Annual Report

2022

Visible Network Labs

A Letter From our CEO and Founder

Friends of VNL,

Visible Network Labs has had a year full of growth, innovation, and collaboration to achieve our mission of strengthening social connectedness for better health, well-being, and mental health outcomes. I am excited about what we've accomplished together and am proud to present our 2022 Annual Report.

This year, our greatest impact was in population health, education, and thought leadership in the network science and systems thinking community. On pages 11 through 16 we detail some of the ways we've made a difference in these areas by strengthening cross-sector collaboration, improving measures and our technology to track data over time, addressing social health needs, researching youth social support networks, and building new tools to strengthen social connectedness.

We continued to grow during 2022 as we added a sixth department to our team, focused on providing our clients and customers the best experience possible while working with us and using our tools. We now have 24 full-time committed and brilliant employees led by a strong leadership team - all working collaboratively to strengthen social connectedness at every level of society.

Our data tracking and learning platform, PARTNER, also significantly improved this year. We streamlined the entire user experience and interface to provide a simplified and easier-to-navigate. We completed PARTNERme pilot tests with several partners, including mental and behavioral health providers, Veteran services organizations, and primary care clinics. These provided vital feedback to continue refining our implementation and software.

Moving into 2023, we look forward to new features and functionality already in the works, including:
- Comparative network tracking to capture connection change over time.
- Public-facing dashboards to easily share your visualizations and maps with the community.
- Improved network analyzer/visualizer to get more focused and meaningful insights
- Continual improvements to our performance, security and data reliability

All of this work is only possible with a rich network of partners, clients, and an incredible team who believe in our mission and vision for a future where everyone has the social support they need to succeed. We hope you continue to be a part of our journey in 2023 as we work together to leverage network science to strengthen social connectedness across the globe.

Dr. Danielle Varda

Danielle Varda

CEO & Founder | Visible Network Labs

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We would like to acknowledge and thank our staff, clients, and community partners who contributed to this report. Thank you for sharing your time and knowledge with us.

Meet our Leadership Team

Our Leadership Team is made up of an extraordinary group of individuals who are all experts in their field with and mission to strengthen social connectedness.

Dr. Danielle Varda
CEO & Founder

Dr. Amanda Beacom
VP of Research and Data
Science

Kelly Sprong
VP of Strategic
Partnerships

Zac Thompson
VP of Product

Sara Sprong, MPA
VP of Customer
Experience

Mike Cooper
VP of Engineering

Meet our Advisory Team

This year, we assembled an expert Advisory Team to help guide our work as we continue to grow and scale our offerings. Learn more about the expertise and experience they bring to our team.

Charles Fred | CEO and Founder | TrueSpace

Charles Fred is an American Entrepreneur and Researcher. Best known for a body of work to positively influence the success of small businesses. He has inspired a movement to help entrepreneurs create conditions for a sustainable growth, and through this effort, to stimulate thousands of new jobs. In 2014, Charles Fred and his daughter, Jamee, co-founded TrueSpace to help entrepreneurs move from the startup phase to the middle market. In February 2020, TrueSpace, in partnership with the Gallup Organization, announced a multi-year research effort detailing the operating conditions that must be present for a small business to consistently reach middle market. Over his 40-year career, Charles founded and led three companies into the middle market generating over $220 million in enterprise value. He is a long-time resident of Colorado, an elite masters distance runner, outdoor enthusiast and cancer survivor. He and Julie, his wife, dedicate much of their time with their family, mentoring young people and entrepreneurs, and giving back to the community. Learn more.

Dr. Wes Williams | VP and CIO | WellPower

Dr. Wes Williams is Vice President and Chief Information Officer at WellPower, Denver's community mental health center. Wes was recognized for excellence in technology leadership with a 2020 Denver Business Journal C-Suite Award and the 2020 Colorado CIO of the Year Corporate ORBIE. Wes opened WellPower's Innovation Technology Lab in 2019, using human centered design to find digital health innovations to improve access, engagement, and treatment efficacy. Wes is currently serving a second three-year appointment by the governor to Colorado's eHealth Commission, representing behavioral health interests. He also supports public health work through involvement with the Metro Denver Partnership for Health and the Colorado Health Observation Regional Data Service. Wes is a licensed psychologist in Colorado. In addition to his work with Visible Network Labs, Wes serves on the board of directors for Prime Health and the Realness Project. To support his own well-being, he enjoys mountain biking, gravel biking, and snowboarding. Learn more.

Ayelet Talmi, PhD, | Professor and LCP | Colorado School of Medicine

Ayelet Talmi, PhD is a Professor and a Licensed Clinical Psychologist in the Departments of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and Children's Hospital Colorado. Dr. Talmi is the Director of Integrated Behavioral Health in the Division of Child and Adolescent Mental Health, a Director of the Harris Fellowship Program, and the Director of Project CLIMB, an integrated behavioral health program in primary care. Dr. Talmi engages in integrated behavioral health and early childhood systems building and implementation, evaluation and dissemination, direct clinical services, health services research, advocacy, and policy efforts in Colorado and nationally. Dr. Talmi is a Past President of the Colorado Association for Infant Mental Health and a Graduate Fellow of Zero To Three's Leader's for the 21st Century Fellowship. As a clinician and researcher, she provides valuable insights grounded in her experience from clinical practice and the needs of providers and the patients they serve. Learn more.

Our Accomplishments in 2022

From our growing team and revenue to our webinars, conferences, and advisory team, here are some of our top accomplishments from the past year.

JANUARY 2022

We created our sixth new department focused on supporting our clients.

JULY 2022

Our team started meeting and working in person again with space at The Arvada Community Room.

SEPTEMBER 2022

We held our three-day annual company retreat with our entire team in Denver, Colorado to strategize and team build.

NOVEMBER 2022

We finished the last of nine webinars from our year-long series on strengthening social connectedness.

APRIL 2022

CEO Dr. Varda and VNL win the Truespace Exemplar Builder Award recognizing our growth.

AUGUST 2022

We continued expanding our team and reached a record size with 24 full-time employees on six teams.

OCTOBER 2022

We launched our new PARTNER CPRM interface and released a new suite of features and tools for better insights.

DECEMBER 2022

We worked on 39 projects this year with almost $2 million in annual revenue and a projection for growth in 2023.

