



Institute for Work and Learning: The Community Blueprint

JUNE 2026

Overview

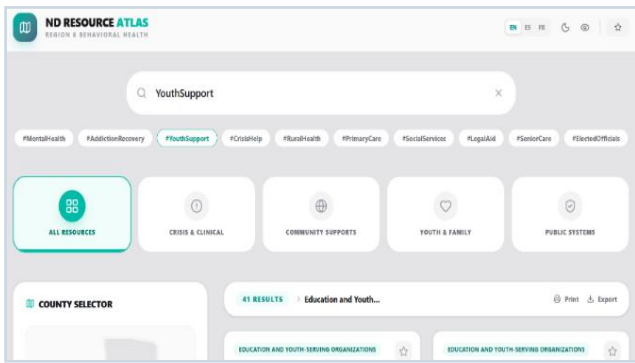
Community Blueprint: FHI 360 and the Walmart Foundation developed the Community Blueprint for Youth in Rural America project with the goal of bringing multiple stakeholders together within a community to share ideas, identify strengths and challenges, and create positive change for local young people. A landscape analysis, focus groups and in-person facilitated discussions inform the creation of a community blueprint: a strategic plan to address the root causes of issues facing youth in the community. Through collaboration across community members, organizations and the workforce system, each site develops and implements locally driven solutions. Our approach entails:



Researcher Amy Detgen facilitates a discussion with community members on local challenges.
Photo credit: Ottumwa High School Photography Club



Pilot programs: After developing the Community Blueprint with our partners in Southeast Arkansas, some of the pilot programs we've supported in rural communities in the United States include:



The Community Blueprint Project led to the creation of the “ND Resource Atlas”, a community resource guide serving as a one-stop shop for available resources and programs for youth and families.

In **Rapid City, South Dakota**, attendees formed a committee of five Pennington County community organizations, led by the local non-profit Journey On, to design an earn-and-learn micro-internships program in local trades and industries such as hospitality, retail, and tech support. In early 2026, **the program placed four participants in 6-8 week paid internships**, and interest in the program continues to grow as the committee partners with more local workforce development organizations.



The Pirate’s Cove in Powell County, Kentucky, at their kick-off event.

As a result of the Community Blueprint project in **Iowa’s 8th Judicial District**, a youth committee **co-designed and led an October 2025 Youth Justice Action Month event**. Youth also became embedded into the District 8’s Family & Youth Engagement structure, **helping the district become recognized as a “gold standard” for authentic youth engagement**. Additionally, as a result of their work, **the district received a \$500,000 federal grant** to create a Youth Hub providing mentorship, workforce exposure, tutoring, and support services for students and young adults.



A speaker at the October 2025 Youth Justice Action Month event.

In **Dickinson, North Dakota**, the Community Blueprint convening led to formation of an advisory taskforce that built on existing local efforts and made sure young people had a voice in the planning process. One year later, the project **created a community resource guide, expanded after-school activities for youth, and built stronger relationships among local leaders** — all with the goal of making this work last.



Earn and Learn interns and employers at their completion celebration in May 2026.

In **Powell County, Kentucky**, the Community Blueprint Project led to **the creation of The Pirate’s Cove, a youth community center** that hosts activities and services that empower youth to gain workforce skills. S.P.A.R.K. Ministries leads a small committee of community leaders that manages the center, and they continue to train local leaders to ensure long-term implementation and alignment with existing community programs.

About IWL: FHI 360’s Institute for Work and Learning has decades of experience working closely with partners to develop cost-effective, evidence-based programming that aligns with our partners’ goals. We partner with foundations and businesses, government agencies, school districts, institutions of higher education, workforce systems, and community-based organizations to gain understanding of all stakeholders’ priorities and develop an actionable plan that fits the community’s needs.

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Or visit: <https://iwl.fhi360.org/>