

WHITE PAPER | 2026

LeveLUP Development System™

A Research-Informed Framework for Integrated Youth & Family
Development

Building leadership. Strengthening identity. Creating pathways to opportunity.



FROM ME 2 U, INC.

Cleveland, Ohio

Framework development: V.O.I.C.E. Consulting, LLC

Executive Summary

LevelLUP Development System™ is a research-informed youth and family development model designed to support individuals across multiple stages of growth. It integrates From Me 2 U, Inc.'s Signature Six™ programs into a continuum of support that builds protective factors, strengthens resilience, and creates pathways to long-term success.

The framework organizes development around six interconnected dimensions: Leadership, Engagement, Value, Growth, Empowerment, and Preparedness. These dimensions operate within an integrated, evidence-informed, community-centered approach and provide a consistent developmental architecture across programs, projects, mentoring, internships, family supports, and community partnerships.

LevelLUP formalizes and connects developmental practices that FM2U has implemented and refined over time. Its structure allows activities and partnerships to be adapted to age, setting, and community need while maintaining a common developmental purpose.

1. The LevelLUP Framework

The LevelLUP Framework is the organizing model for the system. The six developmental dimensions reinforce one another, while the outer principles describe the conditions through which the model is implemented.



Figure 1. LevelLUP Framework™

Six developmental dimensions within an integrated, evidence-informed, community-centered youth and family development model.

2. Six Interconnected Developmental Dimensions

Leadership: Developing confidence, character, leadership skills, initiative, communication, and the capacity to influence positive change.

Engagement: Building meaningful relationships, mentorships, participation, connection, and sustained involvement with peers, caring adults, families, and community.

Value: Cultivating self-worth, identity, purpose, belonging, and recognition of one's strengths and contribution.

Growth: Supporting holistic development, resilience, learning, reflection, adaptation, and long-term success across developmental stages.

Empowerment: Strengthening voice, choice, self-advocacy, agency, and decision-making so participants can act on their goals and needs.

Preparedness: Creating pathways to education, careers, economic mobility, future planning, and successful transitions into increasingly independent roles.

The outer ring, Integrated, Evidence-Informed, Community-Centered, Building Pathways, Strengthening Communities, and Creating Opportunities, describes the principles that guide implementation.

3. Relationship to the Signature Six™

Within FM2U, the Signature Six™ provides the developmental continuum through which LevelLUP is implemented. The framework does not replace the Signature Six. Instead, it explains the common developmental logic that connects programs serving different ages and needs.

Signature Six™ Pathway	Primary Stage or Role	LevelLUP Expression
Inventing Me	Elementary youth	Foundational confidence, engagement, identity, creativity, mentoring, and early skill development.
Working On Me	Middle school youth	Self-awareness, relationships, emotional regulation, executive functioning, digital citizenship, and emerging leadership.
Choose 2 Be U	High school youth	Leadership, empowerment, future planning, social entrepreneurship, service, workforce readiness, and internships.
Becoming Me	College, graduate, and emerging professionals	Professional identity, mentoring, training, internships, fellowships, applied experience, and career development.
Inspired By Me	Adult women	Personal and professional growth, value, empowerment, wellness, coaching, and leadership.
The Best of Me	Youth and family support; college student peer coaching	Individualized youth and family supports, prevention, emotional wellness, coping, case management pathways, connection to resources, and peer coaching for college students.

4. From Practice to Framework: The Evolution of LevelUP

LeveLUP formalizes developmental practices that FM2U has used and refined over time. FM2U's multiyear program history includes mentoring, life coaching, STREAM activities, leadership development, internships, workforce readiness, prevention, family support, and community-based programming. The framework provides a common language for understanding how these experiences contribute to development.

Partnership implementation is also part of this evolution. Through HerSpace, FM2U partners with Diamonds on the Rise and contributes Girls Circle®, Teen Science Cafés, STREAM Leadership Labs, and related youth development content. This collaborative model demonstrates how LeveLUP-aligned practices can operate within a partnership while preserving each organization's distinct role.

