



2016 ACTION PLAN

“My goal from the first day I took office, has been to create the most talented, educated, and entrepreneurial city in the southeast, if not all of America. Over the last five years, I believe we have taken significant steps to achieve just that. However, we must work to ensure all of Columbia is aboard for that journey. The work we do through My Brother’s Keeper Columbia ensures just that. But, to achieve this goal and make it a reality, we must all be involved and roll up our sleeves together.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Benjamin".

MBK Advisory Board:

Mayor Benjamin announced members of the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) Columbia Advisory Board, which will determine the scalability of all proposed MBK programs in the city. The advisory board will create criteria for the “MBK Columbia” partnership organizations and determine how and which organizations will be eligible for participation and support.

The MBK Columbia Advisory Board members are:

- **Dr. John Dozier** - Chief Diversity Officer and Senior Associate Provost for Inclusion for the University of South Carolina
- **Tommy Preston** - Director National Strategy & Engagement at Boeing and National President of the Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholars Alumni Association.
- **Anita Floyd** - Senior Vice president for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation at United Way of the Midlands
- **Rev. Aaron Bishop** - Commissioner of Richland School District One School Board
- **Chip Jackson** - Commissioner of Richland School District Two School Board
- **Dr. Anna Scheyett** - Dean of the University of South Carolina's College of Social Work
- **Dr. Stuart Hamilton** - Eau Claire Cooperative Health
- **Ted Creech** - Director of External Affairs & Chair of Policy Committee of the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- **Julie Smithwick** - Executive Director of SC PASOs
- **Dr. Tanya Smith Brice** - Dean of Benedict College’s School of Education, Health, and Human Services



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MBK Challenge

In February 2014, President Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and to ensure all young people can reach their full potential. The initiative seeks to organize and capitalize on the commitment of community leaders in order to reach that goal.

This past fall, the Administration took a crucial step in this effort by issuing a challenge to cities across the country to become "MBK Communities." This challenge was a call to action for all members of our communities, and Mayors, in particular as they often sit at the intersection of many of the vital forces and structural components needed to enact sustainable change through policy, programs, and partnerships.

MBK Columbia

Columbia immediately accepted the My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge focusing on **ensuring all children enter school ready** and **ensuring all children read at grade level by 3rd grade**. On October 10th



2014, Columbia held the third Local Action Summit in the country by pulling together key stakeholders: Richland School Districts One & Two, Richland County, the Columbia Police Department, and Richland County Sheriff's Department. Facilitated by The Weather's Group, the Local Action Summit helped assess the needs and

assets of our community.

The community's collaborative efforts will be formalized to implement a coherent "cradle – to – college-and – career strategy" for improving the life outcomes of all young people. One effort under this commitment will create a 'My Brother's Keeper Columbia' designation based on the six goals of the My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge for organizations (businesses, school districts, nonprofits, churches, etc.) to receive.

The designation will also aid in efforts to have a repository of information and to create standards for tracking/sharing data among public agencies and community partners.

"Our youth need reassurance and evidence our city is actively seeking ways to help them succeed," said Mayor Benjamin. "It is up to us to foster these discussions and give them the tools they need to achieve their goals. Columbia, please register any youth

The conversation at the summit allowed the city to identify best practices in the community such as the Lower Richland STEM program.



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Milestone 1: All Children Enter School Ready

Lead: EdVenture

EdVenture is a children's museum, located in Columbia, South Carolina with an incredible number of opportunities for children and families that are designed to increase the likelihood of children reading well and ready to enter the 3rd grade. With dozens of engaging hands-on school and group programs, series classes (including Giggle Science and Scouting School, both designed to prepare children for kindergarten), and family programs offered throughout the year at the museum, EdVenture has a long history of dedicating its efforts on school readiness and literacy. Our library, in partnership with the Richland County Library, located at the foot of EDDIE is a popular destination for children and families.

Below are some of the highly successful activities led by Team EdVenture, each contributing to the importance of school readiness and the importance of creating a community of readers:

“Countdown to Kindergarten”

The Countdown to Kindergarten Celebration is an annual FREE educational and fun festivity for rising kindergartners and their families to mark the exciting transition into kindergarten. The celebration, taking place on the first Friday of August each year, will give rising kindergartners' their first chance at conquering skills necessary to succeed at school. Students can practice getting on and off a school bus, holding lunch trays, tasting nutritious snacks, and enjoying hands-on learning activities at the museum. Families can connect with representatives from school districts, state agencies and community organizations to learn about educational, health and community resources available to them, while health personnel will be on hand to provide free dental and vision screenings. As one of the most visible resources for children and families in South Carolina, EdVenture gathers families, educators and community members in an effort to support this transition as a significant educational and developmental milestone in a child's life.