PARTNER
by VisibleNetworkLabs

The Program to Analyze, Record, and Track Relationships to Enhance Relationships

PARTNER uses social network analysis and network science methods to collect network data, visualize your ecosystem of partners, and share insights to improve how you leverage, shift, and strengthen the systems in which you are a part.

Often used by public health departments, foundations, and others working to address systematic problems, PARTNER is the leading SNA tool in the area of social impact. Over the past twelve months, we've introduced a number of upgrades and new features to the platform, including both of its main tools: PARTNER CPRM and PARTNERme.

The platform includes two social network analysis tools that can be used individually, or together, to collect various types of data and create unique insights. This includes PARTNER CPRM, a Community Partner Relationship Management system, and PARTNERme, our Social Health Assessment tool.

PARTNER CPRM

Map, Track and Strengthen Organizational Ecosystems

PARTNER CPRM maps and tracks organizational ecosystems and networks of partners to improve collaboration.

PARTNER me

Assess, Address and Improve Individual Social Support

PARTNERme screens individuals for social needs and support, identifies gaps, and targets needs with community referrals.
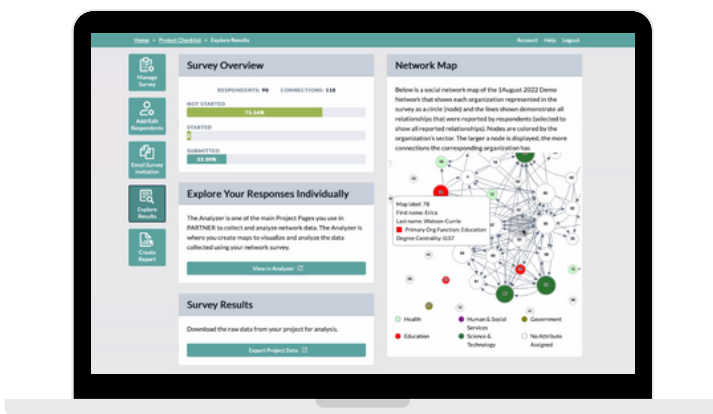
An Ecosystem Data Tracking and Learning Tool

PARTNER CPRM is VNL's tool for Community Partner Relationship Management. Similar to how CRM tools help manage customer relationships, our CPRM software allows you to map, track, and strengthen your network of relationships with various community partners.

From a network science lens, PARTNER CPRM collects data from your network of partners, cleans and uploads it into your Analyzer, and helps you identify actionable insights. It also helps you share those discoveries with your community partners and other stakeholders with customizable reports, network member profiles, and public-facing network dashboards. Learn more here.

What's New in 2022 for PARTNER CPRM?

Launched our New Network Member Profiles

Share Profiles with your partners to let them access and use their network maps, scores, and other data.

Share Network Maps with a Public View Option

Make your network map and data dashboards public-facing so that others can access and explore your results.

Workflow is Now Streamlined and Simplified

We streamlined the entire platform around five easy steps that make PARTNER CPRM even simpler to use.

A Social Healthcare Assessment and Referral Tool

PARTNERme is provides social health assessments and referrals. Unlike other available tools, we use social network analysis to map an individual's network of support, including family, friends, neighbors, and organizations that help them, in addition to their social needs, like housing and food. This allows us to focus on their most pressing need with the least amount of social support, and provide targeted referrals that boost follow-up and engagement rates.

Through our pilot projects with primary care clinics, mental and behavioral health providers, Veteran services organizations and others, PARTNERme has demonstrated its adaptability to a variety of case uses and sectors. Click here to learn more.

What's New in 2022 for PARTNERme?

▶ Creates a PARTNER Social Care Plan for Each Individual

After each screening, PARTNERme creates a PARTNER Social Care Plan with their screening results, referrals, and other info.

▶ One-Link Feature Creates Flexible Screening Options

Quickly share a link to take a screener that can be used in a clinic setting, at home, or while on the go.

▶ Person-Centered Design Focuses on Needs Over Time

PARTNERme focuses on both an individual's needs and support to track how they interact and influence each other.

What's Coming for PARTNER in 2023?

We have a lot more in store for PARTNER during 2023, including powerful new upgrades and features we know you'll love to try out. Here are some of the biggest new improvements we expect to launch during the coming year.

Comparative Analysis: Tracking Ecosystem Changes Over Time

Track organizational networks and ecosystems over time with our community partner relationship management solution.

Improved Speed, Performance, Security and Reliability

We update PARTNER continuously to keep up with new technologies that boost our performance in a number of areas.

Better Options for Mapping, Measuring, & Tracking

Working with our network scientists and analysts, we are improving our Network Analyzer to make it easier to use.

Easy Insights: Help Translating your Data into Action Steps

Track organizational networks and ecosystems with our community partner relationship management solution.

Impacting
Population Health

Supporting our public health and community partners to collaborate more effectively using network science data and mapping.

Supporting Research, Care, and System Collaboration to Improve Population Health

Social network analysis and network science are powerful tools for improving population health, with a variety of different impacts. We used both of our PARTNER tools in our population health projects to make a difference. Here are some examples.

Assessing and Addressing Social Health

In several projects, we focused on assessing social health to map support networks and identify and fill gaps in social support.

The Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center at the Colorado School of Public Health used PARTNERme to screen for adverse childhood experiences and social needs among families with children, followed by referrals to community groups that can help address them.

In a similar project, the Center for Health, Work & Environment at the Colorado School of Public Health used PARTNERme to assess mental and behavioral health among agricultural workers in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado and identify strategies to fill gaps in their available support.

Project Highlight: Rock County Public Health (RCPH)

RCPH serves the 164,000 residents of the Rock County area in south-central Wisconsin. As part of their commitment to cross-sector collaboration, they are using PARTNER CPRM to evaluate their network of community organizations and stakeholders that work towards improved population health outcomes.