Period or Implementation	Implementation or Partnership Setting	Framework Elements	Developmental Application
2011-2014 Foundation stage	Pilot and demonstration work in Glenville and Collinwood; Signature Six development	Engagement, Value, Growth, Empowerment	Early community-based mentoring and developmental pathways established before FM2U's nonprofit incorporation.
Multiyear Signature Six implementation	Inventing Me, Working On Me, Choose 2 Be U, Becoming Me, and related supports	All six dimensions, differentiated by developmental stage	Mentoring, life coaching, STREAM, leadership, internships, and transition supports create a developmental continuum.
Choose 2 Be U workforce and internship extensions	High school summer workforce, community-based, and internship experiences	Leadership, Empowerment, Preparedness, Growth	Youth apply leadership and life skills through paid and applied work, career exploration, social impact projects, and reflective coaching.
HerSpace partnership implementation	Diamonds on the Rise partnership; FM2U contributes Girls Circle®, Teen Science Cafés, STREAM Leadership Labs, and related youth development content	Engagement, Value, Leadership, Empowerment, Growth	Partnership implementation integrates gender-responsive SEL, STREAM exploration, mentorship, leadership, and service learning while preserving each organization's distinct role.
2026-2027 Lakewood implementation	Working On Me, Choose 2 Be U, Girls Who Code and Teen Science Café, Photography and Art Entrepreneurship, Tech for Good	Leadership, Engagement, Value, Growth, Empowerment, Preparedness	Integrated out-of-school-time application combining STREAM, SEL, creative entrepreneurship, leadership, family engagement, and future readiness.
NeuroStrong Families model	Neurodiverse youth and families across Cuyahoga County	Value, Growth, Empowerment, Engagement, Preparedness	Framework principles are adapted to executive functioning, self-advocacy, resilience, family strengthening, and prevention.

5. How LevelUP Is Implemented

LeveLUP is implemented through experiences selected for their ability to develop and connect the six dimensions. The activity may change; the developmental intent remains consistent.

- STREAM and technology experiences: coding, Teen Science Cafés, digital storytelling, web design, inquiry, and applied problem solving.

- Creative expression and entrepreneurship: photography, visual arts, digital media, storytelling, content creation, and youth enterprise.
- Leadership and youth voice: coaching circles, leadership labs, peer education, service learning, community projects, and social entrepreneurship.
- Mentoring and developmental relationships: consistent relationships with caring adults, professionals, peers, and community partners.
- Workforce and internships: career exploration, paid or applied work experiences, professional skills, supervision, reflection, and transition planning.
- Family engagement and support: caregiver communication, coaching, parent education, showcases, feedback, Parent 2 Parent support, and referral pathways.
- Individualized prevention and support: executive functioning strategies, emotional wellness, self-advocacy, case management, and counseling pathways when appropriate.



Examples of participant-created work and hands-on experiential learning in FM2U programming.

6. Mentoring and Internships as Developmental Bridges

Mentoring and internships function as bridges between developmental learning and authentic adult roles. Mentors help participants interpret experiences, expand social capital, strengthen confidence, and identify next steps. Internships and workforce experiences allow youth and emerging adults to practice reliability, communication, teamwork, problem solving, self-advocacy, and professional decision-making in real settings.

This bridge is especially visible between Choose 2 Be U and Becoming Me, where development increasingly shifts toward professional identity, independent decision-making, career readiness, and contribution.

7. Current Implementation Example: Lakewood

The 2026-2027 Lakewood implementation integrates Working On Me, Choose 2 Be U, Girls Who Code and Teen Science Café, Photography and Art Entrepreneurship, and Tech for Good. The design combines recurring youth development experiences, leadership labs, project-based learning, service, mentoring, family engagement, and showcases to build confidence and future readiness.

This implementation demonstrates how a community can select experiences appropriate to local needs while retaining the six developmental dimensions and the framework's integrated, evidence-informed, community-centered approach.

Participant Work in Practice

LeveLUP experiences can culminate in tangible products and reflective activities that connect personal interests with skill development. The examples below illustrate entrepreneurship and wellness applications within FM2U programming.



Creative Entrepreneurship

A participant developed a vegan cookbook featuring original recipes, including this vegan meatball sub. The project connects creativity, planning, applied learning, and entrepreneurial skill development.



