

APA Atlanta | August 2026 Collective Action Co-Design Lab

August 6, 2026 | The Supermarket ATL

32 attendees | 23 Atlanta youth-serving nonprofits represented | 2 friends of APA

Convening Summary

[APA Atlanta's](#) August 6 Member Convening marked an important transition from **collective action ideation toward the design of something tangible that members can begin testing together** ([check out the slides we went through together here](#)).

The morning began with community updates, knowledge sharing and opportunities available across the Alliance. The majority of the convening was then dedicated to APA Atlanta's Youth Career Navigation collective action work: reconnecting members to what they had surfaced together over the past year, grounding the conversation in the assets and employer relationships already present across the community, bringing in complementary learning from APA's strategic partner [CareerRise](#) (and their employer-facing work especially related to early careers in the city), and moving into co-design. The clearest outcome was the emergence of a more connected concept for the workforce collective action: the **Opportunity Atlas**.

Rather than creating another standalone workforce program, members envisioned an Opportunity Atlas that better connects the

career experiences, organizations, employer relationships and supports that already exist across Atlanta. The concept has **two interconnected sides**:

Youth-facing: A digital Opportunity Atlas that helps young people see and navigate career opportunities across participating organizations—including career exploration, job shadowing, work-based learning, internships, mentoring, employment and other experiences. Members also envisioned youth surveys and feedback mechanisms so the Atlas can learn from young people's interests and experiences rather than functioning only as a static directory.

Employer-facing: A Shared Employer Network that connects participating organizations to local employers ready to engage young people across the career continuum. In partnership with CareerRise as an employer-side intermediary, the network could help connect members to employers and high-demand industries while also drawing on APA Atlanta members' youth-development expertise to help employers create stronger internship, job-shadowing, onboarding and early-career experiences.

Importantly, these are **not two separate initiatives**. Together, they form the Opportunity Atlas: one side helps seeks to support 16-24 year old Atlantans understand and navigate what is available; the other strengthens the employer opportunities behind those pathways.

The August session also clarified that APA Atlanta does not need to build the final infrastructure before learning whether the concept works. Members generated several low-fidelity elements that can be tested first: an Opportunity Map, shared career opportunity calendar, common information about participating organizations and employer partners, youth entry and exit surveys, a youth feedback/scorecard mechanism, and employer-facing resources such as an internship/job-shadowing toolkit.

In the spirit of centering youth-voice, young people nominated by APA Atlanta members will be part of testing and shaping what comes next. APA Atlanta plans to engage approximately **20 Atlanta young people ages 16–24 in paid feedback opportunities this fall** including a 60–90 minute feedback session and short

survey. Rather than building a tool and then asking young people whether it works, the goal is to put early versions of the Opportunity Map, calendar and navigation concepts directly in front of young people to understand what is useful, confusing or missing and how they would actually want to find and navigate career opportunities.

The next phase will therefore focus on **prototyping and learning before building more**: organizing the real career opportunities and employer relationships already present across APA Atlanta; testing the youth-facing experience directly with young people; exploring alignment existing mapping activity through our postsecondary to workforce partners in our community and addition to those that exist through ecosystem partners like [United Way](#) and [RIICE](#); and continuing to deepen our partnership with CareerRise to further connect the employer-facing side of the Atlas to Atlanta’s broader workforce ecosystem. [\(for member events on the horizon this fall see appendix on page 12 or on our APA Atlanta slack\)](#)

Our Member-Driven Collective Action Co-Design Arc

The August session did not begin with a predetermined solution. It represented the next stage of a collective action process APA Atlanta members have been shaping together over time.

Step 1: Members identified shared priorities.

In November 2025, members prioritized issues where working collectively could create greater value than organizations working independently. **Workforce Pathways emerged as the highest-ranked priority, receiving 19 of 28 votes**, followed by Youth Mental Health with 14. [\(read more here\)](#)

Step 2: Members explored where collaboration could add value.

At the February and April 2026 convenings, members moved from identifying workforce as a priority toward understanding where the ecosystem was experiencing friction. A consistent theme emerged: Atlanta does not necessarily need more disconnected programs. Members saw an opportunity to better connect the assets that already exist. Ideas included stronger employer coordination, career exposure, internships, shared visibility into opportunities, warm handoffs between organizations and better navigation for young people. ([read more here](#) and [here](#))

Step 3: APA gathered additional information before asking members to design.

