

Engaging Youth

*A How-To Guide for
Creating Opportunities for Young People
to Participate, Lead and Succeed*



A program of
Sierra Health Foundation

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Sierra Health Foundation...

Sierra Health Foundation is a private philanthropy supporting health and health-related activities in a 26-county region of Northern California—a 57,000 square mile area that is home to more than 4.1 million people. Over the past 20 years, the foundation has awarded over 1,700 grants to nearly 700 nonprofit organizations serving the region.

Through partnerships with other foundations, nonprofit organizations, public agencies and community leaders, Sierra Health Foundation has supported efforts that increase access to quality health care services, improve environments that affect health, and help individuals make positive lifestyle choices.

Through our newest grant program, REACH: Connecting Communities and Youth for a Healthy Future, we are focusing on the healthy development of youth age 10 to 15 in the California Capital Region. The foundation board and staff strongly believe that by creating positive supports and opportunities for youth, their chances of transitioning successfully to adulthood will greatly increase. Learn more at www.sierrahealth.org.

The Youth Services Provider Network...

The Youth Services Provider Network (YSPN) is a collaboration of a broad cross section of youth-serving providers and funders in the Sacramento region committed to promoting positive youth development, learning, networking and resource sharing.

YSPN seeks to shift the youth serving delivery system to: view youth as resources, increase youth involvement and leadership, expand opportunities that help prepare youth for life, and mobilize and leverage community resources that support youth to be both problem free and fully prepared.

YSPN's mission is to strengthen the ability of youth practitioners and youth organizations to foster the holistic development of young people. Learn more at www.leed.org.

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- Youth in Focus
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Introduction

Sierra Health Foundation is embarking on a new initiative to promote youth development practices among those who serve 'tweens and teens – youth who are ages 10 to 15. The initiative seeks to engage youth in a variety of contexts, including internships, service, social justice, and advocacy. A major part of the initiative focuses on expanding leadership opportunities for youth, the subject of this report. Sierra Health seeks to explore and highlight the topic of youth leadership because it is a critical tool for empowering youth to take control of their own lives and make healthier decisions that lead to success as adults.

Sierra Health commissioned the Youth Services Provider Network to research and write this report as a part of both organizations' continuing efforts to publicize the importance of youth development approaches when seeking to improve the lives of youth. The Network is a collaborative of youth-service providers that strive to improve youth development practices throughout the Sacramento region through trainings, networking opportunities for youth agencies, and policy work.

The goals of this paper are: 1) to provide an overview of youth leadership and why it is important; 2) to share some of the best practices from organizations that successfully implement youth leadership opportunities; and 3) to provide in a supplemental booklet an introductory catalogue of the youth leadership opportunities that exist in the greater Sacramento region. The report and catalogue aim to guide agencies that are interested in adopting youth leadership components into their program, to make youth aware of leadership opportunities in the Sacramento area, and to help Sierra Health identify gaps in youth services.

The information in this report was gathered from many different sources, including interviews with and a survey of key organizations throughout the greater Sacramento region, as well as a review of the wide body of research literature and online resources addressing youth leadership in California and nationwide.

Download both *Engaging Youth: A How-To Guide for Creating Opportunities for Young People to Participate, Lead and Succeed* and the supplement, *Catalogue of Organizations and Resources in the Sacramento Area* at www.sierrahealth.org/library/index.html or request a print copy at reach@sierrahealth.org.

One of our goals is to create common language so that agencies can talk to and better understand each other. Look for definitions under our *What We Mean* headings.

What We Mean When We Say... Youth Development

Youth development is an approach that stresses certain critical experiences for youth. More than 40 years of youth development research has identified the conditions—called “supports and opportunities” in the research literature—that contribute to youth being able to develop into self sufficient, caring, and contributing adults.

The five key supports and opportunities are:¹

- caring adult relationships
- emotional and physical safety
- opportunities to participate
- a connection with the community
- opportunities to develop meaningful skills

Each of these supports and opportunities is an important component of the whole experience that youth need.

What We Mean When We Say...

