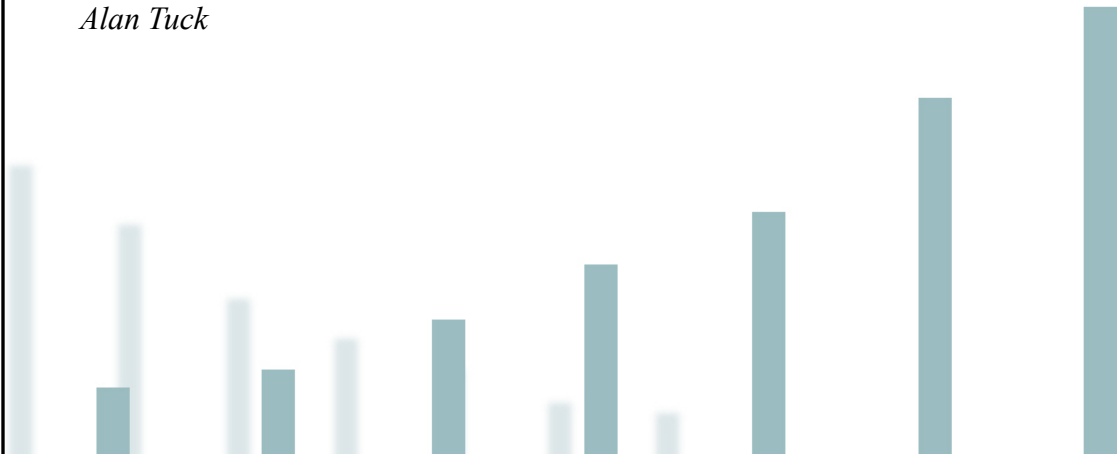**APRIL 2006**

Our Piece of the Pie®

(formerly Southend Community Services)

Making the Biggest Difference in Hartford

Alexander J. Cortez
Alan Tuck

In 2004 Hartford, Connecticut was facing a wide range of social challenges. Nearly 30 percent of its families lived below the poverty line, versus the national average of nine percent.[1] More than 95 percent of its public-school students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.[2] A study commissioned by Mayor Eddie Perez found that while there were thousands of job openings annually, education and job-training shortfalls were leaving the city's youth inadequately prepared to fill them.[3]

Southend Community Services (SCS, renamed Our Piece of the Pie® in 2005) was founded in 1974 to serve residents in one of Hartford's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. The organization began by employing youth to provide services to the elderly. Over time it expanded across the city, in terms of both the number of programs it operated and the age range of citizens it served. SCS established a strong track-record of quality program execution, helping it secure funding for new programs and also attracting the attention of area funders who saw the organization as a potential steward for their initiatives. In 2000, for example, the Department of Labor awarded Hartford with a Youth Opportunities (YO!) grant, and SCS become the primary contractor to implement the program. This multi-million-dollar, five-year contract provided a major opportunity for SCS to expand its work with youth.

By 2004 SCS had reached a crossroads. Its YO! funding, which represented over 40 percent of its budget, was set to expire in a year—with no chance for renewal. The organization's management, led by President & CEO Bob Rath, wanted to step back and identify how SCS should refocus its post-YO! efforts to make the greatest possible contribution to Hartford. With support from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, SCS engaged with the Bridgespan Group to develop a plan for the future.

---

[1] 1999 income data from 2000 US census.

[2] Hartford School District Strategic School Profile 2003-4.

[3] Mayor's Task Force on Hartford's Future Workforce, Final Report, February 3, 2003.