Between April and August, APA Atlanta continued gathering information from members about their workforce programming, career exposure opportunities, employer relationships and areas where stronger coordination could be useful. That allowed the August conversation to move beyond broad brainstorming. Members could begin designing from **actual assets already present in the network** and considering what might be practical to test together.

The Power of the Collective: What APA Atlanta Members Already Bring

Information gathered from the APA Atlanta community prior to the August convening reinforced that members already hold substantial pieces of Atlanta's career-connected ecosystem.

Across the community, organizations identified experiences including **career panels, employer site visits, job shadowing, mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, professional development, career fairs and other forms of career exposure and work-based learning.**

Members also bring existing relationships with employers across multiple sectors and industries.

This created an important starting point for the August session: **the collective action does not need to begin by inventing a new set of programs or employer relationships.**

Instead, members could ask how those assets might become more visible, connected and navigable—and where there are genuine gaps that the collective could address together.

CareerRise: Connecting the Employer Side of the Work

CareerRise's participation provided a complementary perspective to what APA Atlanta members had been surfacing from the youth-serving side of Atlanta's workforce ecosystem. CareerRise's Early Career Community of Practice which launched in July 2026 with ~8 diverse local employers had been exploring similar questions from the **employer and workforce-system side**, including what employers need from early-career talent and what young people need in order to successfully enter and advance within the workforce.

Several ideas from that work helped ground the August co-design conversation.

- **Early career is a continuum, not simply job placement.** Young people move through career awareness, exploration, skill development, employment and advancement. Employer engagement can therefore include much more than hiring, from career conversations and workplace exposure to job shadows, internships and ultimately employment.
- **Exposure is an important part of economic mobility.** Young people need opportunities to see workplaces, industries and career possibilities before they are expected to make consequential decisions about education or employment.
- **Employers are increasingly focused on transferable skills and coachability.** Career preparation therefore includes helping young people build skills that translate across roles and industries, not simply training them for a particular opening.
- **Successful early-career experiences require more than matching a young person with a job.** Onboarding, workplace expectations, transportation, mentorship, professional networks and other supports can influence whether young people are able to enter and remain in opportunities successfully.

CareerRise also brings visibility into employers, industry partnerships and areas of workforce demand that complements the direct youth-development expertise and relationships held by APA Atlanta members. That complementarity became important as members moved into co-design.

Rather than APA Atlanta attempting to independently recreate employer infrastructure, **CareerRise is emerging as a strategic partner on the employer-facing side of the Opportunity Atlas**—helping connect the collective action to Atlanta's broader employer and workforce ecosystem.

August Co-Design: Moving Toward Testable Pilots

With that foundation, members spent the primary working session developing concepts that could begin connecting what already exists. Participants worked from two perspectives:

- **11 organizations focused on the youth-facing experience**
- **7 organizations focused on the employer-facing experience**

The groups considered what information and connections would be most useful, what young people and employers might expect, what participating organizations could contribute, and what small next steps could begin testing the ideas. Although the groups approached the work from different sides of the ecosystem, their ideas ultimately converged into **one connected Opportunity Atlas with two complementary sides: youth-facing and employer-facing.**

- The **youth-facing side** focuses on helping young people discover, navigate, and provide feedback on career opportunities across Atlanta.
- The **employer-facing side, the Shared Employer Network**, focuses on connecting and strengthening the employers, career experiences, and supports that make those opportunities possible.

Together, these two sides form the **Opportunity Atlas** connecting what young people are looking for with the organizations, employers, and opportunities available across Atlanta.

The Opportunity Atlas

The Opportunity Atlas is emerging as a **connected career-navigation ecosystem that helps young people see, access and navigate Atlanta's career opportunities while strengthening the employer relationships and experiences available behind those opportunities.** Its premise is straightforward: APA Atlanta members and partners already offer significant career exposure, workforce preparation, internships, mentoring, professional relationships and employer connections.