Youth Participation

Youth participation describes all the ways that organizations involve youth, ranging from high-level youth leadership opportunities to adult-led activities that merely invite youth to participate. The table below shows a continuum of youth participation activities. Note that the higher levels of participation give youth more voice, choice, and leadership; at the same time, adult roles change from directing to facilitating or coaching.

Levels of control	Example	Level of decision-making	Meaningful roles and responsibilities	Level of leadership development and skill-building
Youth-led	Youth plan, implement, and evaluate a Peer Conflict mediation program.	Youth make all decisions; they may or may not consult adults.	All roles and responsibilities are developed and carried out by youth. Older youth may mentor younger ones.	High
Youth/adult partnerships	Working together at every stage, a team of youth and adults plan, run, and facilitate a youth leadership conference.	Decision-making is shared. Planning and designing activities is shared by youth and adults equally. Differences are negotiated between youth and adults.	All roles and responsibilities are shared by youth and adults equally or are based on skills and interests.	High
Adult-led, with youth consulted	Adults ask youth what kind of after-school activities they want to participate in. Youth give input, help plan a small activity, or help run a small portion of the program.	Youth input is sought, but adults make the final decisions.	Youth have medium to high levels of responsibility. The significance of the activity is medium to high. Youth help define and create choices with approval of adults.	Medium to high
Adult led, with youth interests considered	Youth are provided a chance to be a classroom greeter or help clean up the yard. Classrooms are divided into activity zones (designed and developed by adults) and youth select which zone they participate in.	Some choices are offered to youth by adults, but no input is sought. Youth have little role in decision-making.	Responsibility is low and the level of meaningful involvement may be low as well. Adults decide if, how, and when the youth participate.	Low
Adult-led, with youth given token roles or used as “decoration”	One youth serves on an adult board, but is given little or no opportunity to voice his/her opinion, no formal vote, and is expected to represent all of the youth in the community.	No real decision-making power.	No meaningful role provided. Youth participate primarily so adults can say they have youth present.	Low to nonexistent
Adult-led, with youth as “objects” (passive participants)	Adults organize and run an after-school program. Youth are invited to attend.	Youth have no decision-making power.	Youth are not given any meaningful roles. Adults provide services to youth.	Nonexistent

Background

Overview on youth leadership

Research on resilient youth and the process of growing into adulthood tells us that youth participation (a broader category that encompasses youth leadership) is a critical component that supports positive youth development. It creates a sense of belonging, a sense of autonomy and power, helps youth develop needed social and decision-making skills, builds their sense of competence, and also motivates them to persist.² Michelle Gambone, a leading researcher in the youth development field, finds that youth who have meaningful involvement in decision-making about their lives early in high school are substantially more likely than other youth to meet key developmental milestones by the end of high school.³

In spite of what is known about the importance of youth leadership opportunities, our society generally does not do a good job of engaging youth in leadership or decision-making. The California statewide Healthy Kids Survey 2004 results show that only 21 percent of youth felt they had meaningful opportunities to participate.⁴ This number declines as children move from 7th to 11th grade. Furthermore, a 1998 local Search Institute survey shows that only 19 percent of Sacramento area youth feel valued by adults.⁵ These data indicate a need for more widespread, high-quality youth participation opportunities, both throughout the state and in our local area.

Why should we practice youth leadership?

As youth prepare to become adults, their roles change: Instead of always being taken care of, they increasingly take care of themselves. While not all youth will assume traditional leadership roles as they grow older (e.g. positions of authority, political titles, etc.), they will all become the leaders of their own lives, a job that demands leadership ability. To be successful as adults, all youth will be required to demonstrate self-sufficiency and initiative, which includes making the right decisions that lead to success. Furthermore, youth leadership opportunities can give youth the skills that employers most want for their emergent workforce: self motivation, time management, oral and written communication, team work, influencing people, salesmanship, leadership, solving problems, physical skills related to health, and gathering, evaluating, and/or analyzing information.⁶ Regardless of the future aspirations of youth, leadership opportunities can help all youth develop the skills they will need in the workforce and for a lifetime of making good decisions.

What We Mean When We Say...

Youth Leadership

Youth Leadership, one aspect of youth participation, refers to the ability of young people to impact and make a difference in their home, school, or community by taking on roles of responsibility or meaningful decision-making.