Key Questions

Over a five-month period, SCS' management team and board addressed three main questions with Bridgespan:
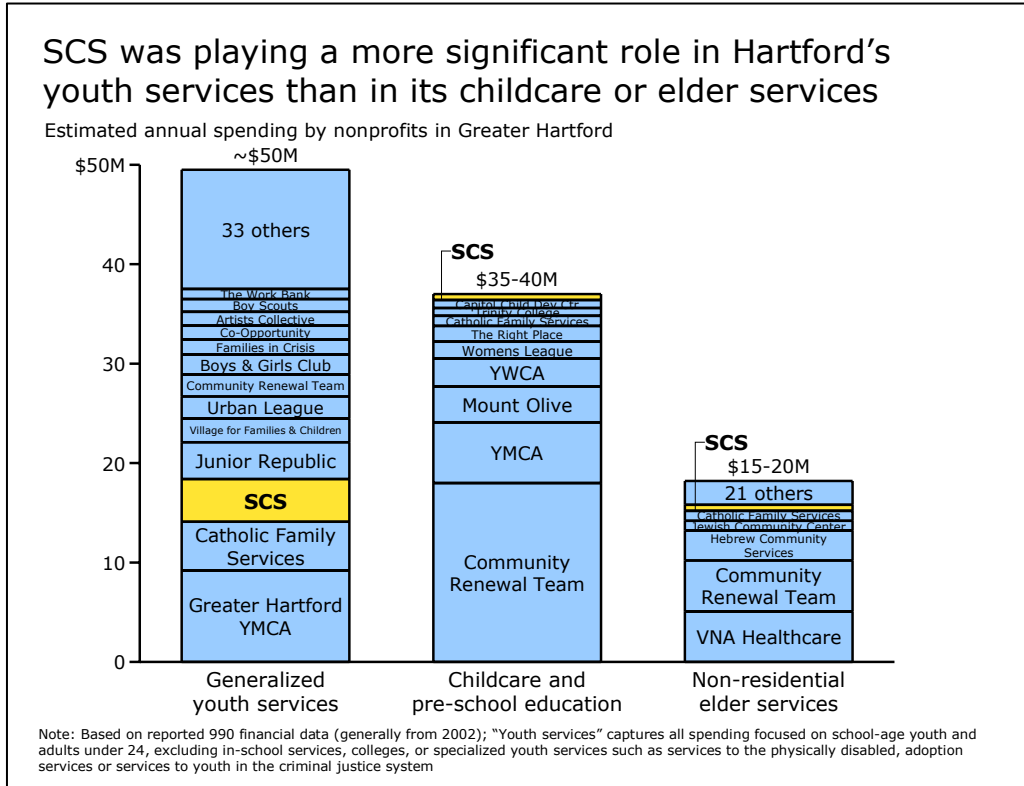
- Where should SCS focus to create the most benefit for Hartford?

- How should SCS manage programs that might not fit with this new focus?

- How should SCS adjust its core programming to maximize the benefit to Hartford?

Deciding Where to Focus

The impending major decrease in funding was cause for reflection. While SCS' budget would be considerably smaller, its leadership team's ambitions were not. One area of inquiry that immediately emerged involved the organization's program mix. To make the biggest possible difference in Hartford, should SCS continue to serve all three age groups (i.e., youth ages 14-24, young children, and the elderly) or should it concentrate its programmatic breadth?

To help SCS' leadership decide, the project team assessed the impact that each of SCS' program areas currently was having. For youth, childcare, and elder services, they tapped into publicly-available data and developed lists of Hartford's major providers. Rank ordering them according to their spending revealed that SCS was the third largest out-of-school youth-service provider in Hartford. If SCS were to exit youth programming, it would leave a significant gap in the field. In contrast, SCS was only a minor player in elder services and an even smaller player in the childcare arena (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: Hartford nonprofit landscape

SCS was playing a more significant role in Hartford's youth services than in its childcare or elder services

Estimated annual spending by nonprofits in Greater Hartford

Generalized youth services (~$50M)	**Childcare and pre-school education** (SCS $35-40M)	**Non-residential elder services** (SCS $15-20M)
33 others	Central Child Day Care / Trinity College / Catholic Family Services	21 others
The Work Bank	The Right Place	Catholic Family Services
Boy Scouts	Womens League	Jewish Community Center
Artists Collective	YWCA	Hebrew Community Services
Co-Opportunity	Mount Olive	Community Renewal Team
Families in Crisis	YMCA	VNA Healthcare
Boys & Girls Club	Community Renewal Team	
Community Renewal Team		
Urban League		
Village for Families & Children		
Junior Republic		
SCS		
Catholic Family Services		
Greater Hartford YMCA		

Note: Based on reported 990 financial data (generally from 2002); "Youth services" captures all spending focused on school-age youth and adults under 24, excluding in-school services, colleges, or specialized youth services such as services to the physically disabled, adoption services or services to youth in the criminal justice system

Adding to the apparent impact potential of SCS' youth-service work, the team confirmed that the needs of Hartford's young people remained great. In a recent study, the Mayor's Task Force on Hartford's Future Workforce had found that 40 percent of Hartford youth were failing to earn a high-school diploma by age 25 and that the unemployment rate for 16-24-year-olds was uncomfortably high at 14.5 percent. Altogether, the team estimated that some 15,000 Hartford youth ages 14-24 were not on track to be job-ready, because of personal barriers, educational shortfalls, and/or deficiencies in employment skills.

