



“ING shares the Alliance’s passion to invest in the future of America’s young people.”

*-Rhonda Mims, president, ING Foundation*

## **Solano County, California Application**

### **Section 1: Community Demographics**

**This section will not count toward your final score.**

In assessing your responses throughout the application, it is often helpful to know more about the demographic makeup of your community. All demographic information requested in this section can be found using U.S. Census Bureau data, available online at [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en).

#### **1.1 Total community population**

What is the total population of your community?

Status: Final

407234

#### **1.2 Community Youth Population**

What is the number of 0-18 year olds in your community?

Status: Final

104494

#### **1.3 Community Ethnicity**

Please provide the ethnic breakdown of your community by providing percentages for each ethnicity.

(The total of the percentages provided need not equal 100%)

Status: Final

White: 56  
Black or African American: 14.9  
American Indian and Alaska Native: .78  
Asian: 12.7  
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander: .13  
Some other race: 8  
Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 17.6

## Section 2: Overview

**This section is worth 50 points. A total of 500 points are available for the application.**

In our search for America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, we are looking for communities that work across sectors to address the local dropout issue, reduce challenges young people face, and better prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. We understand the inherent challenges involved in significantly curbing the dropout rate, and therefore "Best" does not mean perfect, but committed.

### 2.1 Your Community as a 100 Best Communities for Young People

Why is your community one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People?

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

Solano County's abiding commitment to children and youth is deeply rooted in our community culture. Embracing our rich diversity - geographic, ethnic and economic - we grow and support champions in our neighborhoods and institutions, savor the uplifting times, draw lessons and strength from tragic events, and just never quit working together to make our children healthier, safer, and better-prepared to graduate and become productive and happy members of our workforce and our society.

We CARE...about our children, each other, and our community, as demonstrated by the many community collaboratives, plethora of opportunities for children and youth and legions of caring adults selflessly working to shepherd them toward a brighter future;

We COLLABORATE...to leverage scarce resources, ground our work in data and evidence-based practices, reduce service gaps and overlaps, and better serve families across systems;

We COMMIT...for the short-term and the long haul, our funds, "sweat equity," hearts and minds;

We CREATE CHANGE...measurable improvements in children's health and well-being and lasting improvements to our service infrastructure, generating ever-greater hope and dedication across our community.

Solano's children, as in many communities, are born into a complex and fragile "ecosystem" that must be cultivated and supported for them to thrive. Each child is like a precious starfish, dependent on its immediate and larger environment. We work together to keep that environment healthy for children and youth; and as the tiny starfish wash onto shore, work to quickly get them safely back into the nurturing "tide pools" of their neighborhoods, schools and loving caregivers.

What makes us "best?" Solano County receives relatively little outside funding/monetary resources. Our

economic and social challenges, especially compared to the wealthier neighbors surrounding us, sometimes seem daunting. That said, where we shine is in the perseverance, skills and practical optimism of our parents, providers and policymakers.

## 2.2 Your Community's Biggest Challenge

What do you consider to be the biggest challenge your community faces in ensuring that all young people graduate?

Note: This question is for research purposes only and will not count toward your total score.

Status: Final

Challenging school system

## Section 3: Collaboration, Partnerships and Youth as a Community Priority

**This section is worth 125 points.**

In our search for the nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People, we are looking for communities that have made a special commitment to focusing on youth and including young people in decision-making. That commitment should incorporate all sectors of the community, from local schools and youth service providers to businesses, charitable organizations and local government. And most importantly, that commitment should be carried out through concerted community efforts. The following questions will help us determine what your community is doing to make youth a priority.

### 3.1 Prioritizing Youth

How does your community make youth a priority in budgeting, policymaking, services, or other ways?

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

The Solano County Board of Supervisors' Strategic Plan prioritizes children's needs, and its Legislative Platform is used to advocate for state and federal legislation benefitting children.

The Board funds the local non-profit Children's Network to convene a monthly multi-partner "Children's Alliance" and to provide data and advice on the needs and status of children and youth. The Children's Network publishes the "Solano Children's Report Card" with relevant indicators of well-being for children, youth and families, and brings forward pertinent budgetary information and the Alliance's recommendations for improvements in the service infrastructure.

County Supervisors have used these policy documents to deploy funding for neighborhood Family Resource Centers, as well as to provide \$300,000 in 1:1 matching funds for children's health insurance (maintaining the current 95-98% rate of insured children for several years).

County government established April as "Children's Month" in Solano County in 2006, recognizing many

observances for children and youth such as Child Abuse Prevention Month and Month of the Military Child. In April 2010 the Board adopted a "Children's Bill of Rights" as a new platform from which to advocate for child/youth well-being.

The County securitized its Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement funds around 2005, building health clinics in Fairfield and Vallejo with 45,000 patient visits annually; and used a portion of these funds to support a policy and service infrastructure in each of the County's seven cities. These "City Teams" conduct regular and well-publicized "stings" wherein youth attempt to purchase tobacco or alcohol from local merchants, resulting in fewer instances of illegal sales to minors, with only 3 alcohol sales out of 20 stores checked in Vallejo, and no tobacco sales out of 10 stores checked in Benicia.