Youth leadership gives youth opportunities to develop and practice skills, make decisions, and act on their ideas. The following are examples (adapted from *Sure Shot Introduction Session* by Youth On Board):⁷

- Youth serving on adult boards of directors or adult advisory boards as voting members
- All-youth advisory boards that provide advice without any formal authority
- Youth serving on task forces, policy boards, or short-term committees set up for a specific purpose
- Youth councils that are self-governed and self-directed (may serve at the pleasure of an elected or appointed adult board)
- Youth serving as staff to an agency
- Youth serving on a hiring team for an agency
- Youth serving as peer mentors, conflict mediators, and educators
- Youth serving as advocates or community organizers
- Peer courts for youth
- Youth serving as speakers on behalf of an organization
- Youth running teen “town halls” or acting as meeting facilitators
- Youth serving as youth researchers
- Youth serving as trainers
- Youth serving as grant makers

Benefits of Youth Leadership

Providing youth with leadership opportunities can bring benefits to everyone connected to your organization. Below are several of the benefits for youth, as well as the adults who work with them, the organizations that allow for this to happen, and ultimately for society at large (adapted from *Participants in Partnership: Adults and Youth Working Together*, New York State Youth Council from the National 4-H Council Youth Adult Partnerships Training Curriculum).⁸

Youth benefit by:

- Gaining skills they will need in order to become successful adults.
- Creating new relationships with adults and peers, further connecting them to their community and enlarging their support network.
- Gaining a better understanding of the community and its diversity.
- Acquiring a more positive stature in the community.
- Gaining a better appreciation for adults and the multiple roles they can play.
- Beginning to see their own potential as limitless.
- Beginning to view the world, and their ability to affect it, in a positive way.
- Feeling needed and useful.
- Feeling enhanced power, autonomy, and self esteem.

Adults benefit by:

- Feeling a stronger connection with the youth their program serves.
- Gaining a better understanding of the needs of youth.
- Feeling a renewed energy for their work,
- Experiencing improvement in morale stemming from youths' spirit of flexibility and playfulness.
- Gaining an expanded resource base so that they no longer feel "responsible for everything."

What We Mean When We Say...

Community Involvement

Community involvement (or civic engagement) includes any opportunity where youth can impact their community or which makes them feel more connected to their community. Community involvement is a pivotal experience for teaching youth to navigate the systems of the real world and to be productive within them. The most common forms of community involvement are volunteering (when a youth donates time to work in a program) and community service (when a group of youth plan and organize a project to benefit the community). Social action – another common form of community involvement – is when youth become advocates for change (e.g., going to the board of supervisors to support policies).

Organizations benefit by:

- Becoming more focused on the true needs of the youth they serve.
- Having programs that are more relevant for the youth.
- Widening their impact, as reflected by increased program attendance.
- Absorbing the unconventional thinking of youth, which can lead to solutions that adults may not have thought of.
- Stimulating greater ownership of the program by the youth (and ownership by the community).
- Growing potential new leaders and workers who come from the communities they serve.
- Using their youth as positive role models for other youth.
- Gaining new resources and support as youth reach out to their parents and other adults.

“To be open to being truly challenged by youth leadership – and to have the capacity to respond creatively to these challenges – is the mark of a great youth leadership setting.”

– Jonathan London,
Executive Director,
Youth in Focus

Society benefits from:

- The development of future leaders who feel ownership of the society they will grow to inherit.
- A new pool of adult volunteers who want to serve the community.
- The ripple effect of youth lending energy and spirit to community efforts, which inspires other youth to participate in the community in positive ways.
- Youth who are more likely to vote, given an increased sense of empowerment and civic engagement.

What We Know About Youth Leadership in the Sacramento Area

As part of this report, the Youth Services Provider Network (YSPN) developed and distributed a survey to youth service providers in Sacramento County. In addition, a selection of agency staff were interviewed.

