



Opportunity Youth in São Paulo, Brazil (2023).

WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS TO BUILD MORE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

FEBRUARY 2024

Introduction

The [Global Opportunity Youth Network](#) (GOYN) is a multi-stakeholder partnership committed to catalyzing place-based systems shifts in communities – cities and rural districts – around the world through the creation of sustainable economic opportunities for “Opportunity Youth” (OY), aged 15-29 who are out of school, unemployed or underemployed. Created in 2018, GOYN’s current network is comprised of 16 communities in India, Africa and Latin America, with plans to expand to 14 more by the end of 2024.

GOYN started working in São Paulo in 2020 in partnership with United Way Brazil, a leading local non-profit focused on youth and early childhood development. There are an estimated 765,000 Opportunity Youth in São Paulo, making it one of the largest GOYN communities. Many of these young people are concentrated in the “territories,” peripheral areas east and south of the city that are underserved by public services and have low levels of formal economic activity.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Country: Brazil

Community: São Paulo

Opportunity Youth population: 765,000

Main barriers to youth economic opportunities: isolation of Opportunity Youth in the peripheries of the city, lack of inclusivity of the labour market lead to low hiring and retention rates for Opportunity Youth

GOYN start date: 2020

GOYN Anchor Partner: United Way Brazil (UWB)

Opportunity Youth reached by GOYN since 2020: 26,000+

Working closely with GOYN Global Partner Accenture, GOYN São Paulo (which has been operating under the local brand *Juventudes Potentes* since January 2023) mapped the entire youth employment ecosystem in the city and conducted in-depth research to identify the systemic issues preventing young people from accessing opportunities. This research highlighted the lack of connections between employers and Opportunity Youth in the territories as a structural barrier in the ecosystem. This case study details the strategy designed and implemented by GOYN São Paulo to help overcome this barrier.

The context

São Paulo is one of the most dynamic economic centers in South America, with over 1.8 million registered companies. Yet, the city is also experiencing high levels of youth unemployment, with 35% of young people in São Paulo currently out of work. This situation is not just detrimental to young people but also to companies themselves. Indeed, research by GOYN São Paulo on inclusive hiring practices has shown that companies benefit directly from having a more diverse workforce: companies that apply a diversity lens in their hiring processes are six times more innovative; and companies that hire low-income youth have an 87% talent retention rate. However, few employers are aware of these benefits.



“Young people represent a powerhouse for the economy that we are losing or taking little advantage of due to inaction. The transformation that we are experiencing in the world of work is so fast and continuous that it is impossible for the educational system to handle this responsibility alone. Companies need to be ahead of this challenge and get closer to education providers. There is a lack of integration between the productive sector and the training of young people.”

- LUIZ EDUARDO DROUET, FOUNDER, PROSPER TECH TALENTS AND PRESIDENT, ABRH-SP

The challenge

GOYN São Paulo identified a lack of connections between employers and Opportunity Youth from the territories as a key issue in the youth employment ecosystem. This issue can be broken down into three sub-issues:

1. Employers **do not see Opportunity Youth from the territories as a source of potential talent** for their businesses.
2. Employers **lack awareness of inclusive hiring practices** that can attract and retain Opportunity Youth in the labor market.
3. **Opportunity Youth lack information** about available employment opportunities that they are qualified for.

This complex challenge suggests a need for a **multi-faceted approach** that can change employers’ perceptions of Opportunity Youth from the territories, raise employers’ awareness of inclusive hiring practices, and connect Opportunity Youth to existing opportunities in the labor market.

“The biggest challenge to getting a job is the lack of opportunities for people with no experience, as we have several brilliant candidates with cool ideas acquired through a course, college or even life experience and this is not even taken into consideration. I also see that technology technology has exacerbated this challenge, especially in the area of automation, as several companies previously had warehouses and today opt for robots and even artificial intelligence.”

- CAROLINE VICENTE, GOYN SÃO PAULO YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP MEMBER

The approach

Based on this analysis, GOYN São Paulo developed the “GOYN Market” strategy, a suite of solutions to influence employers and create a more favorable environment for Opportunity Youth on the labor market.