Cities such as Vacaville, with its Youth Roundtable, also meet regularly to prioritize and carry out activities with and for youth.

### **3.2 Youth Leadership**

**How does your community support youth leadership or involve youth in local policy and/or budgeting decisions?**

(300 word maximum)

**Status:** Final

The Fairfield Youth Commission is the City Council's advisory body on all youth issues. Vacaville School District's Youth Board of Trustees member participates in deliberations and decisions made by the school board. The Vacaville Youth Roundtable also actively engages youth in developing policy recommendations to the City Council.

Vallejo's Safety Patrol program nurtures and develops leadership for 300 elementary students in 7 schools. Under the supervision of beloved Coordinator "Mr. Vic" Leach, they strap on neon belts and ball caps (donated by local business) to manage drop-offs and escort kindergarteners to class. Students must maintain good grades and behavior to participate. Teams participate in an annual drill exhibition and receive recognition for marching and recitation of Safety Patrol Principles.

Agriculture, Solano's largest industry (890 farms, \$244,000,000 annually), makes 4-H a natural fit. The 4-H Leaders Council's Expansion and Review Committee, comprised of one-third teenagers, is 4-H's Executive Committee. Eleven 4-H units across the county involve hundreds youth in personal/leadership development activities. For example, two Dixon 4-H teens recently saw a need for diapers in their community, hit hard by the economic downturn. They organized a "Diaper Round-Up," collecting over 2,600 diapers.

The Solano College Small Business Development Center sponsors the Young Entrepreneurs Program for youth aged 14-27 who want to start businesses. Vacaville Rotary provides scholarships for Solano students to attend "Camp Venture" for young entrepreneurs. One young Vallejo entrepreneur is working on a "math rap" video in his "B Different" project to promote academic achievement and personal responsibility.

The City of Vacaville's "GOTCHA" program has recognized academic achievement of middle and high school students for over 10 years, with awards ceremonies and parties. Both high-GPA students and those who have greatly improved (2.0 to 3.0) are honored and encouraged.

(See 4.5 for excellent leadership development by JROTC programs.)

### 3.3 Support for the Most Vulnerable Young People

How does your community work to ensure the well-being of the most vulnerable young people, including youth in foster care, GLBT youth, and others?

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

Solano County is home to 2 state prisons housing over 7,500 inmates, a majority of whom are parents. Solano's estimated 10,000-12,000 children of incarcerated parents (CHIPs) are at high risk for family dislocation and poverty. A locally-formed multi-partner task force to address the needs of these children and their families sponsored a "Families Making Connections" resource summit in 2009, featuring Project WHAT (We're Here and Talking), young people who have experienced parental incarceration or involvement with the justice system and seek to raise awareness about the impacts of parental incarceration on children. First 5 Solano and Soroptimists provided funding for a child-friendly visiting room at California State Prison, Solano, featuring murals designed and painted by inmates. The task force also worked with the local Barnes & Noble to collect and distribute 1,000 books to CHIPs.

Solano a nationwide leader in advocating for the expansion of Transitional Age Youth programs, and Solano's 350-400 foster children and youth can access a wide variety of resources and supports. One example is the Foster Youth Education Program, led by the Solano Office of Education, bringing community partners together to ensure that foster children's educational rights are protected and their educational success is secured.

Solano GLBTQI youth can access resources and support through the Solano PRIDE Center, a local non-profit devoted providing services, resources and outreach for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, questioning and intersex youth and adults. PRIDE Center recently set up a "youth fund" to better serve GLBTQI youth. There are GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) Chapters at nine high schools in Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Vacaville and Vallejo as well as one at California Maritime Academy in Vallejo. Recently a grassroots community alliance, "Vallejo Together," held a Parent Summit at the local community college to offer parents resources for their GLBTQI youth.

### 3.4 Community Collaboration

Please describe the ways in which your community collaborates to ensure positive outcomes for young people.

This may include public/private, multi-sector, school/community or other partnerships on the large or small scale.

In your response, please consider how long these community groups have existed, the sectors involved (e.g. local elected officials, media partners, schools, nonprofits, faith groups, young people), the leadership for these groups, and any successes the groups have had in serving young people and/or reducing dropout rates.

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

Solano Children's Alliance - established 1982

Partners: Children's Network, Family and Children's Services, Mental Health, Public Health, Substance Abuse Prevention & Child Welfare Services, Probation, Office of Education, Office of Family Violence

Prevention, First 5 Solano, Solano College, Boys/Girls Club, Youth/Family Services, Healthy Start, EMQ/FamiliesFirst, Community Residents (5); liaisons: Child Abuse Prevention Council, Child Care Planning Council, Juvenile Justice Commission, Child Support Services.

Goals: Use Children's Report Card data to improve outcomes; leverage funds; integrate services

Results: Advocated with state regarding flaws in process for awarding child care funds (\$272/child in Solano - \$1,250/child in San Francisco); Solano funds increased by \$648,440 in 2009, enough for about 65 additional full-day slots.