Last but not least, SCS' leadership knew that its programming could help the city's youth become successful adults. In particular, the YO! program model, which blended case management services with educational support and job-readiness training, was keeping in-school youth on track, leading out-of-school youth back to school or to alternative pathways to a diploma, and helping older youth make transitions to college or full-time employment. While YO! Hartford was still a young program, the anecdotal evidence was promising. And program participants were among SCS' most vocal supporters:

- "YO! helped me with school, jobs, and internships. They are like a family—whenever we need something they are there for us."

- "My [YO! case manager] helps me by inspiring me to overcome obstacles. He also sparked my interest in college and encouraged me to start pursuing my goals."

- "He [my YO! case manager] has always been there for me through good times and bad times."

Everything was pointing to a focus on youth; but making that decision would not be easy for SCS' leadership. They cared deeply about the children and seniors SCS served and were loyal to the dedicated staff who worked on non-youth programming. After a three-day workshop and extensive debate, they committed to unifying the organization around a mission of serving Hartford youth—and to paying careful attention to what would come next for their non-youth beneficiaries and staff.

Transitioning Non-Youth Programming

SCS was operating four programs that either served the elderly or provided childcare. Having committed to youth as the organization's future focus, SCS' leadership now had to take a hard look how these non-youth programs fit with the new mandate. In approaching this difficult exercise, they set two requirements. First, the quality of service SCS' current beneficiaries received would not suffer. Second, all SCS staff would retain a high measure of job security and opportunity.

As the project team began looking at the non-youth programs one by one, they realized that a program's fit with the new mission—while a key criterion—could not be the sole basis for making decisions about its future. The following considerations were also important:

- **Alternative providers:** Were there other potential service providers with a complementary mission that had the capacity to assume the program? Would exiting it leave a significant shortfall in meeting the Hartford area's needs, or was there already excess capacity in these areas?

- **Financial effects:** How would exiting the program affect SCS' financial position, after factoring in its direct costs as well as its share of SCS' overhead costs? Did it help subsidize other SCS programs, or was it subsidized by other programs? Was any funding for SCS' youth programming linked to it?

- **Relationships:** Were there key relationships with funders, government entities, or area nonprofits that would be sensitive to SCS exiting the program? Was support for SCS' youth programming linked to it?

How a program looked through each of these lenses would identify the right option for its future: operate it under the status quo; shut it down over time; transition it to another provider; spin it off as a stand-alone entity; or reorganize it to fit with SCS' new youth-serving focus.

