TENNESSEE CITIES CHALLENGE
Ready by 21 Training Institute for Local Policymakers
A project of the Forum for Youth Investment

Do you want to achieve collective impact for a broad set of outcomes for youth in your community? Do you believe a little direction, guidance and tools would go a long way in creating real change? The Tennessee Cities Challenge is a project that introduces local policymakers in 5 to 7 cities or counties to the strategies, standards, and solutions of Ready by 21.

The need: Many young people in America are struggling.

- Only 4 out of 10 young people in our country are healthy, productive and connected.
- Less than 3 out of 10 young people are engaged in school, hopeful about their future and thriving.
- Only 6 out of 10 high school graduates are proficient in basic workforce skills.

Policymakers across the country are looking for solutions.

Policymakers face daunting challenges to making lasting, positive change for children and youth. Some of these challenges, like state and federal budget cuts, are unavoidable. Others – like poor stakeholder engagement, silo mentalities, lack of data, redundant initiatives and low-quality programs – can be overcome through innovative approaches to local governance.

The new approach: Leaders ready for change are selected and teamed.

They assess their community needs and build a new way of doing business for children, youth and families.

The Forum for Youth Investment, working in collaboration with the National League of Cities, invites Tennessee cities and municipalities to apply for inclusion in the Tennessee Cities Challenge, a series of technical assistance services designed to provide local policymakers the tools and strategies they need to make change. Selected applicant teams made up of mayors, city managers, county executives, city/county council members, department heads and other community decision makers, will join together to assess the state of services for children and youth in their community, and then build their capacity to deliver a cohesive set of supports for children and families – a dramatic shift from the way most counties and municipalities provide services and programs. The Forum refers to this approach as Smart Policy, Ready Youth.

The Potential Outcomes: Virginia Cities Challenge Successes

Smart Policy, Ready Youth was piloted in Virginia in 2010 with teams of city and county leaders in Alexandria, Charlottesville, Hampton, Richmond, Surry County, and Virginia Beach. Today each locality is well on the way to improving outcomes for children, youth and families.

- Charlottesville, Virginia, successfully applied for and received a Promise Neighborhood planning grant.
- Alexandria, Virginia, created a Youth Commission and is in the process of developing a Youth Master Plan.
- Surry County achieved national recognition as one of America’s Promise Alliance’s 100 Best Communities for Young People.
Once accepted, the Forum provides teams of leaders with a two-day policy institute, interactive webinars, one-on-one coaching and ongoing technical assistance driven by local needs. Participants learn how to: form lasting coalitions of stakeholders; set bigger goals across a range of developmental areas (social, emotional, cognitive, physical, cultural and civic); use key indicators to track goals more efficiently; make better decisions based on comprehensive data; improve the quality of their programs for children and families; and align policies and resources to maximize their impact.

The well-tested tools and strategies include:

- **A stakeholder engagement tool** - to ensure that a true cross-section of community leaders from different sectors are involved in big-picture change
- **A fast-paced strategic planning process** - designed specifically to create a child and youth action plan that includes big picture goals, key indicators of progress toward those goals, and action areas for all stakeholders
- **A children’s budget tool** - to help policymakers map where and how their community is spending its resources for children and youth, and make better decisions based on what they find
- **Best practices** - on how to engage young people and families in the decision and policy-making process
- **A program quality assessment and improvement intervention** - to ensure that all the places where children and youth spend their time are providing the range of supports young people need to be successful

After the initial three-month training and assistance process, each local policymaker will become part of a large and growing network of Ready by 21 leaders across the country. Members of that network will have continued access to the expertise of the Forum for Youth Investment and the Ready by 21 Technical Partners, who provide even more detailed technical assistance on the implementation of Ready by 21 tools and strategies.

**Apply Today**

Over the past decade, the Forum for Youth Investment has developed Ready by 21 standards and solutions to help state and local leaders put a whole child development approach into practice. By using the Ready by 21 standards and solutions, the leaders trained by *Smart Policy, Ready Youth* can create a comprehensive and integrated approach to the support and development of the children and youth in their communities.

Cities interested in applying for the Tennessee Cities Challenge should contact Jennifer Ouellette at Jennifer@forumfyi.org by May 11, 2012.
Invitation to Apply
Ready by 21 – Tennessee Cities Challenge

The Forum for Youth Investment, working in collaboration with The National League of Cities (NLC), invites municipalities in the state of Tennessee to join the Ready by 21 Tennessee Cities Challenge. Selected cities will receive pro bono technical assistance for a small team of local policy makers to participate in a Ready by 21 Policy Institute, where attendees will be trained to use Ready by 21 strategies and create a plan to use them in their community. Food and lodging during the Institute will be provided by the Forum.

Training Provided:
Forum and NLC staff members will coach leaders from the selected cities through the following process:

1. Introductory Webinar
   - This hour long webinar will:
     - Explore the basic principles of Ready by 21
     - Outline the tools and services available to communities

2. Policy Institute Preparatory Worksheets
   - The worksheets that will be completed are:
     - Community Evaluation Worksheet – outlines the demographics of your community, lists the leaders from all sectors who are involved in the wellbeing of children and youth, assesses strengths and areas for improvement, and serves as a diagnostic tool to discover the areas of greatest need
     - Moving Trains Worksheet – details all the organizations or collaborations that are serving, or working on behalf of, children and youth in your community

3. Ready by 21 Policy Institute
   - The 1.5 day Policy Institute will:
     - Explore the full spectrum of Ready by 21 principles
     - Provide in-depth training on three Ready by 21 tools or strategies
     - Feature leaders who are already using Ready by 21 in their community
     - Allow for time for team planning to use Ready by 21 in your community

4. Follow-up Interview
   - During this interview Forum staff will:
     - Conduct a brief evaluation of the Policy Institute
     - Discuss the plan for use of Ready by 21 strategies in your community
     - Outline additional opportunities for Technical Assistance from the Ready by 21 National Partners

Terms of Partnership: Please have the Point of Contact (or responsible party) indicate agreement to the following expectations:

1. Point of contact (and at least one other member of leadership team) will attend an introductory webinar online during the first week of June, 2012
2. Point of contact (and at least one other member of leadership team) will complete two brief worksheets prior to the Ready by 21 Policy Institute
3. Point of contact (and at least two other members of leadership team) will attend the entire 1.5 day Ready by 21 Policy Institute in June 2012
4. Point of contact (and at least one other member of leadership team) will complete a one hour follow-up call before July 30, 2012
Request to Participate
Ready by 21 - Tennessee Cities Challenge

City:
Applicant/Point of Contact:
Point of Contact Position:
E-Mail:
Phone:
Address:

Recommended participants include: Mayor, City Manager, County Executive, City (or County) Council Chair, City (or County) Council Members, City (or County) Agency Department Heads. You may also want to engage a United Way, business, foundation or school leader.

Please provide brief, but specific responses to the following two questions:

1. Describe your role in your community, and the role of the 3-5 other leaders you would like to join you in this process:

2. Why are you interested in bringing Ready by 21 tools and strategies to your community?

3. Describe any progress your city or county has made collaborating for children and youth.

4. Please provide a letter of support from the mayor and/or county executive.

Signature: _____________________________ Date: ______________

Application Submissions:
Cities interested in preparing for and attending the Ready by 21 Policy Institute should complete this brief application and submit to Jennifer Ouellette at jennifer@forumfyi.org by May 11, 2012.