BabyFirst Solano - established 2004

Partners: Maternal Child Adolescent Health, Public Health, Child Welfare Services; Black Infant Health; NorthBay, Kaiser; Partnership HealthPlan; La Clinica de la Raza; First 5 Solano; California Hispanic Commission on Alcohol & Drug Abuse.

Goals: Target at-risk populations (teens, African-American women, alcohol/drug/tobacco use); newborns at full term & healthy birthweight

Results: 306 of 347 (88%) born full-term at healthy birthweight to highest-risk moms.

Early Childhood Mental/Developmental Health Collaborative - established 2007

Partners: Children's Nurturing Project, First 5 Solano, Mental Health, Child Welfare and Public Health, Matrix Parent Network, Kaiser, Pediatrician, Parents, Dixon Family Services, Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), North Bay Regional Center, Office of Education.

Goals: Create/implement countywide strategic plan for early mental/developmental health system

Results: Strategic Plan completed; first in CA to establish joint funding for children from First 5 and Mental Health Services Act Prevention/Early Intervention funding. (2009) - 94% of children served by EPSDT improved; 97% of 363 Head Start children improved social/emotional competencies; (2010) 80 children (most in Foster care) receiving treatment and improving; 86 child care providers trained on evidence-based screening tool - Ages & Stages Questionnaire.

## Section 4: The Five Promises

**This section is worth 200 points.**

Research and experience demonstrate that children's chances of success in life greatly increase when they experience the key supports - or "Five Promises" - they need to be successful. The Five Promises include Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, An Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. According to Every Child, Every Promise (2006), more than two-thirds of America's young people experience too few of the Five Promises to have a reasonable chance of success. In this section you will be asked to provide examples of how your community helps bring the Five Promises into the lives of youth.

### 4.1 Caring Adults

Every child needs support and guidance from caring adults in their families, schools, and communities. These include positive relationships with teachers, mentors, neighbors, coaches, and youth volunteers.

What are your community's most significant challenges in ensuring that youth have access to and support from caring adults? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address these challenges?

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

Solano is rich with caring, paid and/or volunteer adults that work every day in the Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts, at the libraries (which, thanks to additional community support are open 56 hours per week), school and church sports leagues, city recreation districts, before- and after-school programs, and in many grassroots community- and faith-based programs such as the Leaven Program and The Father's Place. Highlighted below is the Solano County Parent Teacher Association (PTA):

Solano County PTA provides a network of parents and caring adults who volunteered over 10,000 hours last year, serving 40 schools around the county. Since 1872, from the development of the hot lunch program to bringing attention to the need for immunizations, PTA has given parents the tools to make a difference. PTA empowers parents/caregivers, teachers and other school staff, children and youth with opportunities to make life better for children on a daily basis.

In today's world of budget cuts and increasing costs, Solano PTAs are finding innovative ways to close a portion of the budget gaps with creative solutions. For example the Vacaville PTAs worked with the school district to create "Save our Schools" (S.O.S.), becoming the first in the County to create a mechanism for the public to make a \$10 donation via text message to a school district!

At Travis Air Force Base, PTA units support our troops by sending care packages with necessities and treats and are part of the support system for the spouses and children of deployed moms and dads. The Cambridge (Vacaville) and Glen Cove Elementary (Vallejo) schools host "Moms & Muffins" and "Dads & Donuts" breakfasts in which hundreds of parents and caregivers come to share a meal with their child. Almost all schools host their own carnivals and assemblies, and some have after-school programs.

## 4.2 Safe Places

Every child needs and deserves to be physically and emotionally safe in their homes, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and on the Internet. You may have "Promise Places," in your community, or structured, supervised activities for out-of-school time.

What are your community's most significant challenges in providing safe places for all young people to participate in out-of-school activities and programs? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address the challenges?

(300 word maximum)

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PARTICIPATION.

Status: Final

Over 3,000 children and youth across Solano County enjoy the safety and security of before- and after-school programs, which offer recreation and enrichment along with peace of mind. There are many other options for children and youth, two examples of which are profiled below:

**Matt Garcia Youth Center:** Matt Garcia was only 22 years old when he joined the Fairfield City Council in 2007 as the youngest Councilman ever elected in California. Dedicated to supporting youth by creating places for them to go and things for them to do, fighting the violence and crime in the city, and uniting the community, Matt was murdered after only 10 months in office. Supporters took up his campaign to create a safe haven for youth, and the Police Athletic League (PAL) - Matt Garcia Youth Center opened in 2008. Open to students in grades 7-12, the Center features a large basketball court, four homework rooms with computers, an arts and crafts room, and an entry area with a large boxing ring.