These data contribute to YSPN's ongoing process of cataloguing the youth leadership opportunities that the Sacramento area has to offer. While the inventory we present here does not represent all of the area's youth leadership opportunities, it does give an indication of the scope and variety of activities that are available. The following section outlines some of what we have learned from our recent survey effort about youth leadership in Sacramento County. A separate summary of the agencies who responded to the survey is available. This summary includes agency contact information, information about leadership opportunities, and how to get involved.

Thirty-six youth leadership organizations responded to the survey, including 18 community-based organizations, eight government-based groups and seven school-based groups. Ten of the responding organizations serve the city of Sacramento or specific neighborhoods within or adjacent to Sacramento; 14 serve the entire County of Sacramento. A few organizations designated their target area as areas outside of Sacramento (such as the cities of Folsom or El Dorado), and one organization serves the state of California.

Spotlight on...

Youth Congress, Sacramento City Unified School District

The Program: The district created Youth Congresses at each high school to give youth a voice and forum for participating in the district's high school reform efforts. The Congresses do research and advocate for changes at school sites and within the district at large, with the goal of improving high school education. Each school Congress sends a representative to district-wide Congress meetings. Unlike many school-based leadership programs, the Youth Congress is specifically focused on policy change and advocacy.

The Results: Students presented issues and concerns determined by their own youth-led research to the school board. Some high schools are implementing youth-led research at their school sites to identify issues and then work collaboratively with administrators on addressing them. Recently youth throughout the district came together to plan, organize, and facilitate a district-wide Youth Voice Town Hall.

Spotlight on...

Youth Venture

The Program: Youth Venture is a national organization that empowers young people ages 12 to 20 by providing them with the tools, mentoring, and networking to help them create civic minded organizations, clubs or businesses.

The Results: Youth Venture provides seed money of up to \$1,000 for projects such as youth-led tutoring, radio shows, or social programs that benefit the community. Youth Venture supports affiliate groups around the nation.

Program Contact:
www.youthventure.org

Of these agencies, twice as many provide leadership opportunities to high school youth than to middle school youth. While research suggests that this is similar to national statistics, it still indicates a shortage of programming for middle school youth. There is a growing consensus among those who work with youth that the ages of 10 to 15 are a critical period when youth start to drop out of the system of youth activities if they have not been meaningfully engaged.

The responding organizations offer a substantial number of leadership opportunities for youth. Twelve have youth advisory boards and 15 have youth on their adult boards. Fifteen report that youth have the opportunity to influence activities and 16 report that youth advise on youth policy. Half of the responding organizations report involving youth in some kind of advocacy work.

Only six responding organizations report offering some kind of stipend for youth contributions. Factors for this could include a lack of funds (a common problem) or a philosophical objection to the use of stipends (some argue that youth leadership opportunities provide their own reward). More organizations (13) provide school credit as an incentive. Almost all organizations indicated that they have an adult advisor for their youth group.

Finally, we learned that in Sacramento County, very few school districts have youth serve on their school boards. The few that do have youth serving in an advisory capacity only (not as voting members). Many school districts offer youth leadership classes, but these tend to serve a narrow group of high-achieving students, rather than a cross-section of all youth in the school. These classes also tend to involve youth in planning school activities rather than decision-making around school policies. There are some policy-oriented opportunities for students on school-site councils, although these positions sometimes go unfilled.

Common Challenges

There are many significant challenges to successfully implementing youth leadership activities. Though not insurmountable, these challenges do require thought and planning to overcome. This section of the paper focuses on the obstacles that organizations may face in their pursuit of helping youth reach high levels of responsibility and leadership. Later, in the Best Practices section, we describe many strategies that successful organizations have used to address and overcome these challenges.

Adult and youth perception

Perhaps the greatest challenge to implementing successful youth leadership activities is the perception (or misperception) that adults and youth have of each other. Youth leadership requires both of these groups to set aside deeply entrenched attitudes so that they can communicate effectively with each other and successfully share power and responsibility.

