



KNOWLEDGE TO POWER CATALYSTS

Karen J. Pittman

Partner

Co-Founder, Forum for Youth Investment (1998-2021)

Karen has made a career of starting organizations and initiatives that promote youth development – including the Forum for Youth Investment, which she co-founded with Merita Irby in 1998. After serving as the President & CEO of the Forum for Youth Investment until February 2021, Karen stepped away from organizational management to dedicate her time to galvanizing the growing interest in using science informed strategies to truly change the odds that all children and youth can be successful.

In December 2021, Karen announced her decision to become a Partner in KP Catalysts, LLC, helping friend and colleague Katherine Plog Martinez strengthen and expand her nimble, capacity business. Together, they launched [Changing the Odds Remix](#), a new public platform for sharpening the ideas about how, where, when, why, and with whom learning and development happens (or doesn't happen).

Karen's commitment to public thought leadership is grounded in a much deeper commitment to servant leadership. In addition to CTO Remix, each year Karen reaffirms her commitment to use her knowledge and connections to help [selected organizations and initiatives](#) whose leaders are on the same journey to change the odds for youth success. In 2022, she takes on new roles with the Readiness Projects co-leads – as a scholar-in-residence at the National Urban League and as an Institute Fellow at the American Institutes for Research. She continues her role as governing partner of the SoLD Alliance and is continuing or taking on new roles – senior advisor, consultant, fellow, or board member – with a handful of organizations committed to creating equitable, learner-centered ecosystems including the New Teacher Center and Education Reimagined.

Karen currently serves as a board member for Attendance Works, the Center for the Developing Adolescent, the Children's Funding Project, and Turnaround for Children. She is also an advisory board member for ASU Teachers College/Next Ed Workforce Initiative, Special Olympics' National Education Leadership Network, Student Experience Research Network/Mid-career Fellows Program, and Teach for America/National SEL Programming Evaluation.

A sociologist and recognized leader in youth development, Karen started her career at the Urban Institute, conducting studies on social services for children and families. She later moved to the Children's Defense Fund, launching its adolescent pregnancy prevention initiatives and helping to create its adolescent policy agenda. In 1990 she became a vice president at the Academy for Educational Development, where she founded and directed the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research and its spin-off, the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work.

In 1995 Karen joined the Clinton administration as director of the President's Crime Prevention Council, where she worked with 13 cabinet secretaries to create a coordinated prevention agenda. From there she moved to the executive team of the International Youth Foundation (IYF), charged with helping the organization strengthen its program content and develop an evaluation strategy. In 1998 she and Rick Little, head of the foundation, took a leave of absence to work with ret. Gen. Colin Powell to create America's Promise. Upon her return, she and Merita Irby launched the Forum, which later became an entity separate from IYF.

Karen has written three books and dozens of articles on youth issues, and is once again a regular columnist in the youth development newspaper, *Youth Today*, as she was for decades. She is also a respected public speaker and has served on numerous boards and panels, including those of the Kauffman Foundation, the Educational Testing Service, YouthBuild and the National Center for Children in Poverty. Karen also served on The Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, a national effort to unite leaders to re-envision what constitutes success in our schools.

Karen has been honored with the National Commission for African American Education Augustus F. Hawkins Service Award (2002), the American Youth Policy Forum Decade of Service Award for Sustained Visionary Leadership in Advancing Youth Policy (2003), the Healthy Teen Network Spirit of Service Award (2007), *The Non Profit Times'* Power & Influence Top 50 (2009) and was named one of the 25 most influential leaders in Afterschool by the National Afterschool Association. She also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Partners for Livable Cities, joining previous awardees such as President William Clinton and Lady Bird Johnson.