The Father's House: Vacaville is home to "The Father's House," a faith-based community center. Through an innovative initiative called "City Impact," The Father's House addresses the needs of the community through adult-supervised volunteer opportunities for children aimed at a cleaner and safer City. For example, volunteers of all ages clean up the downtown creek area during the summer "Creek Walk" festival. These intergenerational partnerships provide a safe and healthy environment, support civic engagement and teach children and youth the value and benefits of giving. Recent projects included "Angel Tree" (holiday presents for the children of incarcerated parents), distribution of 400 backpacks filled with school supplies to 400 under-resourced elementary school children, and the Callen Street Cleanup - painting, repairs, debris and waste removal in an aging section of the city.

### 4.3 A Healthy Start

All children need healthy bodies, healthy minds, and healthful habits. These result from access to health care, regular health checkups and needed treatment, good nutrition and exercise, health education, and positive role models who demonstrate good physical and psychological health.

What are your community's most significant challenges in providing access to health care for all young people? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address the challenges?

(300 word maximum)

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HEALTH CARE ACCESS.

Status: Final

In Solano County, a healthy start begins with prenatal and perinatal services. BabyFirst Solano and other programs promote healthy births and breastfeeding - the "first and best nutrition program." (Result: Solano breastfeeding rates 2005/07: 73%; 2008: 86%; California rate: 81%.)

As children grow, the Solano Coalition for Better Health's "Solano Kids Insurance Program" aims to insure every child (success rates consistently above 90%). Children have greater access to a medical home thanks to SKIP retention/utilization services.

First 5 Solano distributes over 3,000 "Kits for New Parents" annually with DVDs/books on child development. However, some children need more substantive intervention; the Integrated Family Support Initiative's homevisiting program kept 226 children reported to CPS safely in their communities (2009), avoiding costly, stressful Foster Care placements.

Solano's high proportion of fast food restaurants (Section 6.2) contributes to obesity challenges. One innovative program is Benicia School District's "Healthy Cooking with Kids." 140 elementary students in 2009 and 340 in 2010 learned healthy nutrition habits, cooking and tasting healthy foods from various cultures. Parents report their children now read food labels, make healthier choices and try new foods.

Solano's two Student Health Centers use volunteer pediatricians from Vallejo's Touro University to see students and families on campus.

Smile in Style program taught 12,547 school children about oral healthcare, screened 1,447 students, and 612 students had sealants placed on their molars to prevent tooth decay (2009).

One example of the many recreational options for Solano children and youth is Greater Vallejo Recreation District, which "nourishes" children's minds, bodies and spirits. Youth served (2009): Aquatics - 45,699; Afterschool Program - 13,680; Special Events - 12,441; Youth Sports - 7,537. GVRD's Before/After-school (ENCORE), Cool School, and "Kids Klub" programs provide daily homework help,



socialization, physical exercise, arts/crafts, theater, sports, music, dance, health/fitness, nutrition, math/sciences and CPR.

## 4.4 Effective Education

Every child deserves to receive the skills needed for lifelong learning. To achieve this goal, there must be quality learning environments, challenging expectations, and constant formal and informal guidance and mentoring. Key milestones along the way include fourth grade reading scores, eighth grade math and science scores, and successful promotion from ninth grade.

What are your community's most significant challenges in ensuring that all young people 1) receive an effective education; 2) graduate from high school on time; and 3) graduate ready to pursue post-secondary education? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address the challenges?

(300 word maximum)

This question relates to five of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, 4TH GRADE READING SCORES; 8TH GRADE SCIENCE AND MATH SCORES, HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATION, MINIMUM TWO YEARS POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION and ADOPTION OF COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS.

Status: Final

Both Solano's graduation rate (lower than California's) and low rate at which graduates are prepared for college (Section 6.3) are of concern - Solano competes in a region (San Francisco Bay Area) with high college graduation rates and a knowledge-based economy.

The 9th grade promotion rate (which, since CA doesn't track this measure, was developed by comparing 9th and 10th grade enrollments - Section 5.9) is stable, perhaps because Solano County has established 4-year high schools. That said, the graduation rate is unacceptably low. Solano partners are working hard to craft interventions that meaningfully improve Solano students' academic success. Examples include:

"Pre-Kindergarten Academies" - For six years, First 5 Solano has offered "boot camps" for children with little/no preschool exposure at four of the County's lowest-performing school catchment areas. Annual results consistently show that children attending Academies improve their cognitive, social-emotional and pre-academic competencies, and perform on par with peers at Kindergarten entry.

Career Academies - Beginning in 2008/09, Vallejo School District established Biotechnology, Engineering/Robotics, Hospitality, Media Graphics and Public Service Academies at its 3 high schools. Outcome data is pending; anecdotally, Academy participants report higher attendance and credit Academies with keeping them from dropping out. The District is currently working with Ford Motor Company Fund and local businesses to transform to a "career pathway/academy" model.

Solano Kids Read - To help instill love and habits of reading, Solano Library Foundation sponsors this annual event whereby hundreds of children across Solano read the same book over the summer, then meet the author in the fall.

P-16 Council - In 2010 the Superintendent of Schools established a "P-16" Council, which brings pre-kindergarten, elementary, secondary and college-level partners together with businesses, parents and community leaders to craft comprehensive, coordinated school/community approaches that will help raise Solano students' attendance, achievement and graduations rates.