Needs: reach out to PNC Grow up Great for partnership, strategic objectives and data



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Milestone 2: All Children Read at Grade Level by Grade 2

Lead: United Way of the Midlands: Midlands Reading Consortium (MRC)

The United Way of the Midlands mission is to unite people and resources to improve the quality of life in the Midlands. The organization to determine and respond to the critical human service needs of the community. Community volunteers in three councils focused on education, financial stability and health develop and review a community-wide needs assessment to determine key issues in the community.



The Midlands Reading Consortium (MRC) is a volunteer tutoring initiative targeting pre-kindergarten through third-grade students, with a partnership between United Way of the Midlands, Lexington School District Two, Lexington School District Five, Richland School District One and Richland School District Two.

The Challenge:

Children who are reading at grade level by third grade are on a path to future success in education, employment and life, following the cradle-to-college-to-career pathway that MBK seeks to establish.

The MRC target population is at risk pre-K through third grade students who struggle with reading and language development and attend schools from three districts across two counties in the metro areas of Columbia. The districts must have signed MOAs with United Way of the Midlands. The schools are typically Title One with 55 – 98 percent student free and reduced lunch. Nearly 30 percent of students enter kindergarten “not ready” based on school assessments. MRC students reflect the target population. On average of the 2100 students served through MRC 86 percent have been African American, 10 percent White, and 4 percent Hispanic.

MBK Strategic Objective:

#READINGISOURSUPERPOWER 2015-2016. United Way just finished up MRC tutoring for the year at 19 schools across the Midlands. This year, 360 volunteers worked with 490 elementary school kids to help them get back to reading on grade level. At United Way, one of the goals is to ensure each student in the Midlands is reading on grade level by the 4th grade. If they are not, they are four times more likely not to graduate on time. This year, the students read a total of **8,483 books** (that's 140,150 pages!) with their tutors. Each school threw an end-of-the-year celebration for the students and their tutors with the theme "Reading is Our Superpower." The students celebrated by making superhero masks, spending special time with their tutors and taking home books to read for the summer to help prevent summer learning loss.

Become a tutor for the Midlands Reading Consortium by contacting Kimberly House (803) 758-6983 or khhouse@uway.org



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Mayor's Books 2 Boys

Mayor's Books 2 Boys mission is to encourage reading among young boys and their families in the City of Columbia and the Midlands

Education research has consistently shown an ever-present gender gap in early literacy. According to The Boys' Reading Commission, by five years old, boys lag behind girls by 11 percentage points in reading achievement. By age 13, the gap has increased to 12 percentage points. The statistics are even more startling for children of color from low-income families. Data analysis by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Data Center found by fourth grade, only 10 percent of African-American boys and 14 percent of Hispanic boys are reading proficiently, compared to 25 percent for their white peers.

The Mayor's Books 2 Boys initiative strives to lessen this early reading achievement gap by getting books into the hands of boys, especially African-American and Hispanic boys. To this end, the program will partner with the City of Columbia's Park and Recreation facilities to distribute books to participating youth and youth sports teams. The Books 2 Boys initiative will also place a permanent curated collection of youth and teen materials at city recreation facilities.



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Milestone 3: Ensure All Youth Graduate from High School

Lead: Lower Richland Stem Program

The Lower Richland Stem Program mission is to expose students will prepare them for advanced study at the collegiate level, as well as highly skilled careers with our state's most innovative companies. Students, parents and teachers in the STEM program also benefit from exposure to a wide variety of enrichment and resources outside of the classroom.

The Challenge:

Lower Richland High School was school identified in the school improvement category which meant they had a “persistently low achieving” rating and were performing in the bottom 5 percent of that without signs of growth and/or had a graduation rate below 60 percent.

MBK Strategic Objective:

In 2011, Lower Richland High School was awarded a “Student Improvement Grant” (SIG) through the US Department of Education. With model options from SIG, Lower Richland chose a Turnaround Model in their proceedings. The Turnaround Model replaces the principal, screen existing school staff, and rehire more than half the teachers; adopt a new governance structure; and improve the school through curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.