The opportunity is to **organize, connect and strengthen those existing assets** so young people can more easily identify opportunities, prepare for them, move between them and share feedback about their experiences. The Atlas would have two interconnected functions: a **youth-facing navigation experience** and an **employer-facing Shared Employer Network.**

Youth-Facing: Helping Young People Find and Navigate Opportunities

The youth-facing side is emerging as a **digital Opportunity Atlas** that could help young people understand what opportunities exist across participating organizations and identify experiences relevant to their interests and goals.

12 member organizations envisioned bringing together consistent information about participating organizations, including:

- the organization and population served;
- programs and services;
- upcoming programs, events and application deadlines;
- career and industry areas represented;

- career exposure and workplace experiences;
- job-shadowing and work-based learning opportunities;
- internships and employment;
- employer partners; and
- how young people can access each opportunity.

Two practical components emerged within this concept.

Opportunity Map + Referral

The Opportunity Atlas could create a shared map and referral resource that makes career programs, experiences, and relationships across APA Atlanta members visible in one place, and helps young people move from one opportunity to the next. Rather than requiring a young person, counselor, mentor, parent, or program staff member to already know which organization offers what, the Atlas could organize opportunities around practical information such as:

- Career or industry interest: the fields a young person wants to explore.
- Type of experience: career exposure, employer site visits, job shadowing, mentoring, work-based learning, internships, or employment.
- Who the opportunity serves: age or grade level, eligibility, and populations served.
- When it is available: program dates, application windows, deadlines, and ongoing opportunities.
- How to access it: application or registration information and, importantly, opportunities for a warm referral from another participating organization.
- Who is connected to it: the APA Atlanta organization and relevant employer or industry partners.

The mapping function would help young people and the adults supporting them understand what exists across the network. The referral function would help them act on that information.

For example, a young person participating in one APA Atlanta organization might become interested in healthcare but need an experience that organization does not provide. Instead of ending the relationship at the boundary of its own programming, staff could use the Atlas to identify another member offering a relevant employer visit, job-shadowing experience, mentor connection, or internship and make a warm handoff to that organization.

Opportunity Calendar

A shared career opportunity calendar could make the Atlas actionable by showing **what is available now and what is coming next**. While the map provides visibility into the

ecosystem, the calendar could surface upcoming career fairs, workplace visits, internships, workshops, application windows and other time-bound opportunities.

Together, the map and calendar begin to create a clearer pathway through opportunities that currently sit across many different organizations.

Members did not envision the Atlas simply pushing information *to* young people. The youth-facing group developed several mechanisms for learning directly from young people and using their experiences to improve the ecosystem.

Student Entry Survey

A simple entry survey could capture:

- basic information;
- previous experiences and exposure;
- industries and careers of interest;
- personal goals; and
- qualitative questions about workforce preparedness.

This could help organizations better understand what young people are seeking and identify where the available opportunities do—or do not—match those interests.

Student Exit Survey

Following an experience, young people could share:

- lessons learned;
- value added;
- key takeaways;
- exposure gained; and
- their overall experience that could be shared across the APA Atlanta community to inform programmatic and strategic changes.

Youth Scorecard / Feedback

Members also proposed allowing young people to provide structured feedback on partner experiences, including:

- opportunities and resources offered;
- overall experience;
- benefits received;
- communication and support; and
- practices that worked particularly well.

Youth feedback could help organizations improve programming and provide another source of information about the quality of experiences being offered.

Members discussed the possibility of feedback contributing to a score or ranking of partner experiences, alongside clear communication and support for organizations to understand and respond to the feedback.

The emphasis was on **continuous improvement**: young people should help the ecosystem understand what is working and where experiences need to improve.

Peer and Trusted-Adult Navigation

Members also recognized that young people do not navigate career decisions alone.

The Atlas could intentionally incorporate support from professionals, counselors, educators, mentors and other trusted adults. Alumni and young people already working or serving within their communities could also serve as **peer navigators**, helping others understand expectations, workplace norms and what different opportunities are actually like.

This makes the Atlas both an information resource and a potential mechanism for strengthening the relationships and social capital that help young people move through career pathways.

Employer-Facing: The Shared Employer Network

The **Shared Employer Network** is the employer-facing side of the Opportunity Atlas. 7 organizations (including CareerRise) worked specifically on this part of the concept during the August session. Members described the central partner value as creating access to:

Good employers ready to connect with local young people for a variety of career opportunities along the career continuum.