## 4.5 Opportunities to Help Others

Every child needs and deserves the chance to make a difference in their families, schools, communities, nation, and world, through models of caring behavior, awareness of the needs of others, a sense of personal responsibility, and opportunities for volunteering, leadership and service.

What are your community's most significant challenges in providing young people with community service and/or service-learning opportunities? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address the challenges?

(300 word maximum)

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, YOUTH SERVICE PARTICIPATION.

Status: Final

One of Solano's most successful youth volunteer activities is the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) program. JROTC instills the values of citizenship, leadership, service and personal responsibility. Cadets plan and organize JROTC activities under the supervision of their caring and dedicated instructors. JROTC incorporates academics - aerospace science for Air Force JROTC and naval science for Navy JROTC. Their many activities and honors include:

School/Military Affil. Active since # of Cadets Community Svc. Hrs.

Fairfield - USAF 1968 176 2,000

Armijo - USAF 1972 132 2,100

Vanden - USAF 2002 147 2,420

Hogan - USN 1976 75 950

- Fairfield (CA-032nd): Solano Office of Education Family Fun Night, Haiti Relief, Tuberos Sclerosis 5K Run and Coast/Creek Cleanup, Commander's Choice Trophy for Professionalism, Leadership and Esprit de Corps at the US Army Drill Sergeant's Challenge in Sacramento; one cadet selected for the Air Force Honors and Technology Camp.

- Armijo (CA-71st): Henderson Foundation for special education students, "Relay for Life" and food drive fundraisers; service to Paradise Valley Veterans Home, Kabataan Youth Show, Fairfield National Day of Prayer and home-school events; one cadet selected to attend advanced leadership training, eight cadets accepted into college and universities, and four with commitments to the military.

- Vanden (CA-20111): Vacaville Veterans Crab Feed, Blue Star Mothers Troop Support Drive, Boys' and Girls' State dinners; raised \$4536 for the American Legion Auxilliary "Pennies for Patients" Leukemia Lymphoma Society; contributed 3380 items (55% of the school's total) to the Solano Can Food Drive; one cadet is national recipient of the Air Force Cadet Officer Mentoring Program Award, with four cadets enlisting after graduation.

- Hogan: Fleet Reserve Association, American Legion, Veteran of Foreign Wars, and American Legion Woman's Auxilliary Post 550; raised \$250 for Haiti; 3 cadets awarded ROTC scholarships to attend California universities.

## Section 5: Data and Outcomes

**This section is worth 75 points.**

As communities across the country mobilize to end the dropout crisis, we must gauge our success along the way. In consultation with the U.S. Department of Education, we will track several highly reliable national indicators that influence graduation rates. We understand that these indicators may not be tracked locally in the same manner as the aggregate data. However, the following questions will help us get a sense of where your community stands in usage and tracking of these and similar indicators. We will score these responses alongside your programmatic initiatives to gauge how your community is addressing its challenges, so “low” scores or non-responses due to a lack of community-level data in this section will not disqualify your community. Please be as complete as possible in your responses.

### 5.1 Elementary Schools

Please enter the number of elementary schools in your community.

Status: Final

60

### 5.2 Middle Schools

Please enter the number of middle schools in your community.

Status: Final

15

### 5.3 High Schools

Please enter the number of high schools in your community.

Status: Final

12

### 5.4 Adequate Yearly Progress Rate

Please enter the percentage of local schools meeting AYP in the most recent year for which data is available.

This information may be obtained by contacting local school districts. You may include trend data if available. (100 word maximum)

Status: Final

42.9%

Trend Data: Solano's 2008/09 combined English-language arts and Mathematic AYP scores (42.9%) represent an upward trend compared with 2007/08 (32.7%). When the 2008/09 combined measure is broken down, 58% of Solano schools made AYP in both English-language arts and in Mathematics.

In California, the state also computes an "Academic Performance Index" (API) to measure schools' improvement over time. Five Solano schools were recognized in 2010 as California Distinguished Schools, based on their successful efforts to close the "achievement gap" (all five schools made AYP, improved in the API, and made significant progress for disadvantaged student subgroups).

## 5.5 Graduation Rates

Please report the high school graduation rate for your community, and indicate if you are using the Editorial Projects in Education rate or a school district reported rate.

This data can be located via the Editorial Projects in Education graduation rates map at <http://www.edweek.org/apps/gmap/>. School district reported data is acceptable, but requires an explanation of the calculation. You may include trend data if available.

Example: 90% of County X ninth graders entering in 2000 graduated in 2004, compared with 87% for the previous class

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

Status: Final

74.6(Self reported figures)

**Calculations and Trend Data:** Source: California Department of Education. Solano County's 2007/08 Graduation Rate is 74.6%, compared to a rate of 79.2% in 2006/07 and to 80.2% for California as a whole in 2007/08. Formula: Number of graduates (Year 4) divided by number of dropouts in Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12.