By visualizing their network, they'll gain insight into how they work across community partnerships, identify opportunities for further network development and demonstrate the impact of their efforts.
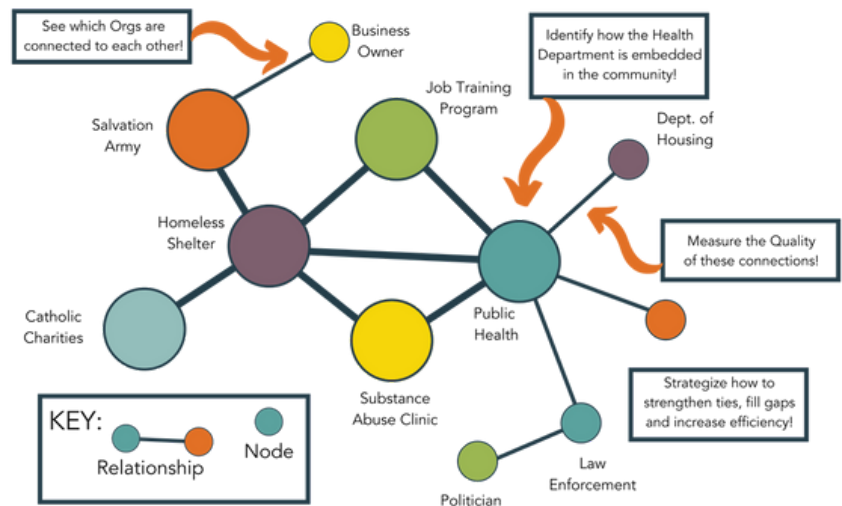
How We Help Strengthen Public Health Systems

Our PARTNER CPRM work focuses on mapping and measuring the members of your ecosystem - which could include networks of community partners. Projects like our work with the Rock County Health Department highlighted above use the tool to better leverage, shift, and strengthen these systems to improve outcomes. Here are two examples of how this works in practice.

Identify Bottlenecks to Streamline Information Sharing

Public Health Departments often rely on a network of partners to disseminate information. SNA allows them to identify bottlenecks and gatekeepers to streamline the flow of resources into the community.

Pick Out Key Players and Influencers to Leverage their Connections

Key Players have more influence on the system due to their connections, trust, or the way they are perceived by others. SNA helps identify them so public health leaders can leverage their status to achieve shared goals.

Our Impact According to Our Partners:

"We used PARTNER to assess the level of confidence and trust our community partners had for the health department and to assist in developing our strategic plan. Assessing the quality of our partnerships with other agencies and our performance was essential to move forward with creating a healthier community."

**Julia Ruschmann,
Bay County Health Dept**

PARTNER has been a critical tool to support County Health Rankings & Roadmaps in analyzing existing networks. VNL provided training on network science concepts, network mapping, analysis, and SDoH resource allocation within networks. We were able to align health rankings data with analysis of partnerships to identify gaps for outreach.

**Justin Rivas MPH,
Formerly CHR&R,
Milwaukee Health Care Partnership**

Impacting
Education

We used our network science lens to strengthen education and improve how we support young people.

Mapping Student Support and Improving Partnerships for Education

We work directly with school systems, funders, youth groups, and researchers to leverage network science and improve educational outcomes at the individual and system levels. Here are some of the ways we've created shared impact in 2022.

Strengthening the Connections that Drive Better School Outcomes

Several projects with funders and schools focused on mapping networks and ecosystems using PARTNER CPRM to improve system-level processes and outcomes.

We helped Denver Public Schools map their engagement in the community with various partners. This enabled them to leverage their connections better, identify gaps in their outreach, and evaluate how effectively they reach marginalized communities.

In our evaluation of the Gates Foundation Networks for School Improvement portfolio, we helped them connect the dots between their communities of practice and their positive impact on educational outcomes.

Project Highlight: Annie E. Casey Foundation Fellowship

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is working to better understand how youth conceptualize and leverage their personal support networks, so we can help strengthen them and fill gaps.

We used PARTNERme to screen forty-three students and map their social support networks and needs. We shared an example result on the next page.

Using PARTNERme to Understand Support Networks and Strengthen Them for Students and Young People

Using PARTNERme for this work allowed us to understand the relationship between the needs students identified and their existing sources of social support. Here are three examples of how we used PARTNERme to understand these networks better. You can read the full results from our research project on page 30 in this Report.

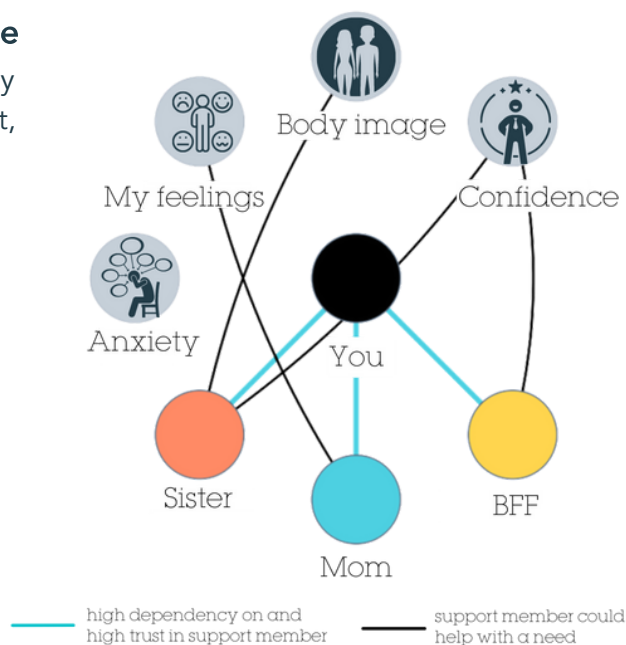### Identify Unmet Social Needs Among Young People

Our research helped identify the most pressing needs faced by high school and college students, including emotional support, financial assistance, and mental and behavioral healthcare.

Map Support Networks to Strengthen Them

By adding a layer of social support, we identified where young people go to get help for their needs, and which types of needs typically go unfulfilled by their network.

Identify Those At Risk of Adverse Connectedness

We scored each source of support by trust and dependency. Young people that reported being dependent on someone they did not trust were at risk of adverse social suppprt.

high dependency on and high trust in support member

support member could help with a need

Our Impact According to Our Partners:

"It was great to have data to be able to share back with each of the Networks for School Improvement. So often, our partners participate in evaluation efforts but never see the fruits of their labor. Using PARTNER, they could see their data and their place within the larger network."

