

## Call to Action from President Obama

*“If America stands for anything, it stands for the idea of opportunity for everybody; the notion that no matter who you are, or where you came from, or the circumstances into which you were born, if you work hard, if you take responsibility, then you can make it in this country...”*

*– President Barack Obama, February 27, 2014.*

President Obama established My Brother’s Keeper in February 2014 to address persistent opportunity gaps facing boys and young men of color and to ensure all youth can reach their full potential. The MBK Alliance was launched as an independent, nonpartisan 501(c)(3) entity in 2015 to scale and sustain this critical mission.

Since that launch, a national movement has grown resulting in nearly 250 cities, counties, and Tribal Nations accepting the MBK Community Challenge; scores of new policy initiatives being implemented; and an exponential increase in aligned private sector commitments — all helping to

reduce barriers and expand opportunity from cradle to career.

Today, the My Brother’s Keeper Alliance, along with cross-sector partners, works to accelerate impact in targeted communities, mobilize citizens and resources, and promote what works — all with the goal of encouraging mentorship, reducing youth violence, and improving life

outcomes for boys and young men of color.



*Image credit: Getty images.*

As of Fall 2017, the MBK Alliance transitioned from an independent nonprofit organization to a core initiative of the Obama Foundation. President Obama has stated repeatedly that the mission of MBK would be part of his life’s work. This exciting move demonstrates the President’s continued commitment to the work, and, by joining forces, both organizations are better equipped

to meet the shared goal of an America where every child can reach their full potential no matter who they are or where they come from.

For more information about the MBK Alliance, visit <https://www.mbkalliance.org/>.

## Our Region's Response

### Regional Commitment

The City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County embraced President Obama's call to action for My Brother's Keeper. In 2015, Mayor Bill Peduto, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, and community leadership created a cross-sector alliance and made a firm commitment to join the national effort by creating a more equitable and inclusive Pittsburgh. Together, this group of partners is dedicated to creating a community where all residents—especially boys and young men of color—are able to benefit from the growth and improvements made over the last decade in Pittsburgh.

After reviewing demographic, social, economic, and crime data as well as numerous community and academic reports, a 16-member committee, with representatives from academia, the clergy, community groups, police, city and county government, and local school systems, was created and charged to draft the local MBK Playbook.

### The MBK Playbook

Following a round of community feedback sessions and a stakeholder analysis, the My Brother's Keeper Pittsburgh-Allegheny County Playbook was released in October 2015. The MBK Playbook identifies numerous strategies to achieve social and economic equity, and includes a review of community initiatives (entitled "Current Keepers") congruent to each goal. The 6 goals outlined in the Playbook include:

1. All of our children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally prepared.
2. All of our children read at grade level by third grade.
3. All of our young people complete post-secondary education or training.
4. All of our young people graduate from college.
5. All of our youth who have graduated from college or a training program are employed.
6. All of our young people are safe from violent crime, and, those who need it, receive the second chance they deserve.



Additionally, lead organizations—nonprofits, federal, county and city government, and community and economic development groups—were identified to ensure the achievement of specific community objectives that commit to "Keeping Hope and Opportunity."

[Read the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County's plan for addressing opportunity gaps for boys and young men of color >>](#)

## 2016-2017 Action Areas

In 2016, MBK Pittsburgh-Allegheny County began setting the foundation for the initiative by identifying a steward, developing evaluation tools for programming and activities, and seeking input from the boys and young men of color MBK aims to serve. These measures allowed for more intentional MBK programming in 2017 that worked toward planning for and making progress on the goals outlined in the Playbook, specifically Goal 5: All of our youth who have graduated from college or a training program are employed.

In spring 2017, the UrbanKind Institute report then informed the development of a community of practice called the MBK Digital Literacy Collaborative (DLC). The DLC connected with youth-serving organizations that can reach youth (particularly young men of color aged 16-24) in out-of-school-time settings to organizations with demonstrated deep experience in mentorship, youth leadership, and/or digital literacy best practices. Through a series of 3 professional developmental and technical assistance sessions during summer 2017, the partners worked to develop case studies of high-quality program examples and refine plans for 2017-18 programming.