Lower Richland started its journey by implementing those action within the Turnaround Model, reorganizing the school structure into divisions with new leadership and internal accountability focused on test performance, career pathways, connection students 21st century through STEM.

- In June 2013, EngenuitySC partnered with Lower Richland for the remaining year of the SIG and focused on creative alternatives to education for students, teachers and parents on the importance of STEM education through exposure to regional career opportunities available up upon graduation.
- In 2014, Lower Richland has 85.1 percent of students passing HSAP on the first attempt, a 6 point increase.
- In 2014, Lower Richland 10th graders saw 40 percent improvement in the number passed the HSAP exit exam after failing the companion exam two years earlier in the 8th grade.
- In five years, Lower Richland saw the number of students taking AP courses jump by 81 percent with 4.8 percent increase in students scoring 3 or higher on the exams
- From 2011 – 2014, Lower Richland reduces expulsions by over 99 percent (123 to 1)
- From 2011- 2014, Lower Richland reduced out of school suspensions by 19 percent (724 to 586)



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Richland One hopes to expand this program to middle schools and elementary schools.

Edventure (Future Leaders Program)

The EdVenture Future Leaders (Leader's Academy) program is designed to impact underserved students in sixth through eighth grades and inspire them to develop life and leadership skills to achieve their education, career, and life goals. In today's society, we as leaders are responsible for shaping and molding our future leaders of tomorrow. As advocates for education and the education of our children, we are the ones that will make it possible for these individuals to thrive in the world in which we live.

Due to overwhelming emphasis on STEAM-related fields and the preparation for student growth and achievement in these areas of science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics, Future Leaders (Leader's Academy) strengthens this content knowledge and emphasizes development of life and leadership skills through an integrated, project-based learning/teaching strategy, addressing the whole student.

The goals of the Future Leaders Program are to strengthen students' 21st Century skills, offer workforce development opportunities, develop in the different aspects of leadership and engage in civic responsibility that directly impacts the community in which the Leaders live, and appropriately socialize our students to function in diverse settings and realize their full potential. Having implemented the Future Leaders Program since 2006, EdVenture has found several positive results, including its impact on:

- promoting creative thinking to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills,
- increasing self-confidence while encouraging respect for others,
- building on collaborative learning and leadership skills already taught in school,
- encouraging youth to stay in school, providing opportunities to embrace learning as a lifelong practice,
- increasing understanding and awareness of STEAM related learning opportunities and careers,
- linking students to professionals in STEAM careers, and
- providing students with hands-on STEAM learning opportunities to spark an interest and excitement in the sciences.

These are the skills that need strengthening in our education system and are necessary to transform our students to be strategic thinkers, problem solvers, and innovators. The Future Leaders Academy addresses the skills identified in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*, including creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and teamwork, communication, information, media and technology; and knowing how to learn.

While participating in the Future Leaders Academy, students will actively engage in "real world experience" and application. The activities are designed to reinforce and build essential characteristics necessary for the workplace, such as integrity, self-direction, global perspective, perseverance, work ethic, and interpersonal skills. Through collaborative efforts with identified partner schools, EdVenture will offer a customized program based on the schools' needs. While some schools elect a two 8-week sessions over two quarters, working with 25 students each for a 90-minute session per school, some choose a twelve-week series of one hour programs.



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Why Future Leaders Matters

Youth development, the process of growing and developing one's abilities and talents, happens no matter what we do. The challenge is to promote positive youth development and plan quality experiences with young people that, not only develops the student in an academic manner, but the whole person. All young people need supports and opportunities to make a successful transition to adulthood. The focus of the positive youth development approach is to help youth acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become healthy and productive citizens. Positive youth development builds on young people's strengths and recognizes their unique abilities to contribute to the society that the young people will inherit.



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Milestone 4: Ensure Post-Secondary Education

Lead: DIG Camp

DIG Camp is an innovation camp for middle school and high school-aged students. Hosted at the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business, its goal is to spark students' interest in STEM careers through hands-on, project-based learning in ideation science, prototyping, 3D design and mobile applications. The camp runs as an innovation tournament during which students will work in teams to search for solutions, tackle challenging content, design their own creations, and test viable businesses, products and services.