Those opportunities could range from **career exploration and workplace exposure to job shadowing, internships and employment**. The concept responds to a practical challenge: individual youth-serving organizations often develop employer relationships separately even when multiple organizations are seeking similar career experiences for young people.

A Shared Employer Network could create greater visibility into:

- which employers are already connected to participating organizations;
- which industries they represent;
- what types of opportunities each employer can provide;
- where employers are interested in engaging or hiring young people; and
- where there are gaps between young people's interests and available opportunities.

Rather than treating an employer as simply “a partner,” the Atlas could eventually distinguish **how that employer is prepared to participate along the career continuum.**

What Employers Could Contribute

Members generated several concrete ways employers could engage beyond simply offering jobs. Ideas included:

- **Employer-hosted etiquette or professional-norms experiences.** Employers could help young people understand expectations and workplace culture through direct interaction rather than expecting youth-serving organizations to simulate every workplace environment.
- **Internship and job-shadowing opportunities.** Employers could offer structured experiences at different levels of commitment, creating more entry points into career exposure.
- **Generational perspective-sharing.** Young people and professionals could learn from one another about workplace expectations, communication and changing perspectives on careers.
- **Corporate/nonprofit meet-and-greets.** Members suggested formats such as “speed dating” to help organizations and employers discover potential partnerships more efficiently.
- **Youth hiring.** The network could identify employers that have a genuine interest in hiring young people and distinguish those opportunities from employers offering only exposure or volunteer engagement.
- This allows the Shared Employer Network to create a **continuum of employer engagement** rather than defining success only by the number of internships or jobs generated.

What APA Atlanta Members Can Offer Employers

Members also pushed the employer concept beyond the question of what employers could provide to nonprofits. They identified significant value that **APA Atlanta members can provide to employers seeking to cultivate early-career talent.**

Youth-serving organizations hold expertise in supporting young people that may not naturally exist within an employer’s HR or supervisory structure. Members identified potential partner-led learning and resources around:

- financial literacy;
- generational differences;
- trauma-informed approaches;
- conflict resolution;
- coaching;

- soft-skill development;
- workplace and professional norms; and
- youth employment.

Early-Career Employer Toolkit

One concrete idea was developing a **toolkit for internships and job shadowing**. Rather than simply asking employers to host young people, participating organizations could help employers think through what makes an experience meaningful: expectations, preparation, communication, onboarding, supervision, coaching and support. That creates a more reciprocal value proposition. The group acknowledges there are some toolkits that exist so more desk research is needed before next steps on this prototype.

Overall the idea was that: Employers provide career exposure, workplace relationships, learning opportunities and pathways into employment. **APA Atlanta members provide** youth-development expertise and partner-led learning that can help employers cultivate talent internally and externally while strengthening their connection to Atlanta communities.

Connecting the Youth and Employer Sides

The most important synthesis from August is that the youth-facing Opportunity Atlas and employer-facing Shared Employer Network **should not be developed as separate projects**. Together, they form the Opportunity Atlas.

The **youth-facing side** helps young people answer:

- What are young people interested in?
- What opportunities can they currently access?
- Where do they need more exposure or support?
- How did they experience the opportunities they participated in?

The **employer-facing side** helps answer:

- Which employers are available?
- What industries and careers do they represent?
- What types of experiences can they provide?
- Where are employers interested in early-career talent?
- What support could help them provide stronger experiences?

Connecting the two creates a potential **learning loop across young people, youth-serving organizations and employers**.

For example, if young people repeatedly identify interest in an industry where few opportunities exist, that information could inform employer engagement. If CareerRise identifies employers or high-demand industries seeking stronger early-career pipelines, those opportunities could become visible through the Atlas and connected to relevant APA Atlanta organizations. If youth feedback shows that internship participants struggle with onboarding or workplace expectations, APA members could use their collective expertise to strengthen employer resources and learning. And as employers add career conversations, workplace visits, job shadows, internships or employment opportunities, those experiences could flow back into the Opportunity Map and Calendar.