Additional funding was then given to pilot projects in fall 2017 that emerged from the DLC, working to integrate 21st century skills into established out-of-school programs. A public progress update November 2017 informed the community about updates from each of the DLC partners and shared summaries of the case study findings developed through the DLC process.

On behalf of the local MBK Committee, Homewood Children's Village and The Sprout Fund facilitated a community-based planning process to determine the future of the MBK initiative in the region during fall/winter 2017. A listening tour was conducted and 3 community feedback sessions were held throughout Pittsburgh and Allegheny County to solicit feedback from community stakeholders as well as boys and young men of color. Additionally, a survey was used to confirm the findings from the feedback sessions and solicit input from the broader community to further prioritize future activities that MBK will lead.

## 2018-2019 Action Areas

In 2018, MBK PAC identified the POISE Foundation as the fiscal sponsor for the initiative and submitted a funding request to support the MBK Action Plan for 2 years. This action plan— built by the community-based planning process— highlighted **the following matters as being of utmost importance:**

- Bring benefit to the lived experience of boys and young men of color
- Increase participation in programs serving boys and young men of color



- Increase quality of programs serving boys and young men of color
- Work on issues related to education, social-emotional health, career-readiness, employment, and public safety

To execute against these priorities, the following foundational annual priorities rose to the top:



- **Stewardship & Human Capital:** MBK PAC must be backed by a strong stewardship organization and staffed by at least one full-time employee who can act as a steward for the initiative.
- **Heartbeat Activities:** MBK PAC must offer ongoing programmatic “heartbeat” activities that are designed to create a consistent pulse of information, activity, and engagement related to MBK.
- **Strategic Initiatives:** MBK PAC must occasionally tackle larger projects by implementing strategic initiatives that require dedicated effort and funding over a longer timeframe.
- **Research and Evaluation:** MBK PAC must be able to evaluate its impact on the community in an ongoing and meaningful fashion.

These priorities are to be born out via the baseline functions of MBK PAC: **Coordinate, Communicate, and Convene**

Coordinate	Communicate	Convene
Network Strategy	Shared Brand	Network Activation
Partner Check-ins	Social Media	Community Conversations
Program Connections	Digital Directory	Annual Gathering
Policy Coordination	Multimedia Stories	

## Coordinate

*MBK PAC will build a structure for MBK in the region that enables partner organizations to do what they do best, while collaborating across critical topic areas and sharing resources effectively.*

MBK PAC will **establish a guiding vision and set a strategy** to achieve that vision. Through the 2017 MBK planning process, we created opportunities for partner organizations, community stakeholders, and youth to have a meaningful role in the development of a strategic vision and setting shared long-term goals. To maintain that vision and continuously strategize about more effective ways to achieve our shared goals, MBK PAC will **host regular check-ins with partner organizations** to better understand their needs and interests and seek feedback about MBK PAC's progress.

Individual partner organizations have to focus on their unique missions, whether that's running an afterschool program, educating students in school, offering community health services, or growing a successful business. Intermediary organizations—those that provide support (financial or otherwise) to front-line organizations—are well positioned to coordinate activities and delivering other support services.

Coordination with other organizations not yet formally involved in MBK PAC will also be critical to the long-term health of the initiative. External partners will become increasingly important as our work grows in scale and complexity. MBK PAC will **connect peer organizations offering complementary programming** to help spur on collaboration and pathways among programs serving boys and young men of color.

Lastly, the MBK leadership team will engage in advocacy work and **coordinate responses to policies that support boys and young men of color**. This will assure that MBK PAC's priorities are made known to local and state legislators. Moreover, this dimension of the work will allow the MBK PAC team to speak on behalf of the entire network, with one voice.