Consider Hartford Home Help, which SCS administered under contracts with the City of Hartford and the nonprofit Connecticut Community Care, Inc. The program provided homemaker assistance and companion services for approximately 200 homebound seniors. It was a positive contributor to SCS' bottom line, yet it was not fundamentally a fit with the new mission. Furthermore, the largest provider of elder services in the Hartford area offered high-quality services and had additional capacity. Transitioning Hartford Home Help to this provider could be advantageous not only to its elderly beneficiaries, but also to the affected SCS staff, who could transition to a larger organization where they could qualify for better benefits than SCS could afford and where their responsibilities were core to its operations.
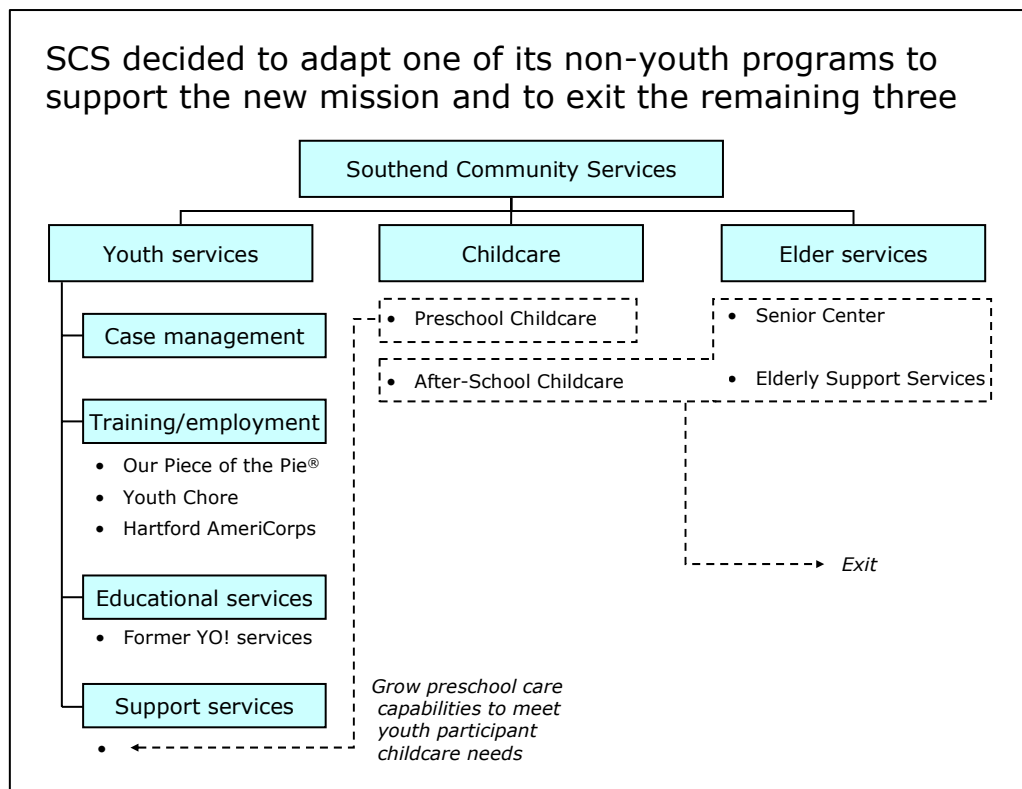
Another SCS program, Preschool Childcare, was much smaller, serving roughly 40 children ages 3-4. Like Hartford Home Help, it was a respectable financial contributor. Providing childcare services for preschool-aged children was not an obvious fit for an organization focused on serving youth ages 14-24. However, teen pregnancy and parenthood were significant issues facing Hartford youth. The city's teen pregnancy rate was 22 percent, with 440 children born to mothers under 19 in 2001.[4] For young parents,

---

[4] Mayor's Task Force on Hartford's Future Workforce, Final Report, February 3, 2003; Breaking the Cycle: http://www.teenpregnancyhartford.org/births_to-teens.htm.

lack of childcare was a significant obstacle to completing education or holding a job—not to mention to participating in SCS youth programming. Making childcare slots available to SCS youth participants who were also parents might make the difference between their success or failure at achieving their educational and employment goals. Accordingly, SCS' leadership decided to keep Preschool Childcare as a support to its core youth programming.

Preschool Childcare ultimately was the only non-youth program they decided to retain (see Exhibit 2). SCS would exit (in various fashions) the other three non-youth programs—programs which represented approximately $750,000 in contract or fee revenue, employed 30 full- and part-time employees, and served over 650 beneficiaries.

Exhibit 2: SCS' new program portfolio

SCS decided to adapt one of its non-youth programs to support the new mission and to exit the remaining three

Optimizing Youth Programming for Impact

SCS' youth programs had expanded over time as the organization took on a variety of contracts. Given that each contract came with its own set of programmatic specifications, SCS' full range of youth supports and interventions was quite wide. These services clustered into three main categories:

- **Case management:** A case manager provided youth with ongoing personal support from a responsible adult, helped them to identify educational and/or employment goals, and designed and monitored a plan of education and job-training support.

- **Education support:** To help youth achieve their educational goals, SCS offered tutoring services; SAT and college preparatory resources; alternative education and GED resources; basic education services (including literacy, math and ESL remediation); opportunities to fulfill community service requirements for high school graduation; and limited financial support.