## 5.6 NAEP – Fourth Grade Reading

Please enter the average scores for the school district(s) in your community on NAEP fourth grade reading assessments.

This data may be available by contacting local school districts. If local school districts do not test this subject at this grade level, do not submit scores from other subjects or grades in this box. Please submit any alternate data on Section 6 of this application.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, 4TH GRADE READING SCORES.

Status: Final

(Blank)

## 5.7 NAEP – Eighth Grade Math & Science

Please enter the average scores for the school district(s) in your community on NAEP eighth grade math and science assessments.

This data may be available by contacting local school districts. If local school districts do not test this subject at this grade level, do not submit scores from other subjects or grades in this box. Please submit any alternate data on Section 6 of this application.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, 8TH GRADE MATH & SCIENCE SCORES.

Status: Final

Math:  
Science:

## 5.8 Preschool Enrollment

Please report the number of young people enrolled in preschool programs in your community.

Available at the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder online at [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en). Please report data from the 2006-8 American Community Survey. This data may also be located by contacting local school districts and/or private local preschool providers.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT.

Status: Final

5075

## 5.9 Ninth Grade Promotion

Please report the percentage of students promoted from 9th grade to 10th grade in community high schools in the most recent year for which data is available.

This data may be located by contacting local school districts.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, 9TH GRADE PROMOTION.

Status: Final

99.8%

## 5.10 Violent Crime

Please report the number of violent crimes committed in your community.

Input your answer as recorded in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime in the United States 2008 report online at [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table\\_08.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_08.html).

Status: Final

2091

## 5.11 Out-of-School Time Enrollment

Please report either 1) the number of hours of out-of-school time enrollment or 2) number of youth enrolled in out-of-school programs, and indicate which measure is used.

This data may be obtained by contacting local school districts and/or local out-of-school program providers.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PARTICIPATION.

Status: Final

3033(Number of youth)

## 5.12 Uninsured Children

Please report the number of uninsured children in your community. Please report community-level data if available. Otherwise, you may report county-level data. Indicate which data type (community or county) you are reporting.

Available for select cities and counties through the Kids Count Data Center online at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/Default.aspx>.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HEALTH CARE ACCESS.

Status: Final

County-Level data

8359

## 5.13 CHIP/Medicaid Enrollment

Please report the number of youth enrolled in these programs in your community. Please report community-level data if available. Otherwise, you may report county-level data. Indicate which data type (community or county) you are reporting.

Available for select cities and counties through the Kids Count Data Center online at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/Default.aspx>.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HEALTH CARE ACCESS.

Status: Final

County-Level data

36825

## 5.14 Immunization Rate

Please express as the number of youth receiving immunizations. Please report community-level data if available. Otherwise, you may report county-level data. Indicate which data type (community or county) you are reporting.

Available for select cities and counties through the Kids Count Data Center online at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/Default.aspx>.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HEALTH CARE ACCESS.

Status: Final

County-Level data

### 5.15 Volunteering Rate

Please report your community's volunteering rate as a percentage of the total population.

Volunteering rates for 125 large- and mid-size communities are available through the Corporation for National and Community Service at <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/rankings.cfm>. Additional data may be available by contacting a local United Way, Points of Light/Hands On Network affiliate, or other local service agency.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, YOUTH SERVICE PARTICIPATION.

Status: Final

30%

### 5.16 Individuals Below Poverty Level

Please report the percentage of your community's population that is below the federal poverty level.

Please express as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder online at [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en). Please report data from the 2006-8 American Community Survey.

Status: Final

7.2%

### 5.17 Child Poverty Rate

Please report the percentage of your community's youth that is below the federal poverty level.

Please express as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder online at [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en). Please report data from the 2006-8 American Community Survey.

Status: Final

12.6%

### 5.18 Unemployment Rate

Please report the percentage of your community's workforce that is currently unemployed.

Please express as reported in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, found online at <http://www.bls.gov/lau/tables.htm>.

Status: Final

13%

## 5.19 Post-Secondary Education Rate

Please report the percentage of your community's population age 25 or higher with a B.A./B.S. degree or higher.

Please express as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder online at [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en). Please report data from the 2006-8 American Community Survey.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, MINIMUM TWO YEARS POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION.

Status: Final

23.2%

## Section 6: Additional Data and Outcomes

**This section is worth up to 10 bonus points, not to exceed 75 points when added with your score from Data and Outcomes.**

Please input any data you wish to have considered in addition to, or in lieu of, the data requested on the previous two pages of the application. This may include non-traditional data that may not be available in student information systems. You may present data that relates to "out of school time", extended day services, youth recreational services, health and human services, or other items. As part of your response, please explain how this data connects youth services to outcomes in your community.

This section will count for bonus points during scoring; therefore, if you have no additional data to submit, feel free to leave this response blank as it will not count against your score.

### 6.1 Additional Data Point #1

Input an additional data point you wish to report. Give this metric a name, describe it, and report the data itself.

If you have no data to report, type "No data" in each box.