## Communicate

*MBK PAC will amplify the voices of partner organizations and the youth they serve by documenting success, sharing stories, and contributing to the national MBK conversation.*

We will **create a strong, recognizable brand/identity for MBK PAC** that boys and young men of color embrace and partner organizations can share to advocate for MBK in the community. We will deploy tactics that raise greater awareness among local audiences and stakeholders that



**promote MBK-affiliated organizations as go-to resources** for boys and young men of color and clearly communicate MBK's purpose and local process to community members, especially program providers.

We will **establish a social media presence** that speaks on behalf of MBK stakeholders and use shared hashtags so that network members can contribute to the conversation. In addition, when possible, we will use traditional forms of advertising and marketing and media partnerships to communicate about the resources and opportunities available to boys and young men of color.

We will **create a digital directory** that collects the basic information and contact details for the people, programs, and organizations that make up MBK PAC. We will also collect and share valuable resources, and we will keep partner organizations informed of upcoming events and opportunities via a calendar.

Finally, we will **capture and share stories with the broader community** that highlight the accomplishments of boys and young men of color in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Photography, web videos, and written blog posts are often the best way to tell the story of impact of MBK PAC that goes beyond the data we collect. In the future, a shared library of multimedia assets will be invaluable in building a comprehensive public relations strategy and pitching stories to attract national media attention.

In sum, MBK PAC will rely on regular, effective communications to keep all partner organizations and local stakeholders fully informed and engaged. Establishing regular, robust communications methods enhances the ability of partner organizations to engage and collaborate with one another and national peers.

## Convene

***MBK PAC will keep partner organizations engaged by providing them with ongoing opportunities to grow professionally and participate in the creation of a local community of practice.***

MBK PAC seeks to achieve something that none of its member organizations can achieve alone. To be successful, MBK PAC must work in the spaces between organizations—the interstitial pockets of opportunity. This can only be achieved by **recruiting and activating a network of organizations** committed to support MBK Goal Area outcomes. Regularly convening the network will help create the conditions for collaboration.

Building an enduring collaborative initiative requires us to continue to bring people together and regularly convene relevant organizations at shared tables. MBK PAC will maintain **robust and**



**focused community conversations** about the issues and opportunities facing boys and young men of color through a variety of activities—from face-to-face in-person meetings to virtual exchanges taking place online. These discussions will range in terms of size, duration, and formality throughout the year.

As MBK PAC grows, we'll need to build widespread public awareness of how it positively affects boys and young men of color. On an annual basis, MBK PAC will **gather partner organizations to celebrate their individual and collective achievements**, reflect on all that has been accomplished over the year, hear from youth directly served by partners, and energize all MBK PAC stakeholders for the work that is still ahead.

## Strategic Initiatives

MBK PAC enhances its role as a local leader and coordinator when it connects with stakeholders, funders, partners, and policy makers. Moreover, burgeoning regional and national relationships may also attract additional investment for the initiative as a whole or for individual partner organizations.

Building on this success, MBK PAC will continually survey the landscape and determine strategic initiatives that would add unique value to the community and the lives of boys and young men of color. **Strategic initiatives are large, involved, partnership-driven, and require dedicated staff and funding over a longer timeframe.**

The following strategic initiatives received the highest marks during the planning process (listed in descending order of identified importance):

- 1. Mentorship** ★★★★★  
Support mentorship activities that serve boys and young men of color and connect them to local opportunities for growth and enrichment
- 2. Youth Summit** ★★★★★  
Design and host a region-wide youth summit to lift up the voices of young people across Pittsburgh and Allegheny County
- 3. Community of Practice** ★★★★★  
Effectively connect organizations that serve boys and young men of color and share best practices among program providers; specific topic TBD





4. **Catalytic Grants** ★★★★★

Offer occasional mini-grant programs to catalyze new projects that increase collaboration between MBK stakeholders

5. **Ambassadors** ★★★★★

Develop and equip ambassadors who can support the work of MBK at the neighborhood level

When the heartbeat activities and strategic initiatives are combined, they will create a consistent flow of activity that will help raise the visibility of MBK PAC, increase collaboration between partner organizations, and, most importantly, increase opportunities for boys and young men of color in the Pittsburgh region.