The Atlas therefore seeks to connect **what young people want and experience, what youth-serving organizations already provide, and what employers need and can offer.**

Where We Go From Here: Prototype Before Building

August provided enough clarity to begin testing the Opportunity Atlas without first determining what the final platform, technology or governance structure needs to be. The next phase should begin with **the actual assets already inside the APA Atlanta community.**

Prototype 1: Build a First Opportunity Map

Start with participating APA Atlanta organizations and map a consistent set of information:

Organization | Population/Ages Served | Career/Industry Areas | Opportunities Offered | Timing | Eligibility | Employer Partners | How to Access

This creates a low-fidelity version of the youth-facing Atlas using real programs rather than designing technology first. APA Atlanta will connect with **United Way of Greater Atlanta, RIICE, Neighborhood Nexus, and other ecosystem partners across the city** to understand what infrastructure already exists, what can be built upon and what information APA Atlanta members uniquely contribute.

Prototype 2: Layer in a Shared Career Opportunity Calendar

Use the same member network to create a coordinated calendar of actual upcoming career exploration experiences, employer visits, job shadows, internship windows, career fairs, workshops, work-based learning opportunities and application deadlines.

The **map answers “What exists?”** while the **calendar answers “What can I access now or next?”**

Testing both together would help determine what information young people and organizations actually use before investing in a more sophisticated digital tool.

Prototype 3: Test the Employer Connection With CareerRise

On the employer-facing side, the prototype is emerging less as another technology product and more as a **strategic partnership with CareerRise as an employer intermediary**.

APA Atlanta and CareerRise can begin testing how employer and industry information connects back to the Opportunity Atlas: which employers are interested in career exposure, job shadows, internships or hiring; where there are high-demand industries; and where member organizations could collectively help employers strengthen their early-career practices. APA Atlanta and CareerRise can explore next steps for a specific employer-facing pilot (like the toolkit) in the following months during the Early Career Community of Practice.

The purpose of these prototypes would be not to prove that every component of the Opportunity Atlas should be built.

It is to learn whether connecting these assets creates meaningful value:

- Can young people more easily see and navigate opportunities connected to APA Atlanta?
- Can organizations make stronger connections across programs?
- Can youth feedback improve experiences? Can employers access youth-development expertise that helps them better engage early-career talent?
- And can CareerRise and APA Atlanta create a stronger bridge between Atlanta's youth-serving and employer ecosystems?

In the spirit of centering youth-voice, young people nominated by APA Atlanta members will be part of testing and shaping what comes next. APA Atlanta plans to engage approximately **20 Atlanta young people ages 16–24 in paid feedback opportunities this fall** including a 60–90 minute feedback session and short survey. Rather than building a tool and then asking young people whether it works, the goal is to put early versions of the Opportunity Map, calendar and navigation concepts directly in front of young people to understand what is useful, confusing or missing and how they would actually want to find and navigate career opportunities.

Those learnings can inform what the Opportunity Atlas becomes next.

Organizations present at the August Convening included: Moving in the Spirit, HYPE, GeorgiaForward, 21st Century Leaders, Achieve Atlanta, Re:Imagine ATL, MAAC, The Village Method, Café Momentum Atlanta, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPÉE), CareerRise, Soccer in the Streets, Grove Park Foundation, VOX ATL, HealthMPowers,

Appendix: APA Atlanta Fall Events Calendar

August

August 13 | Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education — Critical Issues Forum

9:30 AM–12:00 PM | The Gathering Spot

Conversation with the candidates for Georgia State School Superintendent, plus a panel exploring research and data on the needs of Georgia students. Students are welcome.

@Bre West can share more.

August 15 | VOX ATL — Open House

1:00–3:00 PM

For young people interested in storytelling, podcasting, writing, production, broadcast journalism and more. Prospective partners are also welcome. Applications are currently open for VOX ATL's Journalism Fellowship, VOX Studios and Youth Voice Leadership Accelerator. @Charaun Cash can share more.

August 27 | Café Momentum Atlanta — Momentum in Action: One Year Strong

6:00 PM | Café Momentum, 200 Peachtree Street

Celebrate Café Momentum Atlanta's one-year anniversary and the young people at the heart of its work. Funds raised support programming for justice-involved youth ages 15–19. @Sandy Welfare can share more.