- **Job-readiness support:** To help youth achieve their employment goals, SCS provided job-readiness training; internship and summer job placement; participation in five different youth businesses; and full- and part-time job placement.

There were restrictions on SCS' provision of these services, however. The menu of services a given beneficiary could access was highly dependent on the specific SCS program in which he or she was participating. The YO! service suite was the most extensive, with participants receiving case management plus the full range of educational and job-readiness services. In contrast, SCS' other youth programs did not have case management services and usually offered either education or job-readiness support, but not both.

YO! was not without its limitations either. Because of the nature of the federal YO! grant, SCS only could serve individuals in specific census tracks. As a result, the ability to participate in the YO! program literally could depend on the side of the street a young person lived on.

UNIFYING YOUTH PROGRAMMING

Having committed to a mission centered on serving youth, SCS' leadership hoped to more universally apply what they had learned over the years about what worked. SCS' leadership knew from experience that the interventions a particular youth needed to succeed varied greatly by age and individual circumstances. Going forward, they wanted to formalize a system that allowed the organization to tailor its programming around the unique needs of each youth and that would not be limited by the side of the street someone lived on.

The SCS staff established a program model consisting of five different "Pathways to Success." Based on an individual youth's specific needs, he or she would receive the mix and dosage of services and supports dictated by one of five pathways (see sidebar).

SCS' leadership's positive experience establishing and experimenting with the YO! program model offered insights for implementing Pathways to Success effectively. In particular, case managers played a prominent role in YO!, coordinating the specific set of educational and/or job-readiness services each YO! participant required. They not only provided YO!

> **Pathways to Success**
>
> - Pathway 1: Significant barriers to achieving progress, acute needs
> - Pathway 2: Out of school, no diploma
> - Pathway 3: In school, more than two grades behind (defined by literacy)
> - Pathway 4: Out of school, with diploma (not full-time employed or in college)
> - Pathway 5: In school, on track (two or less grades behind)

participants with direct support, but also helped to ensure that other YO! services were delivered and received well.

The case manager role seemed a natural fit for Pathways to Success. When an individual began the Pathways program, a case manager could assess his or her specific needs and goals, and select the most appropriate pathway. The case manager could re-evaluate the pathway placements annually and provide the participant with ongoing support and guidance. SCS' leadership was so convinced that case management was the linchpin that they committed to providing it to all youth participants.

Given that universal case management would increase the organization's cost per youth served, however, SCS' leadership realized they would need to convince funders to support it. They quickly launched an effort to educate stakeholders—including area foundations and the Mayor's office—about its merits. They drew on powerful, personal testimonials of Hartford YO! participants who, with the support of their case managers, had achieved positive educational and employment outcomes. These were young people who had gotten their lives on track despite such obstacles as dropping out of school, becoming pregnant as a teen, and getting into trouble with the law. Their efforts persuaded a number of key stakeholders that SCS' new program model was compelling, and that case management should be central to SCS' approach to serving Hartford youth. (See the appendix of this case study for an example of the materials SCS' leadership used to build the case for case management services.)

EXPANDING DATA COLLECTION EFFORTS

While SCS' youth program model built on the organization's prior experience, it still had several new elements. This put a premium on tracking key performance metrics, to help the organization identify opportunities to refine the model's design and delivery.

Adding further support for enhanced data collection was the SCS leadership team's experience fighting for case management funding. If contract specifications were not allowing them to serve youth the way they wanted, they were committed to campaigning for the desired programmatic changes. Performance data could be a powerful lever in such instances.

Accordingly, the project team set to specifying intermediate and long-term target outcomes for program participants as well as key indicators to track (See Exhibit 3). Given the organization's tailored approach to serving youth across a range of ages and with very different personal educational and employment goals, it would need to track these indicators separately for each group of like youth. For example, tracking rates of grade-to-grade promotion would not make sense for all participants, since some were out-of-school or already had graduated from high-school. For these youth, metrics such as high school re-enrollment, college enrollment, and work-readiness would be more appropriate.

