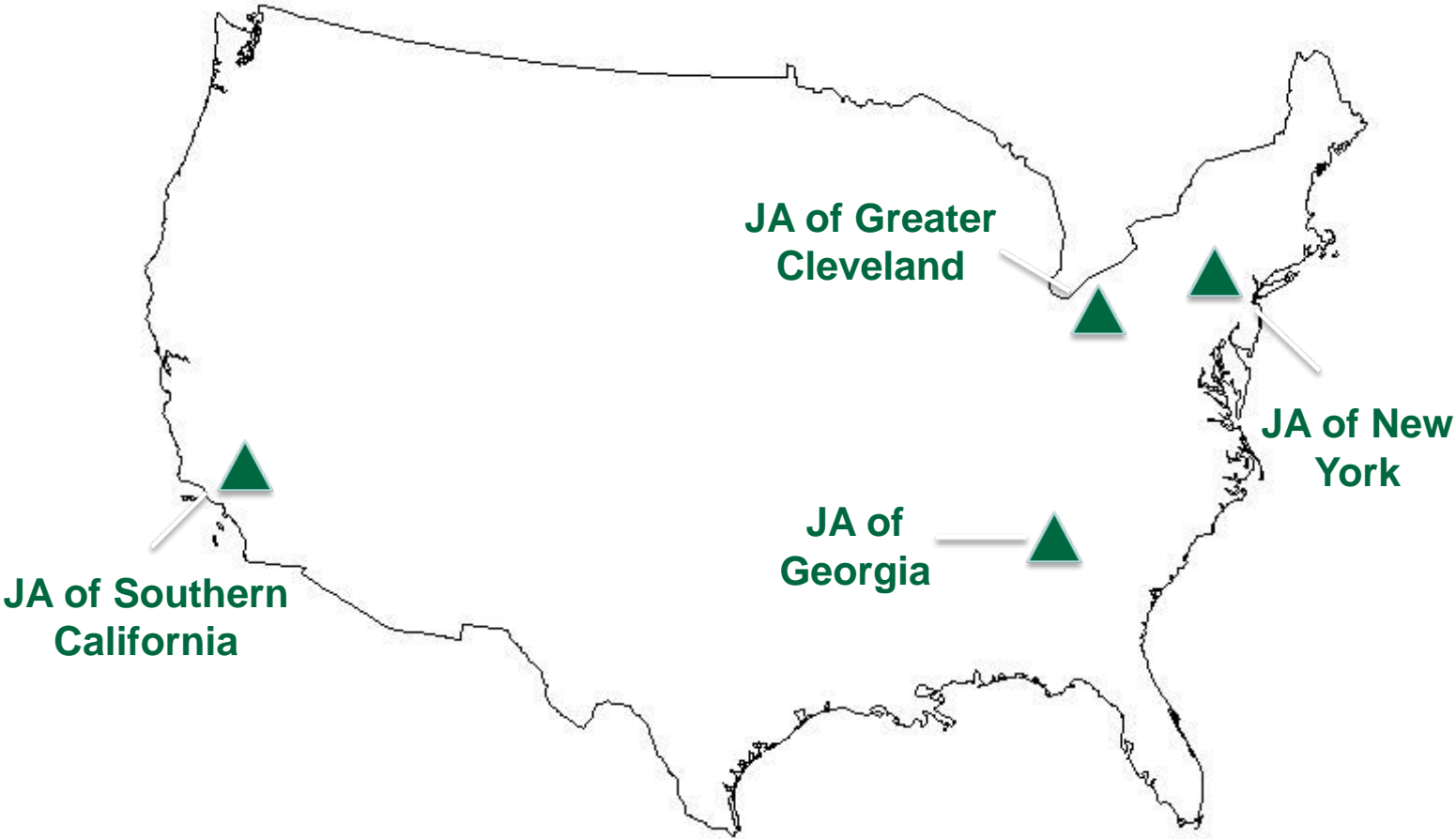
Customized approach

- While all sites share common themes, **unique capabilities and contexts** require a customized approach to develop highly effective and implementable pilots
- An effective pilot design in one site **does not easily translate** to another site, absent a customized approach to design

What does it look like?

