

b2i Advisory Committee

Subcommittee on Sustainability and Peer Connections Recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Improve and align annual data collection across b2i, Opportunity Passport (Financial literacy program), and ETV (Education and Training Vouchers) to better track participation, outcomes, and gaps in programs that support long-term sustainability.

Recommendation Description: Data related to participation, persistence, and outcomes are currently collected independently across b2i, OPP, and ETV. This limits our ability to understand how b2i youth engage across programs for which they are eligible—particularly those that strengthen financial literacy, postsecondary access, and career advancement, all of which contribute to long-term sustainability of the b2i participant.

Without aligned data, it is difficult to assess cross-program utilization, referral effectiveness, equity in participation, or cumulative impact. Aligning annual data collection would provide a more comprehensive view of youth engagement across programs, allowing us to identify service gaps, monitor engagement and outcomes in OPP and ETV for b2i participants, which may support improved sustainability beyond b2i involvement. Ideally, data collection would capture outcomes both during b2i participation and, when feasible, beyond program exit to assess longer-term stability and success. This should consider improving survey completion rates from participants – and encouraged by b2i Independence Coordinators – as data may inform outcomes by participants utilizing b2i and other programs simultaneously.

Because OPP and ETV data are already collected for participating youth up to age 26, advancing this recommendation will require a clear, long-term data-sharing agreement between DHHS and Central Plains Center for Services (the OPP and ETV administrator). This agreement should outline what data will be shared, for how long, and under what access parameters. Stronger alignment across b2i, OPP, and ETV would enhance coordinated referrals, support continuous improvement, and improve our ability to demonstrate system-level impact to stakeholders and policymakers. It may also provide insight into the extent to which b2i youth continue accessing relational supports, such as PALS, beyond formal program involvement.

Suggested Recommended Action Step: We believe it would be beneficial for DHHS and Central Plains to collaborate on developing a long-term agreement for shared data across programs that can be mutually beneficial.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Strengthen b2i understanding and relational connection by revisiting program intake information—at minimum every six months—through a clear, youth-friendly one-page summary.

Recommendation Description: Youth often receive a significant amount of information during intake, which can be overwhelming and difficult to retain—particularly given the transitions and instability many experience when entering b2i. When program expectations and supports are not clearly understood or reinforced, it can negatively affect engagement, participant outcomes, and the strength of the relationship with their Independence Coordinator (IC). Over time, this misalignment can hinder a participant’s ability to successfully reach their goals and exit b2i in a stable and confident manner that supports long-term sustainability.

Developing a concise, accessible one-page overview of key intake information, and intentionally revisiting it at least every six months, would reinforce understanding of program benefits, youth rights and responsibilities, and expectations and clarity on engagement and communication. It would

also reinforce goal setting and progress monitoring, and sharing of available supports (including OPP, ETV, and other relevant resources). Having this overview available as a virtual option on a website could support easy access and could include more detailed description. This recurring touchpoint would function not only as an informational refresher, but also as a structured opportunity to assess and strengthen the IC–youth relationship. It also supports clarity around mutual accountability, addressing disengagement early, and navigating boundary challenges proactively and transparently.

By normalizing these check-ins, the program reinforces transparency, shared expectations, relational trust, and consistent support—key conditions for sustained engagement, personal development, and long-term success.

Suggested Recommended Action Step: Establish a practice expectation that ICs review and discuss the b2i one-page intake summary and program norms with youth at least every six months—and *more frequently when disengagement or boundary concerns arise*—to promote shared understanding, relational alignment, and sustained engagement.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Explore structured peer engagement opportunities to strengthen connection among youth, between youth and b2i staff, and program improvement.

Recommendation Description: While individualized staff support remains central to b2i, creating intentional opportunities for youth to connect with one another—both those currently enrolled and those who have successfully exited or aged out of the program—is equally important. Structured peer engagement allows participants to build meaningful bonds, reduce isolation, and empower one another through shared lived experiences. It could also improve opportunities for skill development in budgeting, studying, and career development. Connections between current participants and alumni can be especially powerful, offering real-world perspective, modeling of long-term stability, and tangible examples of success beyond b2i.

When youth engage with peers navigating similar transitions, it strengthens belonging, normalizes challenges, and reinforces persistence—key factors in achieving goals while enrolled in b2i. At the same time, alumni engagement can reinforce leadership identity and continued connection to supportive networks, contributing to sustained success after exit.

Beyond relational benefits, peer spaces can serve a purposeful role in improving the program itself. Bringing youth together to provide feedback, identify barriers, propose solutions, and promote shared accountability shifts participants from service recipients to active contributors in program improvement. Structured opportunities—i.e., peer cohorts, facilitated dialogue sessions, youth advisory groups, alumni panels, mentorship pairings, virtual check-ins, etc.—can create consistent environments for connection, leadership development, and collective problem-solving.

By fostering connection, empowerment, and shared ownership, structured peer engagement can strengthen in-program outcomes while building the confidence, skills, and community ties that support long-term sustainability after youth exit b2i.

Suggested Recommended Action Step: Pilot small scale structured peer engagement opportunities – supported by input from youth with b2i experience – that intentionally include both current participants and alumni; gather youth feedback on connection, relevance, and impact; and use findings to develop a sustainable model that strengthens engagement, program improvement, and post-exit success.