August 29 | Moving in the Spirit — Annual Open House

Facility tours, sample dance classes and teacher meet-and-greets for young people and families interested in Moving in the Spirit's programming.

[Learn more about the Open House](#)

@Selena Harper can share more.

August 30 | HYPE — HYPE Project Application Deadline

Afterschool coding program for 6th–12th graders, with fall cohorts in Web Design Principles and Intro to Generative AI.

[Student application](#)

@Keonia Rodgers can share more.

August 31 | GeorgiaForward — Pickleball Fundraiser

Macon, GA

Includes a beginner pickleball lesson and round-robin play, so no prior experience is required. @Sadie Krawczyk can share more.

September

September 11 | Hands On Atlanta — 9/11 Day

Join Hands On Atlanta as a meal pack supporter or task leader as Atlanta commemorates the 25th anniversary of 9/11 through service. @Chanika R. Perry can share more.

September 11 | RedefinED Atlanta — A City Changing: Funding Student Opportunity

RedefinED Atlanta's annual A City Changing convening brings together leaders and community members around expanding opportunity for Atlanta students. @Mary-Kate Starkel can share more.

September 13 | HYPE — Leadership Academy Application Deadline

Internship placement program for 10th–12th graders with computer science experience, pairing employer experiences with professional development and career-readiness support. @Keonia Rodgers can share more.

September 23 | Achieve Atlanta — Community Breakfast

Join Achieve Atlanta for its upcoming fall Community Breakfast and conversation. @Shannon can share more.

September 30 | CareerRise — Workforce Excellence Summit

An opportunity to connect with Atlanta's broader workforce ecosystem and learn more about CareerRise's systems-level workforce development and industry partnership work.

October

October 1 | Grove Park Foundation — Grove Park Heroes

Celebrate community leaders working across education, housing, economic development and community development while supporting Grove Park Foundation's work.

[Learn more about Grove Park Heroes](#)

@Roy Cogdell can share more.

October 1 | GeorgiaForward — Young Gamechangers Applications Open

Applications expected to open for the 2027 Young Gamechangers cohort, an eight-month leadership and community development experience for professionals ages 25–40. @Tavari Turner can share more.

October 8 | APA Atlanta — Final In-Person Member Convening of 2026

Collective Action Kickoff. Stay tuned for the agenda and additional details.

October 9 | Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta + Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia — State of the Georgia Girl Report Launch

8:30 AM | Plywood Place

Breakfast and panel discussion celebrating the release of a new research-backed look at the needs, lived experiences and opportunities of girls across Georgia. Attendees will also get first access to the report. @Bryanne can share more.

October | OneGoal — Student Summit

Career exploration, campus exposure and skill development for juniors across OneGoal's partner high schools. Not open to the general public. @Nicole Dupree Plummer can share more.

October 23 | GeorgiaForward — Golf Tournament Fundraiser

Marietta Municipal Golf Course

Join GeorgiaForward for its fall golf tournament fundraiser. @Sadie Krawczyk can share more.

October 29 | GeorgiaForward — Young Gamechangers Final Community Presentation

Hinesville/Liberty County

The current Young Gamechangers cohort will share its final community presentation after working together on collaborative problem-solving and community development. @Tavari Turner can share more.

November

November 5 | GLISI — Resilience Sampler

9:00 AM–12:00 PM

Open to APA community leaders and focused on investing in your resilience as a human-centered leader. @Leslie Hazlebussey and @Meca Mohammed can share more.

November 14 | Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC) — Hope in Every Step

Piedmont Park

MAAC's second annual walk for youth mental health, focused on the intersection of mental health and the experiences of young people in foster care. @Victoria Salzman can share more.

Also Coming Up

HEY! — Kathryn Johnston Memorial Garden opening. @KaCey Venning and @coachboyd can share more.

21st Century Leaders — Leadership Connect Youth Entrepreneurship Day. @Aaron Quinney can share more.

Emerging 100 of Atlanta — Park 100 Social Fundraiser, Atlanta Hawks Million Meal Pack and Fall Collegiate Career Fair. @Tony Price can share more.

Atlanta CASA — Holiday Wrap 2026 volunteer and community partner opportunities. @Domonique Cooper can share more.

Moving in the Spirit — 40th Anniversary events throughout the year. @Selena Harper can share more.