Wellness & Creative Expression

A color therapy activity supports creative expression, mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-directed engagement. The experience connects wellness, reflection, and personal growth through an accessible creative practice.

Examples of participant-created work from From Me 2 U, Inc. programming.

8. Outcomes and Evaluation

Evaluation examines whether participants demonstrate growth across the dimensions relevant to their program and developmental stage. Participation data are important, but LeveLUP also emphasizes evidence of development, application, and progression.

- Leadership: confidence, initiative, communication, teamwork, and demonstrated responsibility.
- Engagement: participation, relationships, mentoring connection, belonging, and sustained involvement.
- Value: self-worth, identity, purpose, confidence, and recognition of strengths.
- Growth: resilience, reflection, skill development, emotional and social growth, and progression over time.
- Empowerment: voice, self-advocacy, decision-making, agency, and ability to act on goals.
- Preparedness: career awareness, executive functioning, future planning, professional skills, postsecondary readiness, and economic mobility pathways.

Methods may include pre/post measures, including the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) when developmentally appropriate, participant reflection, facilitator observation, project rubrics, portfolios, attendance and contact hours, mentor or supervisor feedback, caregiver feedback, completed projects, and follow-up indicators where feasible.

9. Evidence-Informed Foundation

LeveLUP is a practice-developed, research-informed framework. It is not presented as a single validated clinical intervention. Its design is consistent with established literature on positive youth development, social-emotional learning, developmental relationships and mentoring, experiential and project-based learning, out-of-school-time programming, youth voice, and meaningful participation.

Positive Youth Development: Emphasizes strengths, relationships, competence, confidence, character, connection, and contribution.

Social-Emotional Learning: Supports self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Developmental Relationships and Mentoring: Recognizes consistent, supportive relationships as important contexts for growth and opportunity.

Experiential and Project-Based Learning: Connects knowledge to action, reflection, problem solving, and authentic application.

Out-of-School-Time Development: Uses sequenced, active, focused, and explicit experiences to strengthen personal and social skills.

10. Scalability and Replication

LeveLUP is designed to be adaptable across age groups, program types, community settings, and partnerships. Replication is based on maintaining the framework's developmental architecture while selecting activities and delivery strategies appropriate to the local context.

- Retain the six LeveLUP developmental dimensions and the integrated, evidence-informed, community-centered orientation.
- Select activities and dosage appropriate to the developmental stage, population, and setting.
- Use authentic application through projects, mentoring, leadership, service, workforce, or other relevant experiences.
- Build meaningful family and community connection.
- Measure development and progression, not participation alone.
- Use implementation guidance, training, fidelity expectations, and continuous improvement when the model is replicated.

11. Development and Community Implementation

The framework grew from the intersection of program development, community implementation, and systematization. V.O.I.C.E. Consulting, LLC developed the formal LeveLUP Development System™ and associated framework architecture. From Me 2 U, Inc. serves as the primary community implementation environment in which the model has been informed, demonstrated, and refined through practice.

12. Implications for Funders and Community Partners

LeveLUP offers funders and partners a way to support developmental continuity rather than isolated activities. Technology, arts, mentoring, prevention, family engagement, leadership, and workforce experiences can be delivered as distinct activities while contributing to a common developmental trajectory.

- Support integrated models that connect identity, relationships, leadership, learning, and future readiness.
- Fund developmental continuity across childhood, adolescence, emerging adulthood, and family systems.
- Invest in mentoring, work-based learning, evaluation, staffing, and family engagement infrastructure, not only activity costs.
- Support cross-sector partnerships while maintaining a coherent developmental framework.

- Build evaluation capacity that can test and strengthen the framework over time.

Conclusion

LeveLUP Development System™ formalizes a developmental approach that has emerged through years of community practice. Its six dimensions, Leadership, Engagement, Value, Growth, Empowerment, and Preparedness, provide a shared architecture for experiences that may look different by age, community, program, and partner.

Within FM2U, the Signature Six™ provides the developmental pathways through which the framework is expressed. Historical and current implementations demonstrate how mentoring, STREAM, leadership, creative expression, workforce development, internships, prevention, and family engagement can work together to strengthen youth and family development and create pathways to opportunity and long-term success.

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