Exhibit 3: Target outcomes and key indicators

SCS committed to expanding its tracking of intermediate and long-term participant outcomes

	Long-term outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Key indicators to track
Education	**Obtain vocational certification or graduation from a 2- or 4-year college program**	**Educational skills/ achievement**	• CASAS appraisal administered annually by SCS • Other in-school test scores, where available (e.g. CAPT, PSAT, SAT)
		Educational attainment	• Promotion from grade-to-grade, particularly promotion from 9th to 10th grade • Re-enrollment in high school • High School Diploma or GED awarded • Enrollment in vocational program or 2-4 year college program • Graduation in vocational program or 2-4 year college program
Employment	**Full-time, unsubsidized employment or national/ military service, for a total of at least 8 months of engagement in the workforce over a 12-month period, irrespective of job turnover**	**Work readiness**	• Completion of SCS job readiness training • Completion of internships • Demonstration of competencies and soft skills through SCS self-assessment tools • Referral to and completion of occupational skills training
		Unsubsidized employment or national/ military service	• Part-time employment or national/military service • Begin full-time employment or national/military service • Employment for 8 months over 12-month period, assessed at 3, 6 and 12 months

This level of tracking surpassed what SCS' current performance measurement systems and approach could handle. The organization would need an enhanced data reporting system. To help make this happen, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation provided SCS with a grant to engage NPower, a nonprofit IT consulting firm. NPower would begin by conducting a diagnostic of SCS' current data tracking against the new requirements.

Moving Forward

In the year since committing to a youth-focused strategy, SCS has covered a great deal of ground. It rapidly transitioned out of the three non-youth programs marked for exit. Hartford Home Help is now in the hands of that larger senior services provider, and the Senior Center is now run by Catholic Charities. The employees of SCS' school-aged childcare program for youth ages 5-12 successfully spun off their own nonprofit organization.

To signal the new focus, the organization has changed its name to "Our Piece of the Pie®"—a name that was created by the youth SCS served and that already had positive recognition in the community as the name of the organization's former job-readiness program. A tagline with the organization's new mission statement—"Helping Hartford youth become successful adults"—reinforces this messaging.

Bob Rath has been busy raising community and financial support for the new program model. He has presented the revamped organization to several hundred stakeholders at the local, state, and national level. This promotional activity has been essential in securing funding to replace the expired YO! grant. In addition to the continued support of longtime funders, a group of funders that includes the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, United Way of the Capital Area, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and the Hampshire Foundation has committed to supporting the new plan.

Rath sees a bright future: "OPP is a much more tightly focused organization and will continue to strengthen its model so that hundreds of Hartford youth graduate from college and return to live, work, and play in their home city."

Appendix: Building the case for case management

Why case management is needed

- At-risk youth do not know what they need or where to get it
  - Are not exposed to the right definition and goals of successful development
    - ‣ Commonly lack role models and positive ongoing support/reinforcement
    - ‣ Frequently come from single or no parent homes (or homeless)
  - Do not know what services they need to succeed, and in what order to receive them
  - Do not know where to go / who can provide these services

- Service providers face a challenge in engaging youth
  - Do not know which youth most need their services and how to recruit them
  - Do not know what other services a given individual needs and/or is receiving
  - Without coordination, multiple service providers can work at cross purposes
  - A 'blanket approach' to providing all services to all youth results in wasted resources providing some programming to some youth who do not need it

- In school support services are stretched and at-risk youth frequently do not receive the guidance needed