The focus for 2016 is social innovation and helping communities. Students will gain experience in problem-solving and creating solutions for innovation hurdles in a fun and interactive setting. The goal is to create a safe space for learning and to introduce



DIG Camp
Design | Innovate | Grow

students (especially underrepresented populations/demographics) to the tech field, innovation, and STEM. The emphasis throughout is on developing problem solving skills, applying them to real innovation hurdles, and having fun. The City of Columbia, through its MBK efforts, is working to promote recruit/identify attendees for and provide funding for the camp.

For more information and for sponsorship or volunteer opportunities, visit digcamp.weebly.com or email digcampsc@gmail.com.



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Milestone 5: Ensure All Youth Out of School Are Employed

Lead: Columbia Urban League - SWELP

The Columbia Urban League's Summer Work Experience Leadership, SWELP, is an evidence-based, best-practice, career development program for youth ages 14-19. Each summer, SWELP provides over 500 youth with valuable work experience that helps foster a strong work ethic and self-esteem.

The Challenge:

To create the most talented, educated and entrepreneurial city in the southeast, if not all of America we have to ensure our city's youth of color are exposed to jobs and valuable work experience. The opportunity of employment is an important step during their transition into adulthood. It assures they have a chance to have an independent and self-reliant lifestyle. For youth who live in low income communities or experiences disadvantages, employment is often a novelty that is proven to help them attain a better life.

MBK Strategic Objective:

The program consisted of four classes. Each class lasted for a duration of two weeks. The first class began on June 15, 2015, and the last class concluded on August 7, 2015. More than a 1,000 youth inquiring about summer job opportunities and a considerable amount of support from the City of Columbia including financial assistance and jobsite placements we were able to employ nearly 500 deserving youth. The purpose of this program is to assist primarily underserved youth in becoming productive and contributing members of society. This program focuses on the development of work ethic and life-skills, which are the foundation for obtaining academic achievement and success

This year, the Columbia Urban League provided invaluable work experience to nearly 500 youth residing in the greater Columbia area, 60 percent of which came from disadvantaged households. Participants reported having a beneficial experience that provided knowledge of careers, enhanced their social skills and cultivated long-term positive relationships with caring adults in the work place.



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Milestone 6: Prevent Youth Violence

The Lead: Columbia Police Department

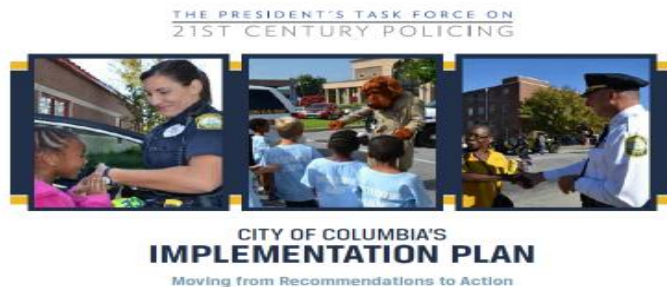
The Challenge:

Police-community relations must be strong if a city is to have effective policing and create a safe environment for our youth.

Need: Data on crime in city involving youth

MBK Strategic Objective:

In December 2014, in response to a number of serious incidents between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve, President Obama issued an Executive Order establishing the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The mission of the Task Force was to identify best practices and make recommendations to the President on how policing practices can promote effective crime reduction while, at the same time, build public trust. As a result, in May 2015, the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing was submitted to the President. The report contains 59 recommendations and 92 action items organized around six main topic areas or "pillars:"



The six topic areas are:

1. Building trust and legitimacy
2. Policy and oversight
3. Technology and social media
4. Community policing and crime reduction
5. Officer training and education
6. Officer wellness and safety

The Columbia Police Department (CPD) has begun a detailed review of the Task Force report and recommendations. To support a comprehensive approach to reduce crime and build trust and legitimacy, implementation of the recommendations must come as a result of collaboration between city government officials, the Columbia Police Department and the community. The Columbia Police Department's Citizen Advisory Council (CAC), which is comprised of representatives from relevant constituent groups, will serve as the mechanism for collaborative implementation. Internally, the Columbia Police Department's Office of Professional Standards will monitor progress of the Department's implementation of recommendations and provide regular progress reports to the Chief of Police, command staff and city council. A matrix has been created for the purpose of tracking the Department's progress that lists the recommendations, responsible personnel and budget implications