Jen Husbands,
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

"There's so much power in the informal connections that happen in communities, and we aren't always able to capture the voice of everyone. Working with VNL helped us do that, as well as identify redundancies and streamline efforts, enabling us to strengthen trust with the communities we serve."
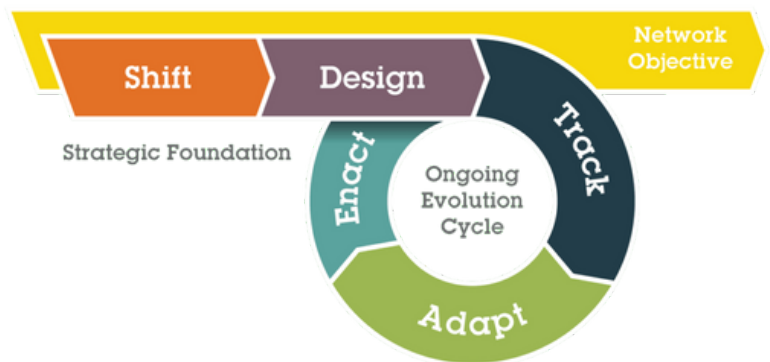
Alece Montez,
Formerly Denver Public Schools,
Co-Exec. Director, AJL Foundation

Impacting
Thought Leadership

We conduct research, hold webinars, and publish studies to contribute to the fields of network science and systems thinking.

As a team of innovators, we constantly discover and share new lessons and ideas with our community. Our PARTNER method for designing and adapting network strategies is just one example of a research-informed tool we've created and shared to help advance the field of network practice.

During 2022 we focused on developing new insights and sharing new ways of thinking with our clients and community. Through our social connectedness webinars, community-led research, and continued resource creation, we have stepped up our thought leadership efforts to continue driving network science innovation.

Strengthening Social Connectedness Webinar Series

Our webinars in 2022 explored different facets of social connectedness and its influence on health and well-being. We discussed its influence on key groups like Veterans, young adults, and rural communities, shared potential solutions in technology, policy, and programming, and helped foster conversation about innovative ideas for the future. Click here to visit the full webinar archive.

Publishing New Network Research and Resources

Our Communications team worked hard over the past year to share our insights through out published research, blog articles, guides, briefs, and infographics.

During 2022, we published more than seventy new resources, including:

- Social Isolation Vs Loneliness
- Social Prescribing in the USA
- How to Analyze a Network Map
- A Network Science Reference Guide

What We Believe at Visible Network Labs

Our team has shared beliefs regarding network science and social connectedness based on our decades of experience working in the field. Here are three of our biggest core beliefs:

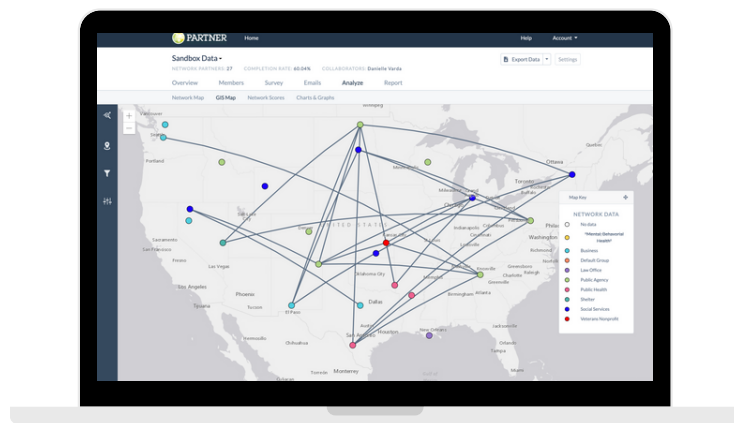## More isn't better while building a community network.

Creating more connections and partnerships in a network saps you of time and resources. Instead of using a 'more is better' strategy, think carefully about which relationships are critical for reaching your goals and which are not.

Social connectedness is a critical determinant of health.

Our relationships with other people affect our health, provide support, and link us to resources. If providers aren't assessing the connectedness of those they serve, they are missing a vital piece of information.

You need data to manage and build networks strategically.

To build a strategy for your network, you must consider and account for all of your network's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. This is impossible to do properly without data about your network's structure, quality, and interactions.

Coming in 2023: Network Funder Research

Foundations play a critical role in funding networks and community collaboration.

In our new ongoing research theme for 2023, we will be collecting data on how foundations fund and collaborate with networks in the communities they serve.

Please keep your eyes open for a webinar and report with our findings later in 2023.

Our 2022 Partners

- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Apprentice of Peace Youth Organization
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- CAMH Echo
- Children's Cabinet
- Colorado Center for Primary Care Innovation
- Colorado Health Foundation
- County Health Rankings and Roadmaps
- CU Denver Center on Network Science
- University of Colorado Center for Health, Work, and Environment
- Data Across Sectors for Health
- Digitunity
- DC Bar Foundation
- Denver Public Schools
- Forward Flag
- Glasser/Schoenbaum Human Services Center
- Growing Local South Carolina
- Georgia Family Connection
- The HadaNõu Collective

- Help Me Grow
- Inside Out Network
- Jacobs Foundation
- Jefferson Center for Mental Health
- North Central Accountable Community of Health
- New England Clinical and Translational Research Network (NNE-CTR)
- Olympic Community of Health
- Prime Health Colorado
- Public Health National Center for Innovations (PHNCI)
- RAND Corporation
- RECETAS
- ReThink Health/Ripple Foundation
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Rock County Public Health Department
- Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center
- U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
- NAPCRG (North American Primary Care Research Group)

2022 By the Numbers

13,780 CUPS OF COFFEE

28 VNL FURRY FRIENDS

94 STAFF TRIPS AND TRAVEL

7 STATES WITH VNL STAFF

10 NATIONS WITH PROJECTS

6 NEW ADDITIONS TO OUR VNL STAFF FAMILIES

24 VNL STAFF

6,367 SOCIAL FOLLOWERS

491 CUMULATIVE MONTHS OF VNL STAFF EXPERIENCE

906 NODES IN LARGEST MEAUSRED NETWORK

46,821 WEBSITE VISITORS

70 NEW FREE RESOURCES

4 NODES IN SMALLEST MEAUSRED NETWORK

39 PROJECTS

135 REPORTS WRITTEN

56,745 LINES OF NEW CODE

The Team at Visible Network Labs

Josh Albert
Full Stack Developer

Denver, Colorado

Kaley Bachinski, MSc
Senior Project Manager

Denver, Colorado

Amanda Beacom, PhD
VP of Research and
Data Science

Boston, Massachusetts

Mike Cooper
VP of Engineering

Denver, Colorado

Alex Derr, MPA
Director of Marketing and
Communications

Denver, Colorado

Tyler Funk
Software Developer

Denver, Colorado

Jenny Lawlor, PhD
Network Data Scientist

Lawrence, Kansas

Josh Nikander
QA Specialist

Denver, Colorado

Jen Rymes
Administrative
Manager

Denver, Colorado

Will Jacobson
Business Development
Specialist

Denver, Colorado

Alena Lidey
Customer Success
Manager

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Marissa Baron
Senior Project Manager