- Bridgespan worked **individually with each pilot site**, guiding them through a set of key design questions to develop an effective pilot
 - Because of existing capabilities and capacities, these questions were different for each site
- Based on the individual site pilots, Bridgespan pulled out key themes and elements that emerge from each pilot design and **developed a framework for a national model**

PILOTING THE APPROACH



TWO PATHS TO IMPACT

Community-based approach

- Approach centers on choosing a subset of schools to focus JA programming
- Target audience for JA programming would include all students within a given school site and/or a subset of students within a given school site
- A place-based approach typically ties to feeder patterns (i.e., K-12 pathways for students) that allows for continuous dosage
- To ensure that the target audience is those students at-risk of not graduating, schools chosen should be those that produce high numbers of underserved students

JA New York and JA SoCal are pursuing a place-based approach

Cohort-based approach

- Approach centers on targeting a specific group of students (i.e., cohort-based) to focus JA programming
- Target audience for JA programming would include students who may be coming from multiple school sites (and possibly multiple districts)
- A people-based approach typically involves after-school or summer programming; although it could include pull-out programs during the school day
- Target students should be those who are at-risk of not graduating, independent of their home school

JA Cleveland and JA Georgia are pursuing a people-based approach

ACHIEVING THE VISION

1

Strengthening focus



Focusing on serving students when they are most at-risk

2

Building on assets



Scaling current programs with highest potential for success

3

Maximizing impact



Increasing dosage of JA programs to maximize impact

4

Engaging key advocates



Supporting volunteers and parents to deepen impact



5

Partnering for success



Partnering with organizations to catalyze further impact

6

Dedicating capacity



Increasing capacity to support programs and partnerships

7

Measuring success



Ensuring measurement in ongoing success in increasing graduation rates

8

Evolving the organization



Evolving the role of Junior Achievement USA to support site success

SERVING THOSE MOST AT RISK

What this means

- Reaching students during **middle years** (i.e., grades 6-8) and at **key transitions** (i.e., between grades 5-6, 8-9)
- Serving the “**underserved**” – students most at risk of dropping out, not adequately supported by current system

Why this is important

- Research indicates that intervention during middle grades is critical; youth most likely to exhibit negative indicators that increase risk of dropout during middle grades
- Focusing on the underserved enables JA to prioritize resources toward youth most in need of additional supports

Questions to guide a site’s approach

- Who is our target population? Should we be prioritizing students during the middle years? How are we defining the “underserved?”
- How well are we currently reaching our target population? How can we increase our reach, particularly among students in the middle years and the “underserved?”

SCALING STRONGEST PROGRAMS

What this means

- Selecting **programs with highest potential** to increase graduation rates to serve as the anchor for this initiative
 - Based on existing Junior Achievement USA assessments, six programs emerged as having most potential: JA Economics for Success, JA Finance Park, JA Company Program, JA Job Shadow, JA Success Skills, and JA Personal Finance
- Enhancing and scaling prioritized programs if **other key criteria** are met (i.e., reach/scale, required resources)

Why this is important

- Enables sites to build upon existing assets (rather than invest in new programs) already strongly aligned with HS graduation; ultimately saving sites time and resources and enabling them to draw upon “what works”

Questions to guide a site's approach

- Which programs have the highest potential to support increased graduation rates?
- Do these programs have the scale & reach sufficient to achieve the impact we seek?
- Do we have the resources required to further scale these programs effectively?

INCREASING PROGRAM DOSAGE

What this means

- **“Going wide”** – strengthening pipeline between programs (i.e., coupling programs so youth move from one to next)
- **“Going deep”** – increasing dosage within each program (i.e., increasing touch points and/or length of sessions)

Why this is important

- Achieving success requires students to be continuously engaged in and receiving the appropriate dosage of JA programming, especially during the middle years
- Most programs today are standalone, with varying levels of dosage; coupling programs, ensuring all are high dosage enables sites to more effectively serve youth

Questions to guide a site’s approach

- Are students receiving the appropriate dosage of JA required to achieve the impact that we seek? How can programs be enhanced and/or coupled to increase dosage?
- What other activities (e.g., through the use of technology, partners, volunteers, etc.) can we pursue to ensure students are continuously engaged?

VOLUNTEERS AND PARENTS

What this means

- **Enhancing volunteer training and recruitment** to deepen impact, especially for those students who are underserved
- Forming **partnerships with parents** to provide support for students outside of their school and JA experience

Why this is important

- An effective volunteer has the potential to be the highest impact lever that a JA site can utilize
- For JA programs to achieve their desired impact, JA will need a robust supply of well-trained volunteers
- Parent engagement can ensure both that students are excited about and continue with JA programming

Questions to guide a site's approach

- What is our approach to training volunteers? Does it empower volunteers to reach underserved students?
- What are our most effective volunteers (especially those who work with underserved students) doing? How can we train volunteers to replicate these behaviors?
- What is our approach to engaging parents?

SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

What this means

- **Identifying gaps** most effectively filled via partnerships
 - Research of indicators of HS graduation suggests that JA has strong impact on youth attitudes and 21st century skills; however, impact on academics and youth behaviors may be a gap
- Forming **district, programmatic & funding partnerships** where compelling, mutually-beneficial value propositions exist

Why this is important

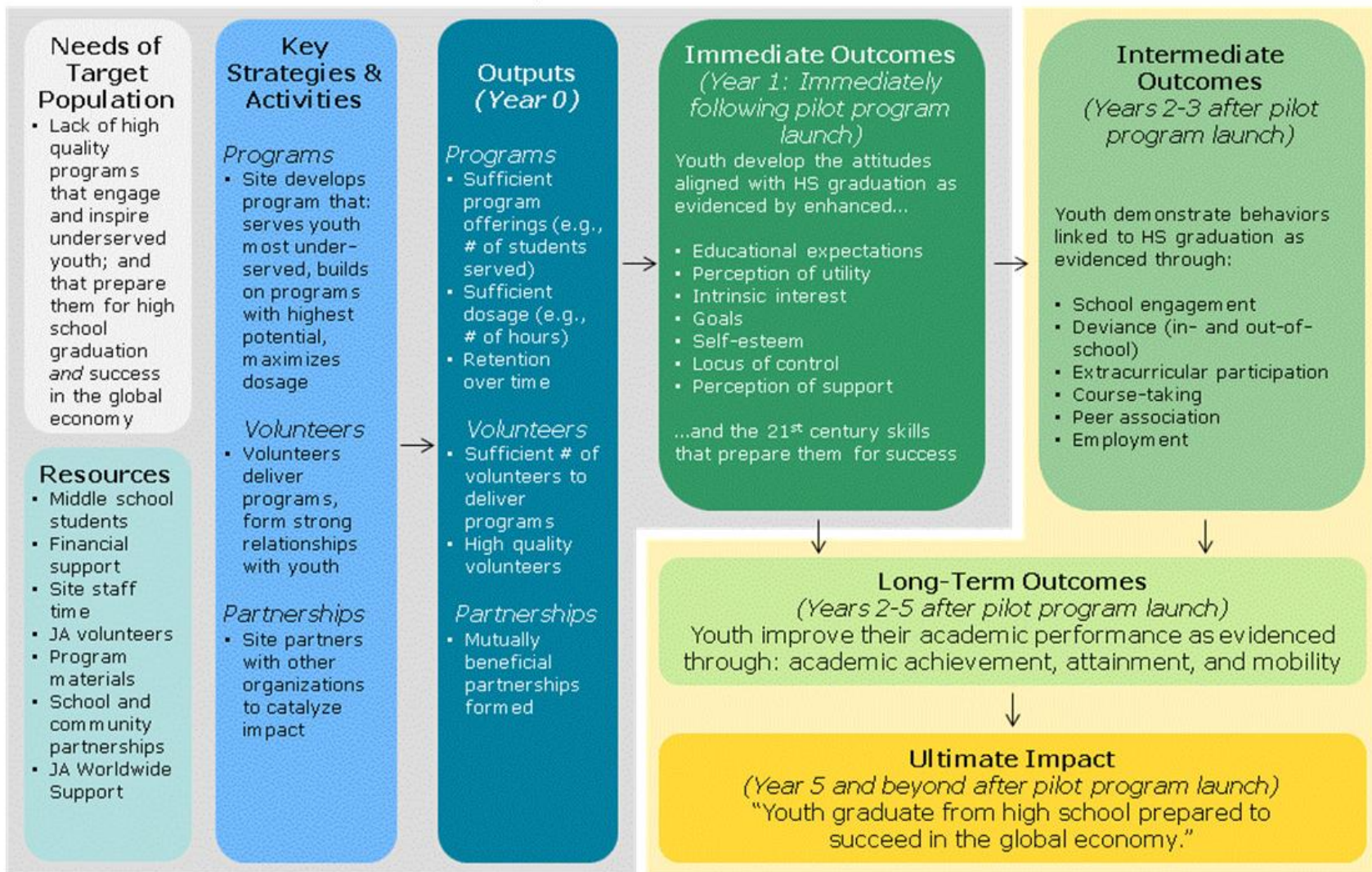
- Program enhancements alone may not sufficiently address all indicators related to graduation; partnerships with districts and other youth- and education-focused organizations that complement JA programs may be instrumental to success
- Partners and funders are essential to growth/sustainability of initiative

Questions to guide a site's approach

- What are the “gaps” we seek to fill? How can we enhance or build partnerships to fill these “gaps?”
- Who are the partners (programmatic, development, other) that we should pursue?
- What do we offer partners?

LOGIC MODEL FOR SUCCESS

What JA can directly control



What JA can reasonably expect to influence

PLAYBOOK TO GUIDE ROLLOUT

- 1 Establish a burning platform
- 2 Describe key elements of success
- 3 Help sites assess their readiness
- 4 Provide guidance and tools
- 5 Communicate the role of JA USA



A FEW FINAL WORDS



“Being in JA made me realize I could go to college.”

-Ulyssa, JA of Georgia