- Out-of-school youth over age 14 have no active engagement from local/state resources until such time as they become involved in the juvenile justice system due to behavior
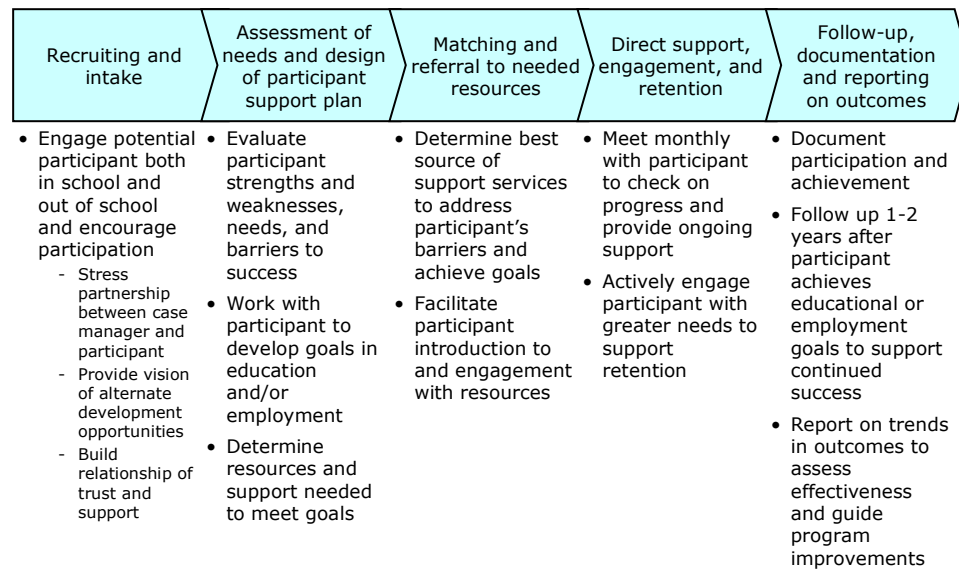
Case management overcomes these challenges by providing:

- A regular source of support who can help a youth define a clear and productive development path (education, employment, or both)

- Ability to assess participant barriers and needs, select best services to address needs, and make connection

- Ongoing support and follow-up to:
  - Support positive development and progress towards careers through frequent and regular meetings
  - Assure quality of service and intended outcomes are achieved
  - Provide positive adult support at key moments along pathways to success

- Positive sustained engagement as prevention and alternative to juvenile justice system

> "Without case management, interventions are often uncoordinated and scarce resources squandered. A young person can easily fall through the cracks or give up trying to navigate what is, in most locales, a disjointed multi-institutional "non-system." **The function of case management is to overcome the mismatch between institutions and client needs and to provide the continuity of services that is critical for at-risk youth.**"
>
> - Andrew Hahn, Paul Aaron and Chris Kingsley, The Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University

There are five key steps in the YO! Hartford case management relationship with youth

Recruiting and intake	Assessment of needs and design of participant support plan	Matching and referral to needed resources	Direct support, engagement, and retention	Follow-up, documentation and reporting on outcomes
• Engage potential participant both in school and out of school and encourage participation - Stress partnership between case manager and participant - Provide vision of alternate development opportunities - Build relationship of trust and support	• Evaluate participant strengths and weaknesses, needs, and barriers to success • Work with participant to develop goals in education and/or employment • Determine resources and support needed to meet goals	• Determine best source of support services to address participant's barriers and achieve goals • Facilitate participant introduction to and engagement with resources	• Meet monthly with participant to check on progress and provide ongoing support • Actively engage participant with greater needs to support retention	• Document participation and achievement • Follow up 1-2 years after participant achieves educational or employment goals to support continued success • Report on trends in outcomes to assess effectiveness and guide program improvements

Putting a face on case management in Hartford

Angel Perez, YO! Participant: Angel dropped out of high school at age 15 as a freshman, and was referred to YO! by his guidance counselor as a last resort. He originally expressed interest in pursuing a GED, but could not because of his age. YO! kept him engaged in job training and community engagement, and eventually helped Angel realize the need to return to school. Angel enrolled in the YO! Academy in 2002 and is now a senior. He has had both internships and unsubsidized employment, and is now interested in pursuing college upon graduation.

Asia Breedlove, YO! participant: Asia entered YO! at age 17 as a single mother and an out-of-school youth. She has participated in YO! For 3 years, returned to school to get her GED, and with support has now gotten her driver's license, a car, and her own apartment. She currently is employed at a bus company. She also has completed occupational training in medical office skills and is seeking a new career to take advantage of her new capabilities.

> **"YO! helped me with school, jobs, and internships. They are like a family - whenever we need something they are there for us."**   **-Latasha Kemp (YO! participant)**

> **"My YDS [case manager] helps me by inspiring me to overcome obstacles. He also sparked my interest in college and encouraged me to start pursuing my goals."**
> **- Moises Laurent (YO! participant)**

> **"He [my YO! case manager] has always been there for me through good times and bad times. He is easy to talk to."**   **- Catherine Evans (YO! participant)**