Denver, Colorado

The Team at Visible Network Labs

Kelly Sprong
VP of Strategic Partnerships

Golden, Colorado

Sara Sprong, MPA
VP of Customer Experience

Denver, Colorado

Steve Stremsterfer
UX/UI Design Manager

Denver, Colorado

Kendall Warwick-Diaz, MA
Data Analyst

Denver, Colorado

Zac Thompson
Director of Product Management

Denver, Colorado

Stephen Ham
Full Stack Developer

Denver, Colorado

Brandon Davis
Product Owner

Fort Collins, Colorado

Danielle Varda, PhD
CEO and Founder

Denver, Colorado

Jalece Wherry, MHA
Customer Success Manager

Atlanta, Georgia

Lea Xenakis, MPA
Director of Research and Evaluation

San Fransisco, California

Andy Zheng, MPA
Senior Data Analyst

Denver, Colorado

Vlad Solokha
Full Stack Developer

Denver, Colorado

Meet Our 2022 Company Interns

We are lucky to work with a great team of interns here at Visible Network Labs, along with a group of four Youth Social Support Research Fellows. They support our Product and Technology Teams develop software, test new features, and document processes.

During the 2022 winter season we were joined by Josh and Isabella. Josh has since joined our team part-time as a QA Specialist while Isabella continues her education at the Colorado School of Mines.

Josh Nikander
Technology
Intern

Denver, Colorado

Isabella Spielmann
Technology
Intern

Golden, Colorado

Meet Our Youth Research Fellows

Through a partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, these young leaders are helping us research and better understand how young adults think about, build, and leverage their social support networks.

With their support, we will create new tools and resources to help organizations strengthen social connectedness among young people to provide more opportunities, and improve their educational outcomes and quality of life in the long term.

Get to know our team of Fellows on the right. You can read about the results of this work in the appendix or visit the Fellowship homepage to read all our briefs and reports by clicking here.

Kyra Stoute
Social Support Research Fellow

Atlanta, Georgia

Martha Gonzalez
Social Support Research Fellow

Atlanta, Georgia

Zoe Crocker
Social Support Research Fellow

Orlando, Florida

A Few Words From our Team...

We asked our team what they were most proud of from 2022 and what excited them the most about 2023. Here are some word clouds of their responses, and a few examples of what they said.

What are you looking forward to in 2023?

What are you most proud of from 2022?

"I am most proud of being a part of such a supportive culture and team at VNL. As a pretty new employee still, I am proud to have been able to share my expertise as a practitioner and incorporate that into our project management practices and thought leadership projects."

"I am proud of our work creating a new Customer Experience Team to provide all of our partners with more significant support to make the most of their work with us."

I'm most proud of the insights our partners can discern from the software. It is great to see 'aha' moments!

Thank You for Your Partnership and Support!

We want to show our gratitude to all of our community partners, clients, and supporters for helping make 2023 such a success. Whether you worked with us on a research project, shared feedback on our tools and resources, presented at a webinar or helped us in another way, we thank you for your time and dedication.

Connect with the VNL Team!

Whether you have a question about one of our projects or you simply want to connect, please send us a message at hello@visiblenetworklabs.com or send us a message online at www.visiblenetworklabs.com/contact-us.

You can also follow us on your favorite social networks below. We look forward to connecting!

www.facebook.com/VisibleNetworkLabs

https://twitter.com/VNetworkLabs

https://www.linkedin.com/company/visible-network-labs/

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKcJHK_9CW1slLAONDlCmZA

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We included more information for those interested in learning more about our research and projects during 2022. You can also visit us online at visiblenetworklabs.com

Here is what you'll find in our appendix:

Appendix: Case Studies
Working with Forward Flag VSO

Forward Flag's mission is to reduce the rate of suicide among Veterans through advocacy, education, and programs to support Veterans directly. Their work spans a wide variety of areas, including providing direct programmatic support to Veterans, raising awareness of the problem through events and publicity, and getting out into the community using their mobile Veteran Wellness Center.

Veterans often have one or more unmet social needs, like access to stable housing or transportation. These factors and others often increase the risk of suicide and other adverse outcomes. Many also lack a strong support network and have an increased risk of being socially isolated or lonely. However, Forward Flag did not have an easy way to screen the Veterans they serve to identify and address these gaps, which would help reduce their risk of suicide in the long term. We partnered with Forward Flag on a six-month pilot program to test the feasibility of implementing PARTNERme, our social care platform, in a Veteran Services Organization.

Our Data Science and Customer Experience teams worked closely with the Forward Flag team, including visiting them in New Mexico to experience their programs face-to-face. We worked with them to create a customized PARTNERme assessment with questions about their health, social needs, and their personal support network. This included:

- What are the Veteran's social needs? (Housing, Transportation, Social Support, Mental Health)
- Who does the Veteran go to for help when they need it?
- How much does the Veteran trust and depend on each member of their support network?

After completing the screening, each Veteran received a copy of their own PARTNER Social Care Plan. This had a map of their support network and included a curated list of resource referrals addressing their most pressing need with the least amount of support.

During the first stage of the pilot program, we screened 41 Veterans during their visits with Forward Flag, either at their office, in their Mobile Wellness Center, or online using a shared link. After collecting the results and analyzing their data, our team came to the following conclusions:

- More than half of all Veterans screened rated their health as poor or fair.
- The most common needs identified by Veterans were mental and behavioral health and social support and guidance.
- There is a major opportunity to assist Veterans with these needs to improve their well-being by filling gaps in their social support network and improving coordination.

During the second stage of the pilot, we re-screen Veterans to follow up on their needs and resource referrals, re-visualize their support network, and assess any changes that occurred. This was a challenge, as many Veterans do not return to Forward Flag for any official follow-up. However, with some effort, we were able to re-assess six Veterans to compare against their initial results. Based on this analysis, our team came to several additional conclusions:

- Veterans often face barriers when accessing referrals (E.g., They don't qualify for a program).
- Support networks generally grew in size between time one and time two.
- There is a real need for systematic innovation to better connect Veterans with resources and support.