Goals

The strategy has three overarching goals:

1. **Raise awareness** amongst employers of the benefits of the productive inclusion of Opportunity Youth, to attract and retain these young people in the labor market
2. Promote **inclusive hiring practices** with employers through collaborative activities and partnerships
3. **Connect Opportunity Youth** to available employment opportunities on the labor market

Through this strategy, GOYN São Paulo aims to place and retain 3,000 Opportunity Youth annually with employers in its network.

Raising awareness

GOYN São Paulo has developed several activities to increase employers’ understanding of the benefits of productive inclusion of Opportunity Youth.

First, to meet employers in their own space, GOYN offers **panel sessions** on productive inclusion, held in the company’s offices. The sessions include inclusion specialists, hiring managers with experience working with Opportunity Youth, and Opportunity Youth themselves. For companies interested in learning more, GOYN São Paulo also offers workshops for human resources (HR) and business managers covering the full talent management cycle, from training to retention.

GOYN São Paulo also worked closely with Accenture to develop a “**social immersion**” program to help employers better understand Opportunity Youth from the territories. The one-day *Elevado À Potência* (Raised to Power) program brings employers to the spaces where Opportunity Youth live, study and work to open up a dialogue and foster mutual learning between the two groups. The experience is then used as a stepping stone to start the company’s productive inclusion journey.

ELEVADO À POTÊNCIA

journey overview



Promoting inclusive hiring practices

In addition to this one-on-one engagement with employers, GOYN São Paulo is also seeking to promote inclusive hiring practices to a larger audience and to reward companies implementing best-in-class practices for hiring

Opportunity Youth. For that purpose, GOYN partnered with the **Great Place to Work Institute** (GPTW), a global certification organization that evaluates companies' culture and practices, to create the "Best Companies to Work For - Opportunity Youth" ranking in São Paulo.

The creation of the ranking seeks to encourage companies to reflect on their hiring practices and influence the implementation of more inclusive and equitable talent management approaches.

To be considered for the ranking, companies must fill a detailed questionnaire about their HR management practices. GOYN participates in the evaluation process leading to the ranking, and can offer further support to the companies that do not make the final ranking.

Importantly, the data collected for the ranking will also be used by GOYN to better understand the challenges faced by Opportunity Youth in the labor market (e.g., placement, retention, professional development, etc.) and the strategies developed by companies to address these challenges, fostering learning and informing the design of future interventions.

In addition to the GPTW ranking, GOYN is also seeking opportunities to promote inclusion of Opportunity Youth at large events attended by employers.

Connecting youth to opportunities

Finally, GOYN São Paulo organizes bi-annual **Career Fairs** in the territories to bring Opportunity Youth in direct contact with employers and skilling providers. This enables young people to access information about available opportunities in a familiar space.



Opportunity Youth at a GOYN Career Fair (2023).

CAREER FAIRS IN NUMBERS

- 1,000 young participants
- 15 companies
- 1,000 free training courses
- 1,000 job opportunities offered
- Diverse audience including 56% Afro-Brazilian youth, 56% women, and 42% from low-income households

The impact

GOYN São Paulo's strategy has progressively matured since 2020, and some of the activities outlined above are still in their early stages. However, there has already been significant interest in the activities implemented by GOYN:

- **8** companies registered for social immersion experiences with GOYN in 2023 and early 2024
- **3** large awareness-raising sessions conducted with **100+** employers in attendance, plus **7** sessions led for smaller groups (up to 20 companies)

"My name is Leiriane, I'm 19 years old! I live in the South Zone of São Paulo. I am currently part of the GOYN Youth Advisory Group. This certainly made and still makes a total difference in my life! Through the program I was able to improve my communication, despite more challenges due to being shy, and today I work in a wonderful company, a job that I also got through the program. It has been very rewarding to be part of it all."