Status: Final

Name: California Standards Test Spring 2009 English Language Arts Grades 2-10: Solano

Description: The percentage of all Solano students who scored at the "proficient" level or above is identical to that of the state of California as a whole (51%). NOTE: Solano is not of sufficient size to participate in NAEP assessments; this is presented as alternative data.

Data: 51%

### 6.2 Additional Data Point #2

Input an additional data point you wish to report. Give this metric a name, describe it, and report the data itself.

If you have no data to report, type "No data" in each box.



Status: Final

Name: Retail Food Environment Index: Solano

Description: UCLA's "Retail Food Environment Index" (RFEI): number of fast food restaurants and convenience stores divided by number of grocery stores/produce vendors near the homes of California Child Health Interview Survey (CHIS) respondents. Solano: fifth highest in the state. High RFEI is linked to higher rates of obesity and diabetes.

Data: 5.11

### 6.3 Additional Data Point #3

Input an additional data point you wish to report. Give this metric a name, describe it, and report the data itself.

If you have no data to report, type "No data" in each box.

Status: Final

Name: Percentage of 2007/08 High School Graduates Meeting Course Requirements for UC/CSU: Solano

Description: This data point is particularly important because of Solano's location in the San Francisco Bay Area, which has a relatively high rate of college graduates in California (San Francisco: 53.3%) and with which Solano students/the local economy must compete for jobs.

Data: 26.7%

## Section 7: Youth Voice and Success Stories

**This section is worth 50 points.**

An essential component of your work in communities should be youth voice and leadership. Please have four youth from your community submit written testimonials of 200-300 words supporting your application. Each testimonial should include the young person's name, age and affiliation within the community. These testimonials may not be written or significantly edited by adults.

Each testimonial should explain why the young people believe their community is one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, citing examples of key programs or initiatives that have helped young people stay on a course to success.

### 7.1 Youth Testimonial #1

Enter your first youth-written testimonial. This testimonial should explain why the young people believe their community is one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, citing examples of key programs or initiatives that have helped young people stay on a course to success

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

I am 18 years old and have been in the foster care system for 17 years. I was in a lot of different places. One time I thought I got lucky, I found a "permanent home." I went to the same school for more than one whole year. Everything seemed like it was finally going my way. Then one day, I came home from school and my foster mom and dad had moved away. They took all my stuff and didn't even leave a note. Now what was I going to do? My social worker got me into a new place to live and she got me a CASA [Court Appointed Special Advocate]. My CASA is the best! She sees me every week. My grades were

not so good but my CASA makes sure I do my work the right way so that when I get out of high school, I can go into the service. She talks to me when I call her even when she is busy with the rest of her stuff. Even when I am not the best, she is still there for me. When I go to court, my CASA sits right beside me, telling the judge what I need, not what anyone else needs. I think that if my CASA wasn't with me, I might be in the hall about now. I didn't always do the right things but now my CASA expects me to do them and I want to do them because she is watching out for me. I really can't believe that my CASA does all this for me and doesn't get paid anything for it, she is a volunteer. Even when I get out of the system, she is still going to be my friend, she is my forever friend.

## 7.2 Youth Testimonial #2

Enter your first youth-written testimonial. This testimonial should explain why the young people believe their community is one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, citing examples of key programs or initiatives that have helped young people stay on a course to success.

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

I am a graduating senior at Liberty Continuation School in Benicia. In September 2009, I needed 137 units to graduate in June which was my goal. In that one can earn 72 units a year, I doubted I would graduate on time. I live with my best friend and her family; there were many distractions. The way in which I was able to break out of a downward spiral was as the result of what I experienced at Liberty. This alternative school has so much going for it. Liberty is very involved in the community, providing plenty of opportunities for students to not only give back to their community but to earn credits as well. Many different organizations provide chances for students to work with them on a wide variety of activities, each time helping them get one step closer to graduation. I noticed it wasn't just about all the opportunities available that really pushes the students to succeed, it's the encouragement from the staff. The staff constantly goes out of their way to help students with any problem they may have and push them in the right direction, all the while providing encouragement. Knowing that I had the support of these special adults helped me stay on track. It wasn't the specific actions of any one of the teachers, secretary, counselor and principal; it was a pervasive feeling that they were invested in my success. Now I have received my high school diploma and have the belief that good things will continue to happen for me. I have learned that I have what I need within myself to set a course in life. Not only did Liberty give me support; it empowered me to know that I can make it using my own strengths.

## 7.3 Youth Testimonial #3

Enter your first youth-written testimonial. This testimonial should explain why the young people believe their community is one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, citing examples of key programs or initiatives that have helped young people stay on a course to success.

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

Inspired:

Ever since I was born I have been living in Solano County. When I lived in Fairfield I have had some good, and bad experiences. Not only just to me but also to people around me and my family.

Some positive things that has happened to me is the schools I joined were fun and also changed me. Also, my family used to live around me and we loved each other. Except on a day my little cousin was supposed to be born, she had an umbilical cord rapped around her neck but they got her out in enough

time that she was alive.