In the future, Forward Flag plans to use these results to continue informing and improving their SDOH and social connectedness screening program to serve the Veterans in their community better.

"Having to spend countless hours researching resources is not only painful; it's a waste of time and money. PARTNERme streamlined our intake process with a customizable questionnaire that allows us to be more efficient and effective for our beneficiaries, allowing us to serve our community better."

Ted Skibyak,
Veteran Liaison. Forward Flag

Digitunity aims to eliminate the technology gap by ensuring everyone who needs a device has one. Their network approach includes fostering collaboration, engaging cross-sector stakeholders, and putting in the work at the ground level to establish the systems necessary to achieve their goal. For example, their Digital Opportunity Network is a space for those in the field to engage, connect, and take action to break down silos and foster local-level impact.

Thanks to a $2.5 million contribution from AT&T, Digitunity launched a two-year pilot program in ten US cities, including New York, Milwaukee, Atlanta, and San Diego. Working with a network of local partners in each area, they aim to provide 20,000 K-12 students and their families with low to no-cost computers and technology and digital literacy support to help address the technology gap in education. The pilot program's three goals are:

1. Increase the supply of low to no-cost devices available to families in each city.
2. Map the pathways and barriers to device access in each city.
3. Connect stakeholders and build robust, sustainable and accessible device ecosystems.

To get started, Digitunity wanted to better understand the pre-existing relationships in each of the ten cities. We partnered with them to do just that using our PARTNER CPRM platform. By mapping and visualizing the connections between organizations working to eliminate the technology gap, we helped Digitunity identify gaps that needed to be addressed, along with opportunities to leverage in each local network. For example, each network map helped them identify isolated partners in need of more connections, as well as which organizations were most centrally connected. These network maps also serve as an effective baseline measure they can compare their progress against in the future.

Our team worked closely with Digitunity to design and send ten surveys; one for each of the ten pilot cities. We asked organizations working in the digital equity space several questions, including:

- Who they were collaborating with in their community?
- How were they working with and engaging with their network?
- What resources they were sharing and leveraging with their partners?
- Which barriers to success were the most serious in their area?

We shared the surveys using our best practice-informed schedule to improve response rates and the validity of our results. Once we collected and analyzed all of the resulting network data, our Data Science team compiled ten Highlight Reports, one for each city. Each report includes a detailed map of their network and answers to the most essential questions in their survey, including value and trust, collaboration intensity levels, and the most significant barriers to success listed by their network.

After sharing all ten reports, one of our network scientists joined Digitunity for a series of community webinars to share the results with their partners. In each session, Dr. Beacom presented results relevant to that specific community and advised translating findings into actionable insights. She also discussed how organizations could use the reports to demonstrate their impact to their community stakeholders and funders.

Moving forward with the results, Digitunity also plans to host a series of group meetings with their partners to facilitate more discussion about the findings and co-create further ideas for improvement and action.

"The digital divide is more evident than ever as a result of the pandemic. Working with the team at Visible Network Labs and using their network and data science approach and tools is allowing for greater collective and aligned effort and resources to ensure that communities are equipped for the 21st century."

Karisa Tashjian
Director of Programs,
Digitunity

Appendix: PARTNERme Project Highlights

APPRENTICES OF PEACE YOUTH ORGANIZATION - DENVER, COLORADO

AOPYO is a youth organization that aims to develop students through a whole-person approach by integrating mentoring, enrichments, and career pathway programs. After working with us on on our Youth Social Support Research Fellowship focus groups, they decided to partner with us on a full PARTNERme screening program for the young people they serve.

AOPYO has a focus on developing resiliency and self-sufficiency among young adults. To that end, PARTNERme will help them measure and map the personal support networks of those they work with. This will allow them to better leverage their network, identify gaps, and fill them using targeted community referrals to local organizations.

JEFFERSON CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH - DENVER, COLORADO

We continue our partnership with Jefferson Center, a mental and behavioral health provider based in Jefferson County, Colorado. With 18 locations throughout the area, they provide community-centered services to thousands of residents, including counseling, substance abuse, and other types of programming. They continue to pilot test PARTNERme with several of their providers.

Most of those visiting Jefferson Center have additional social needs. For example, they may be lonely or socially isolated, face domestic violence at home, or lack affordable housing, food, or legal aid. PARTNERme helps providers understand the needs of their clients along with their existing support that can be integrated into their care to fill gaps and improve outcomes.

Appendix: PARTNER CPRM Project Highlights

NORTH CENTRAL ACCOUNTABLE COMMUNITY OF HEALTH - WASHINGTON

NCACH brings together clinical and community partners throughout our North Central Washington region in developing data-driven health priorities and programs to improve local health systems. Their collective work helps support more equitable access to improving health and well-being for the residents in Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, and Grant counties.

NCACH worked with our team to implement PARTNER CPRM in their network of community partners. We helped design and implement a survey to visualize their connections, identify gaps in their networks, leverage shared resources effectively, and build a better collaborative strategy for the future.

ROCK COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT - WISCONSIN

The Rock County Public Health Department works with a diverse network of community partners to advance public health priorities throughout the county. However, this network of partners is informal and spread throughout the communities they serve, making it hard to leverage effectively. They are working with VNL to map and measure their network of partners using PARTNER CPRM.

This social network analysis will visualize their network relationships, provide insights about the ways Rock County Public Health works across community partnerships, identify opportunities for continued network development, and demonstrate the impact of RCPH's collective efforts to their stakeholders and the community at large.

Appendix:
Findings from our Youth Social Support Research Fellowship

Project Introduction and Background

The United States is facing a youth mental health crisis. The number of students who report feeling persistent feelings of sadness increased 40% from 2009 to 2019. At the same time, suicide rates among youth 10-24 increased 57%, along with rates of depression, anxiety, and other disorders.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues as students stayed home for a year or more. By October 2021, these numbers led the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Children's Hospital Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry to declare it a national emergency.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation wanted to better understand how young people's personal support networks can play a role in solving this crisis. These networks of families, friends, and other formal and informal supports help young people identify and access resources, learn about new ideas and opportunities, and provide support for their mental health concerns like anxiety and stress. More broadly, they are essential to help youth achieve their goals and aspirations in life.