Adult perception of youth — Adulthood

The field of youth development encourages adults to view youth as partners and resources – individuals who have something meaningful to contribute, such as time, energy, creativity, or knowledge. All too often, however, adults see youth as “objects” – individuals who do not have the knowledge, judgment, experience, or skills to make decisions or contribute. These types of negative perceptions (whether conscious or unconscious) are sometimes referred to as **adulthood**, defined as “behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement.”⁹ Adulthood perceptions limit adults’ ability to see youth in meaningful roles and can interfere with an organization’s attempts to implement youth leadership activities. The following adult comments and actions are potential signs of adulthood thinking:

- I don’t have time to explain (why I made a decision that affects your life).
- You are too young to understand.
- Show me respect (even though I may not show you respect).
- What do you know? You’re just a kid.
- Kids are to be seen and not heard.
- Adults know what is best for youth.
- Youth lack the wisdom and maturity to participate in making responsible decisions.

Spotlight on...

Oak Park Multi Services Center, Youth Leadership Council

The Program: The Leadership Council is a project of the Oak Park Multi Service Center of the County Department of Health and Human Services.

The Results: This youth leadership council is primarily responsible for planning and implementing an annual youth leadership camp that is run by youth. The Leadership Council also facilitates regular service projects in the Oak Park community and advises the Prevention Policy Board on their policies.

Program Contact:
Marilyn McGinnis, Program
Manager at (916) 875-2999

- I just don't get you (not taking the time to understand youth and their cultures).
- They don't deserve help until they help themselves (not understanding some of the odds and dangers that youth face in their environments).
- You should know better (not acknowledging that youth are still children developmentally even though they look like adults).
- Being surprised when youth say something intelligent.
- Assuming that youth only know about youth issues and not about general societal issues.
- Ignoring youth in the room or only connecting with the adults.
- Giving youth only small and menial tasks to do.
- Assuming youth will not understand an issue and not taking the time to explain it to them.

Adultism may lead adults to make decisions, set policy, or carry on practices that impact youth without their input. In doing so, adults risk choosing a direction that may be irrelevant for the needs and interests of youth, or which may contribute to the alienation of youth. Furthermore, adults can miss out on the creative input that youth have to offer. (For tools to help adults assess their perceptions of youth, see the Additional Tools and Materials section.)

Youth perception of adults

Youth can also harbor negative perceptions of adults that can interfere with communication and partnership. Some common youth perceptions of adults are listed below:

- Adults tend to put up barriers when youth try to do something like a project.
- Adults stereotype youth.
- Adults don't support youth enough.
- Adults don't like youth.
- Adults don't trust youth.
- Adults don't understand youth today and what they are facing.
- Adults have old-fashioned thinking.
- Adults are intimidating.
- Adults are controlling, reluctant, stressed out, hypocritical, old, boring, slow know-it-alls who are quick to say no.

Overcoming stereotypes by both youth and adults is critical to supporting youth-adult partnerships. Many of the strategies listed under "Attitude Shift" and "Supporting Youth" in the Youth Leadership Best Practices chapter can help to overcome these generalized attitudes.

What We Mean When We Say...

Facilitation

Facilitation is the role that adults can play to help elicit participation from youth. As a facilitator, the adult provides nondirective leadership. The facilitator helps groups arrive at a decision or accomplish tasks by acting as an assistant and guide, not by controlling. Facilitators are concerned about the process that groups go through to make decisions or accomplish work together, more so than about the outcome of the work. They help groups "gel" and become a community as a critical first step. As youth gain skills, adults may practice fading facilitation, in which the adult facilitator role decreases to some degree and becomes that of an equal participant or a supporter on the sidelines.

What We Mean When We Say...

Coaching

Coaching is the role adults play to guide youth and help them learn the skills they need to take on increased leadership roles. It is more actively focused on building skills than facilitation.

Other challenges

Transportation. Getting the youth to where they need to be is the most commonly cited struggle that organizations face.

Youth transiency. Many youth participants move frequently due to economic and family circumstances, making it difficult to maintain connections. When youth leaders leave, new ones must be trained all over again.

Making leadership appealing to youth. Youth (and adults) need to be re-educated that opportunities for leadership can go beyond traditional roles, such as club president, that may not be appealing to all types of youth.

Mismatch between youth skills and adult expectations. Adults may want youth to lead and take responsibility when youth haven't yet developed the requisite skills. Conversely, adults may have expectations for youth that are too low.

