



# youthprise

*Accelerating Leadership and Innovation  
Beyond the Classroom*

**December 2011**

*Dear Friends:*

*Something remarkable is happening right here in Minnesota.*

*It's an emerging vision that is just now coalescing, and a bold collaborative model that's igniting unprecedented alliances and conversations, ready to ripple out into the state.*

*It's a groundswell of people who care about youth—and are frustrated by the inequities and gaps, the silos and blinders, and the age-old, same-old problems.*

*More importantly, it is young people themselves, who are assuming their rightful place at the table with adults, ensuring that their ideas and voices are heard.*

*At Youthprise, we believe that our state's greatest untapped resource is the energy and ingenuity of our youth.*

*We believe that for too long society has underutilized their talents and, too often, our well-intentioned systems have failed to meet their educational and developmental needs. And we believe that only when we meaningfully engage young people as partners can we begin to script a better way.*

*We believe, whole-heartedly, that many of the struggles and issues our communities face will be more effectively addressed when we have youth and adults working side-by-side. With diverse viewpoints and thinking, we can re-imagine and resolve the very real challenges we face and generate the momentum necessary to transform perceptions, policies and entire systems!*

*By working together, we can create an effective learning system that invests in Minnesota youth and allows each young person to shine. And we can ignite the commitment from policy makers and civic leaders to establish the policies that will make that system succeed.*

*This, of course, requires nurturing, and fostering the civic, reasoning and leadership skills of our young people in a more focused, intentional way. It means maximizing opportunities for youth engagement and innovation, and ensuring that every single young person has a chance to learn more, experience more and contribute more than ever before.*

*At Youthprise, we believe that this is exactly what should happen during the 2,000 hours that youth spend away from school, beyond the classroom, each year. So we're mobilizing resources and forces to make the very most of that precious discretionary time. We encourage everyone who cares about Minnesota youth (and the future of our state) to come to the table with fresh ideas, innovative thinking, and a willingness to test new approaches.*

*Over the coming years, Youthprise will partner with committed stakeholders in the Twin Cities and throughout Minnesota—young people, families, youth workers and youth-serving organizations, researchers, funders and policy makers—to ensure that all Minnesota youth thrive, and that our state thrives as a result.*

*I invite you to visit the Youthprise website ([www.youthprise.org](http://www.youthprise.org)) to learn more. We will be sharing exciting news later this month about our work, including our grantmaking priorities. You can be among the first to get the news by Signing Up for Email Updates, Following us on Twitter, or Liking Us on Facebook. We're excited about what's possible and invite you to join us!*

**Wokie Weah**

President



# About Youthprise

The mission of Youthprise is to champion learning beyond the classroom so that all Minnesota youth thrive.

Youthprise was founded by The McKnight Foundation to increase the QUALITY, ACCESSIBILITY, SUSTAINABILITY and INNOVATION of opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. In partnership with other funders, with youth, and with key stakeholders, Youthprise will accelerate leadership and innovation beyond the classroom.

## OUR VISION

Youthprise is aiming boldly for the vision that Minnesota will lead the nation in accelerating leadership and innovation beyond the classroom, ensuring that:

- Every young person is included and engaged.
- Every family has access.
- Every program has support to ensure quality and impact.
- Every community has a clear plan—for youth and with youth.

## WHAT WE WILL DO

- Expand access to quality learning experiences
- Advance integrated community-based systems
- Leverage and grow resources to close the opportunity gap

## HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Mobilize the power of youth to enliven, expand and transform systems and programs
- Ignite public insistence on engaging, accessible, quality learning opportunities for all young people
- Bring together resources and people to identify and scale great programs and strengthen systems and policy

## YOUTHPRISE STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

In 2012, Youthprise will strategically invest time, talent and resources to unlock the potential of our community's youth, including:

- Partnering with organizations to expand opportunities for Minnesota youth to lead in policymaking, grantmaking and program design
- Convening intergenerational forums, conducting outreach and partnering with grassroots community leaders to address strategic opportunities in the field
- Providing grants for general operating support to organizations that expand access to high quality opportunities for learning beyond the classroom for middle and high school-aged youth (open RFP)
- Providing grants to community-based networks to develop comprehensive learning systems that expand program participation, promote program quality, increase youth civic engagement, and advance or develop reliable information systems (by invitation)
- Commissioning research to develop measures of non-academic indicators for learning beyond the classroom
- Collaborating on funding and innovative projects with national, state, and local funding partners
- Assisting municipalities, tribes and youth providers to develop community action plans for and with youth
- Coordinating Minnesota's Statewide Afterschool Alliance and advocating with state and local policy makers to build champions for learning beyond the classroom, building on the work of Youth Community Connections

*Learning beyond the classroom includes activities that take place during afterschool, summer or weekend hours in youth's out-of-school time. Research shows that participating in high quality opportunities for learning beyond the classroom has wide-ranging benefits for youth—academically, socially and emotionally—and helps them become happy, productive, contributing adults.*

*Unfortunately, youth do not have equal access to quality learning opportunities. This opportunity gap significantly contributes to educational and developmental disparities across communities and across ethnic, racial and income groups.*