VNL worked with the Annie E. Casey Foundation over a two-year project to better understand the way young people think about, conceptualize, and leverage their support networks. VNL and the Annie E. Casey Foundation wanted to understand the differences between the perspectives of younger and older people to inform future programs that strengthen and support these networks.

VNL worked directly with a group of youth research fellows to answer four research questions:
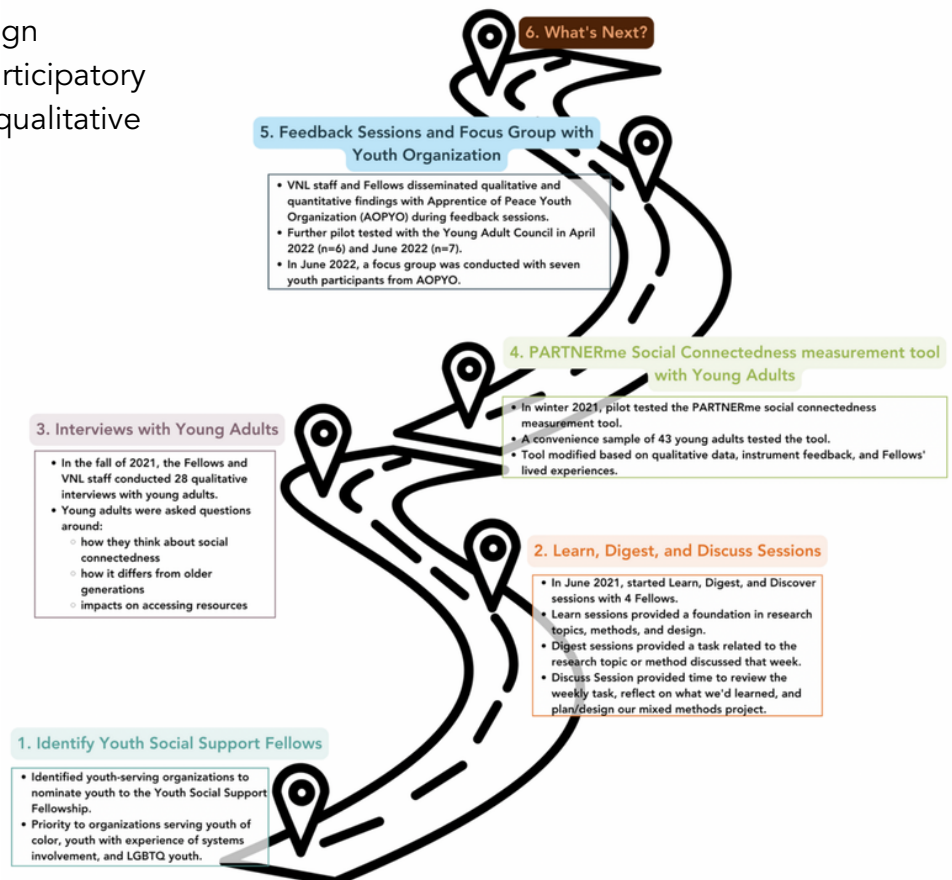
- How do young adults think about and describe social connectedness?
- How is social connectedness different for young adults compared to older people?
- How do those differences impact how young adults access resources?
- How does that align with how young adults want to be connected to resources?

Our Research Methodology

We utilized a mixed-methods design grounded in community-based participatory research, social network analysis, qualitative analysis, and design thinking.

The five research steps included:

1. Identifying and Recruiting Youth Social Support Fellows
2. Learn, Digest, and Discuss Sessions with the Fellows and Researchers
3. Interviews with Young Adults about how they think about social support
4. Social Connectedness Screening using PARTNERme
5. Feedback Sessions and Focus Group with Youth Organization Members

6. What's Next?

5. Feedback Sessions and Focus Group with Youth Organization
- VNL staff and Fellows disseminated qualitative and quantitative findings with Apprentice of Peace Youth Organization (AOPYO) during feedback sessions.
- Further pilot tested with the Young Adult Council in April 2022 (n=6) and June 2022 (n=7).
- In June 2022, a focus group was conducted with seven youth participants from AOPYO.

4. PARTNERme Social Connectedness measurement tool with Young Adults
- In winter 2021, pilot tested the PARTNERme social connectedness measurement tool.
- A convenience sample of 43 young adults tested the tool.
- Tool modified based on qualitative data, instrument feedback, and Fellows' lived experiences.

3. Interviews with Young Adults
- In the fall of 2021, the Fellows and VNL staff conducted 28 qualitative interviews with young adults.
- Young adults were asked questions around:
  - how they think about social connectedness
  - how it differs from older generations
  - impacts on accessing resources

2. Learn, Digest, and Discuss Sessions
- In June 2021, started Learn, Digest, and Discover sessions with 4 Fellows.
- Learn sessions provided a foundation in research topics, methods, and design.
- Digest sessions provided a task related to the research topic or method discussed that week.
- Discuss Session provided time to review the weekly task, reflect on what we'd learned, and plan/design our mixed methods project.