Adults' inability to see or accept program deficiencies. In some cases, adults assume that existing youth leadership opportunities are higher quality than they actually are, and see no reason to change their practices.

Adults' unwillingness to undertake major change. Adults and institutions may listen to youth but not hear or value their input or be willing to act on their suggestions. They want youth participation for the purposes of external publicity or credibility, but not if it means a fundamental shift of current roles and practices.

Inadequate support and time. It takes time and resources to support high-end youth engagement. Proper adult support and time for youth may be unavailable at small organizations, whose resources are stretched thin. Even when resources are ample, organizations may underestimate the time and infrastructure needed to support youth leadership efforts (such as training, flexible budgets to respond to youth ideas, staff support, access to executive staff and decision makers).

Spotlight on...

Youth ACT

The Program: Youth ACT is a project of Area Congregations Together, a consortium of churches involved in social justice issues in the community.

The Results: ACT youth help organize in the community and also have done advocacy around youth transportation issues, education reform and health care. ACT uses grassroots organizing strategies to engage youth and community residents and builds leadership skills.

Program Contact:

Jim Keddy at (916) 488-1138

Youth Leadership Best Practices

Spotlight on...

Many agencies are succeeding in providing quality leadership opportunities for their youth. The following section lists some of their best practices and strategies for overcoming challenges and creating successful leadership experiences for their youth. This information was compiled from interviews with agencies that have an excellent reputation for strong youth leadership, as well as existing research on youth development, and the collective expertise of the YSPN staff. These best practices are divided into the following topic areas:

- Planning and assessing readiness
- Attitude shift
- Recruitment and selection
- Supporting youth
- Youth on governance and advisory boards
- Other points to consider

The American Lung Association, Sacramento

The Program: For many years, the Lung Association has engaged youth in advocacy and awareness-building around anti-smoking issues. They have a youth advisory group, a youth who votes on their board of directors, youth internships during the summer, youth leaders coordinating Clean Air Awareness Events at schools through Clean Air Clubs, and activities in which youth rate movies for their depictions of smoking (the Hackney Awards and Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down!).

The Results: The organization offers youth involvement at many levels, creating a stepladder of leadership opportunities that build upon each other. Youth begin as participants in an activity and then may advance to helping lead the activity. From there, youth may advance to the advisory board and then eventually be selected to serve on the adult board.

Program contact:

Shelley Mitchell, senior program manager, (916) 444-5864

Planning and assessing readiness

Groups that are successful at youth leadership devote adequate time to assess the readiness of their organization to implement true youth leadership opportunities. They also spend sufficient time planning and preparing. These steps help organizations identify potential challenges and craft strategies for dealing with them. They help smooth the transition to youth leadership, preparing adults and youth for changes and getting the right supports in place.

In planning and assessing readiness for implementing youth leadership, successful organizations do the following:

Determine what kind of leadership opportunities will be made available to youth. There are many ways that organizations can involve youth (see What We Mean When We Say “Youth Leadership,” page 3). Effectively involving youth requires that organizations be intentional about what youth leadership opportunities they will offer, and exactly what the opportunities will entail. Some organizations have been successful in creating a **stepladder of opportunities** for youth involvement—that is, multiple positions or activities that provide increasingly more responsibility and opportunities for skill development and decisionmaking. This kind of stepladder can be used to usher youth into increasingly higher-level roles, or can help transition an organization that is trying to implement youth leadership for the first time. Organizations should determine where they want to be along the continuum of youth engagement and intentionally develop strategies and organizational structures that are appropriate for (or build to) that level of involvement.

Determine if their ultimate goal will be a youth-led activity or a youth/adult partnership model. In youth-led models, adults play a minor role (or no role) in the activities or decisions of the group. In **youth/adult partnership models**, youth and adults act together to accomplish work and goals. The specific roles of youth and adults are negotiated, but typically adults share power with youth and are mindful of developing the youth to take on more and more responsibility, without losing the presence and contributions of the adults.