Some things that happened to me that I wish never happened was my little cousin almost got run over. My eighteen year old cousin got shot and killed one month away from his birthday and was graduating to go to college.

One day my mom decided she wanted to move to Vacaville. My whole life changed when I joined the Vacaville Neighborhood Boys & Girls Club. The people here made me open up and change. The people here such as Murray Colbert, Amber Smith and Tonya Stow are helping me preserve. They have helped me stay in school and want to be someone in my life.

Thank you to everyone in the Vacaville Neighborhood Boys & Girls Club!

(12 year old girl)

## 7.4 Youth Testimonial #4

Enter your first youth-written testimonial. This testimonial should explain why the young people believe their community is one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, citing examples of key programs or initiatives that have helped young people stay on a course to success.

(300 word maximum)

Status: Final

In the heart, a little city brought something I needed in my life, purpose in my life. The city of Vacaville has a program by The Father's House called Ministry Training Institute that pushes young adults to their future. After I graduated high school I had dreams of going to college to pursue a medical career. My dreams were dashed when funding wasn't accessible.

I met with the Directors of the Institute, Raymond and Kim, and they gave me hope by telling me that through this program I would get direction. Throughout the nine month program I was faced with the true me, figuring out what I really could and couldn't do. My mind was constantly challenged to dream bigger and to be a part of a team.

Raymond brought all of us in and saw the capabilities we had. He would not stand around and watch us be children, yet would give us the opportunities to grow and step up as leaders. The love and encouragement from his heart has brought me here to this very day a changed woman with a purpose. Raymond has helped me through this program and graduate with success.

## 7.5 Success Story

Please share with us one success story from your community. This story could highlight a young person whose life has been extraordinarily impacted by community efforts or a Caring Adult that goes above and beyond to improve the lives of children and help them graduate.

(200 word maximum)

Status: Final

I am currently ending my freshman year at Stanford University. I grew up in Vallejo, California, a place that I believe was behind me accomplishing my goals when it counted the most. I am aware of the generalizations that exist about the city and its residents, many of them founded in concrete events that have occurred around myself and my peers. These generalizations, however, although they may reflect a faction of the communities and negative aspects of the city's image, by no means give a picture of the character of the place I was raised in. I was only able to reach my academic successes through the abundant support and honest caring I found within teachers, administrators, and community members. My graduation at 16 years of age and admission to Stanford, my dream school, was extremely influenced by the amazingly inspirational, hard working, tenacious, loving, and simply intrinsically good people that currently live and will continue to come from Vallejo. I would never be so blinded by my love of my home to pretend issues don't exist, but those who chose to neglect what these communities have to offer are truly missing out.

## Section 8: Additional Information

**This section is worth up to 25 bonus points. The total score from this section, together with your scores from the Overview; Collaboration, Partnerships, and Youth as a Community Priority; The Five Promises; and Youth Voice and Success Stories sections may not exceed 425 points.**

This section will count for bonus points during scoring; therefore, if you have no additional anecdotal information to submit, feel free to leave this response blank, as it will not count against your score.

### 8.1 Additional Information

Please share any other information you believe uniquely qualifies your community to be one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People. This may include information on any programs, services or initiatives that fall outside the Five Promises rubric, additional community partnerships, other awards your community has received, or other anecdotal evidence that clearly demonstrates your community's commitment to ending the dropout crisis and improving the lives of young people.

(300 word maximum)

If you have no additional information to report, type "No information" in the box.

Status: Final

One of the true measures of a community's commitment to its children and youth is the level of participation and constructive action during difficult times.

A "best" community stays focused on what CAN be done and remains child/youth-centered - maintaining core supports, growing promising practices and attracting, by its tough-minded optimism, the human and financial resources to remain stable and even progress, in hard times as well as good ones.

Solano is that community!

For example:

--The same economic downturn wreaking havoc on family and government budgets is actually stimulating community commitment in Solano. In 2009 we realized there was a rich, untapped vein of

talent and desire to serve among the many potential volunteers across Solano. In June 2010 the Solano Volunteer Center goes live! Community partners (California Volunteers, Community Action Partnership, Faith in Action, First 5 Solano, Solano Nonprofits Coalition, United Way of the Bay Area and Valero Benicia Refinery) established a business plan and raised the basic funding. Year One Goal: 1,500 volunteers/75 nonprofits. Estimated community value by Year 3: over \$2.1 million! "Heart" value: priceless!

--First 5 Solano signed on with the US DHHS as a "Text4baby" partner. Thanks to this nationwide public-private coalition, some of Solano's hardest-to-reach and highest-risk teen moms now get helpful tips and advice in their chosen medium.

-- Solano Economic Development Corporation, First 5 Solano and Children's Network launched a major "business engagement" strategy in 2009; the "Alliance of Business for Children" will work to leverage business influence, partner on "challenge grants" for preschool and more.

These efforts personify Solano County - the child- and youth-centered community that knows how to weave commitment and resources together across our children's and youth's lifetimes to form both a "safety net" to keep them secure, and a "trampoline" to launch them toward the sky.