1. Identify Youth Social Support Fellows
- Identified youth-serving organizations to nominate youth to the Youth Social Support Fellowship.
- Priority to organizations serving youth of color, youth with experience of systems involvement, and LGBTQ youth.
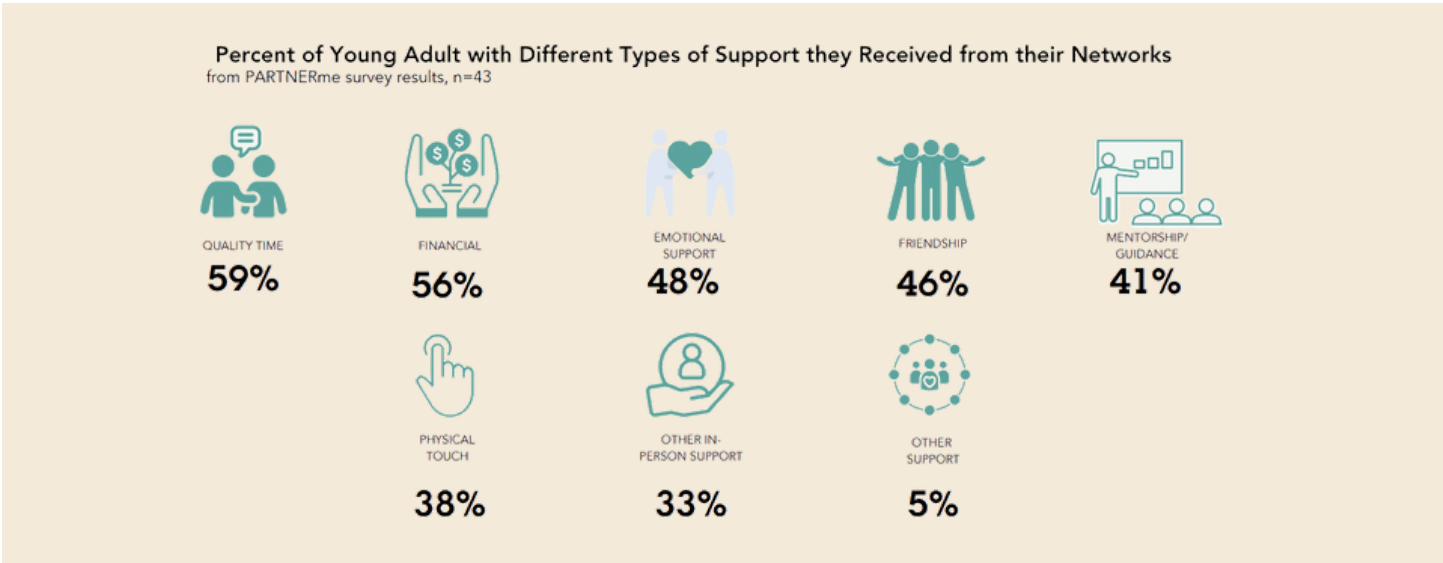
VNL and our four research fellow conducted qualitative interviews (n=28) with young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 in the Fall of 2021. The PARTNERme social connectedness measurement tool was refined as a result of these qualitative interviews, and the experiences of the Fellows and pilot tested (n=43) with young adults between the ages of 14 and 24. PARTNERme was further refined after that pilot testing and through feedback sessions with Apprentice of Peace Youth Organization (AOPYO) in the spring of 2022. In addition, a focus group with seven members of the AOPYO Youth Advisory Council was conducted in the early summer of 2022. More detailed findings from those aspects of this project can be found here.

Our Findings and Conclusions

We learned many things about young adults; how they feel about social connectedness, and how they connect to resources through our interviews, PARTNERme assessment, feedback sessions, and focus group. Here are some of the most important conclusions.

Social support networks and young adults

In qualitative interviews, young adults indicated they were most likely to ask for emotional support. That could mean simply having someone listen to them or could mean providing advice or mentorship. Most often this support came from family and friends. A significant portion of those interviewed indicated the importance of mental health and having mental health support. We saw this again in the PARTNERme social connectedness measurement tool results, where many young adults indicated that their networks provided them with quality time, emotional support, and friendship.

Percent of Young Adult with Different Types of Support they Received from their Networks
from PARTNERme survey results, n=43

QUALITY TIME	FINANCIAL	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	FRIENDSHIP	MENTORSHIP/ GUIDANCE
59%	56%	48%	46%	41%

PHYSICAL TOUCH	OTHER IN-PERSON SUPPORT	OTHER SUPPORT
38%	33%	5%

Building Supportive Connections

When asked to talk about finding people to connect with, and maximizing the positive aspects of those relationships while minimizing the negative aspects, focus group members said that it depends on the individual and the type of connection they are looking for.

For example, sometimes these young adults are seeking connection and support by exercising, gaming, or going on social media, and other times they are looking for a place to escape from their stresses and "get into a quiet headspace." Some young adults expressed feeling comfortable making connections in person while others feel more comfortable in online forums and social media platforms.

Focus group participants also had suggestions for how to improve the technology we use to measure and foster social support:

- Consider that there may be other venues where young adults seek support (e.g., gaming communities, exercising) besides people and organizations.
- Asking questions about digital support systems and social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Facebook, Instagram) were also considered important to young adults.

Reaching out for Help and Accepting Resources

In this work, we have found that embarrassment, stigma, and trust were significant factors in whether or not young adults asked for help or accepted offered resources. Continuing to normalize that all people need help from time to time may prove valuable in supporting young adults when they eventually reach out.

Balancing and celebrating growth and self-sufficiency in young adults while also ensuring that they know they can reach out when they need it can be tricky, but worth greater consideration, particularly for youth-serving organizations.

Allowing for Self Expression

Building trust and reducing the stigma or shame that young adults may feel when asking for help from others includes fostering authentic relationships, and allowing young adults to express their identities in ways that make sense to them.

In the PARTNERme social connectedness measurement tool, we asked young adults how they would describe their race, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds.

The focus group members said they appreciated that the survey allowed them to write in their responses rather than choose from a pre-defined set of responses. Young adults identify in a diverse number of ways, and allowing them to provide their own descriptive words is a a powerful way to recognize and lift up lived experiences.

What Does it Mean for Those Supporting Young Adults?

While it may seem obvious, building meaningful, authentic relationships with young adults requires trust and time. It is essential to create non-judgmental spaces for them to share their experiences, dreams, and goals, and allow them to direct how they'd like to achieve those dreams and goals. Youth-serving organizations, funders, and others who care about young adults can help by providing ways to build valuable supportive connections, connections young adults would feel comfortable using to help achieve their goals in life.

Understanding that young adults are more likely to turn to their informal supports and their peers before reaching out to more formal organizations could mean a greater focus on peer mentorship and systems for peer recommendations of resources. It could also mean demonstrating authentic, tangible ways that young adults' voices are centered in the work of these organizations and funders.

Considerations for Funders

Future directions of work with young adults could include:
- Creating processes for youth recommended resources.
- Refining social support building tools and identifying how best to use these tools effectively.
- Identifying what kinds of social and mental health needs can be addressed by different types of settings (in-person, virtual, hybrid).
- Identifying the ways that virtual interactions can be improved.
- Further investigation into how young adults build valuable virtual connections and limit negative virtual connections.

Considerations for Youth-Serving Organizations

Reaching out for help can be a truly vulnerable position for many young adults. Ensuring those situations feel safe, non-judgmental, and easy is critical.
- Build trusted and authentic relationships with young adults to foster these safe, non-judgmental spaces.
- Recognize the personal lives and time constraints on young adults when creating your expectations of them.
- Ensure you properly value their time and contributions.
- Leverage peer supports and trusted information sources.
- Anonymity may be particularly important to some young adults and concerns over how information will be shared with others may stop them from sharing or asking for help.