- LEIRIANE, YOUNG AMBASSADOR AND GOYN SÃO PAULO YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP MEMBER

- **98** São Paulo companies registered for the GPTW ranking “Best Companies to Work For – Opportunity Youth” (six times more than the initial expectation of 15 companies)
- **3** careers fairs held in the territories, bringing together over **2,500** Opportunity Youth and **37** companies and resulting in an average of 15% post-event employment

As a result of these activities, GOYN São Paulo has observed an increase in the number of companies and industry associations seeking to work more closely with GOYN, with the social immersion program being an important gateway (e.g., Brazilian Franchising Association, American Chamber of Commerce, Brazilian Human Resources Association of São Paulo). GOYN São Paulo has also seen greater engagement of employers with GOYN and with the cause of productive inclusion of Opportunity Youth, with many companies starting to use the term Opportunity Youth and having an increased awareness of GOYN and its activities.

The social immersion experience developed by GOYN São Paulo has also had concrete impacts on employers’ practices. Accenture – a large employer in the technology and consulting sector – decided after participating in the program to create a working group to review their Young Apprentice Program and their approach to recruiting Opportunity Youth. In addition to participating in a second edition of the social immersion experience to enable more employees to benefit from it, Accenture also invited a group of young people to visit the company in February 2024 and evaluate the

new version of their Young Apprentice Program and their processes for attracting and retaining Opportunity Youth. As another example, Dow Chemical – a large chemical producer – decided after participating in the social immersion experience to work with GOYN São Paulo to support young people in situations of social vulnerability. The GOYN São Paulo team was invited to participate in a meeting with the company’s leadership in Brazil, and to present a partnership proposal that will be implemented in early 2024. Finally, GOYN São Paulo has also received positive feedback on its employer engagement strategy from companies with a long-standing relationship with GOYN, who have welcomed its evolution, impact and increasing maturity.

“We built with GOYN a strong network of allied companies, which can strengthen their social investment together, build better project practices and exchange knowledge. We believe in the process so much that we hired one of the young women impacted by GOYN São Paulo to join our team. A year later, she is fully integrated into the company and leads our volunteer initiatives, being well recognized for her professionalism. In addition, she has also added diversity of thought to our team, bringing new insights and innovation.”

- GUSTAVO OLIVEIRA, CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER, ACCENTURE BRAZIL

SYSTEMIC IMPACT

GOYN defines systems change as a change in the barriers and underlying drivers of youth economic opportunity that leads to long-term, sustainable change at scale in the community.

Through its employer engagement strategy, GOYN São Paulo seeks to address the systemic exclusion of Opportunity Youth from the labour market due to the prevalence of negative stereotypes and absence of youth-friendly hiring practices. Because changes in employer perceptions and practices are institutional and long-lasting, GOYN’s impact endures well beyond GOYN’s involvement with employers and has the potential to benefit all Opportunity Youth in the community – not just those reached by GOYN.

Looking forward

In 2023, GOYN São Paulo rebranded as *Juventudes Potentes* to improve its resonance and appeal to Opportunity Youth. Under this new name, GOYN São Paulo is continuing to deepen its employer engagement work to increase awareness of the benefits of productive inclusion of Opportunity Youth. A key priority is to have the issue recognized as a core part of companies' Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) or Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) agendas: while ESG and D&I now feature prominently in corporate strategies, greater inclusion of Opportunity Youth is usually not associated with these themes. GOYN São Paulo sees coordinating the emergence of a consistent and simple narrative around the issue to facilitate its adoption as critical to make progress in this area.

Alongside these efforts, GOYN São Paulo has also started a research project to capture and understand the expectations of Opportunity Youth in the city of São Paulo regarding professional placement and employment, with a specific focus on professional learning programs (apprenticeships). The study will explore the impact of Brazil's recently updated apprenticeship law on the social insertion and professional development of young people, provide recommendations to key stakeholders on how to align their practices to the expectations and needs of young people, and help strengthen and expand the representation of Opportunity Youth in the professional learning ecosystem.



Interested in learning more? Use this QR code to hear the inspiring message to employers of Geovana Nogueira, Opportunity Youth in São Paulo.

Copyright © 2024 by The Aspen Institute (Global Opportunity Youth Network) and Catholic Relief Services

The Aspen Institute
2300 N Street, NW | Suite 700 | Washington, DC 20037
Published in the United States of America in 2024 by The Aspen Institute
All rights reserved

This case study was developed with the support of GOYN Global Partners GDI and Catholic Relief Services.