Assess whether the entire organization is ideologically prepared to fully embrace youth involvement. The organization undertakes real preparation for youth leadership, and not just a verbal agreement. In order to enact change of this kind, administrators are on board and actively providing support, not just passive assent. Before moving forward with programs and strategies to engage youth, staff and management have conversations on the pros and cons of involving youth, the assumptions and beliefs they hold concerning the capabilities of youth, the issue of adultism (as defined in the “Adult Perception of Youth” section above), and what they want the organization to get from the youth involvement efforts.

Check that everyone involved shares a willingness to be transformed, and to have their assumptions challenged. All staff members are asked to recognize that bringing youth on board in a participatory way will create new challenges and experiences that are hard to foresee. Staff members are encouraged to greet these new developments with an open mind and a sense of adventure.

Assess the skill level of youth to take on leadership roles. Successful organizations acknowledge that not all youth are ready to jump right in at the highest levels of leadership. They assess what the youth are capable of, and what they will need from staff in order to succeed.

Provide staff and youth with the training and support they need to be able to serve in their respective roles. Each leadership experience builds confidence, helps the youth stretch, and helps the agency assess what skills the youth do or do not have. At each step, youth are provided coaching or relevant skill development to prepare them for whatever activity they are being asked to undertake. In addition, successful organizations know that staff who do not have leadership skills may have a hard time training youth to have leadership skills. To address this challenge, they offer appropriate skills development and support to staff members who work with youth.

“Adjust the leadership forum to meet the needs of the youth. Let them drive.”

– Bob Cabeza
Executive Director
CORAL Long Beach
YMCA Youth Institute

Assess if the infrastructure is in place to support youth involvement and leadership. Elements of a supportive infrastructure include: appropriate staffing, flexible budgets, flexibility in meeting times, training for youth and adults, transportation support, policies and procedures, awareness of legal issues related to youth on boards or as volunteers, and/or appropriate business for youth to participate in.

Assess the organization's management style, and whether it is a good fit with youth development principles. Organizations that do not employ youth development principles in how they manage their staff (i.e. are very hierarchical or 'top-down', or have trust or emotional safety issues within their organization) find it hard for staff to engage youth.

Attitude shift

As adults, we lead because we have vision and a sense of where things need to go. We are also required by law and culture to protect and take care of youth and children. Youth leadership requires that we relinquish some control and share power with youth. This can be difficult and even scary for adults, but is critical if youth are to develop true leadership skills. The following section focuses on the ways that some organizations have helped make happen the shifts in attitude necessary to accommodate youth/adult partnerships and youth in leadership roles.

Organizations that are successful in shifting attitudes to accommodate youth leadership do the following:

Encourage adults to focus on youths' assets, rather than their shortcomings. Many traditional programs for youth take a **deficit-focused** approach (the idea that youth need help and don't have the necessary skills) rather than an **asset-based** approach (the idea that youth have capabilities and potential that rise to the surface given the right opportunities). Staff in the organization recognize, fully appreciate, and validate the gifts that young people bring to the table, such as:

- new energy
- their connection to other young people
- an understanding of youth culture
- their knowledge as critical informants
- a broader sense of their peer group
- an ability to look at things through a different lens
- individual characteristics each youth brings to the team

"Part of leading is learning to let go."

– Marianne Bird
4H Youth Development Advisor
University of California
Cooperative Extension

"As adults, we tend to look at how much work it is as opposed to what kind of opportunity it is."

– Daniel Cox
Program Supervisor
Teen Services,
City of Sacramento

Spotlight on...

Youth Power Clubs, San Juan Unified School District

The Program: These clubs engage elementary and middle school youth in community service activities to improve their schools.

Program Contact:
Carolyn Smith at (916) 575-1984

Create and communicate boundaries for decision-making. Staff members decide how much decision-making by youth will be appropriate for their organization. Then they define and clearly communicate boundaries and parameters for the youth so as not to frustrate them.

Encourage success and permit failure. Staff members decide ahead of time how willing they are to let youth make mistakes and fail. Then they can be supportive and act as coaches for the youth, using failures and successes as teaching tools.

Know when to let go. Adults with a passion for their work sometimes find changes suggested by the youth frustrating. However, not accepting changes can run the risk of doing the “same old stuff” that has kept youth from meaningful participation for so long. Experienced organizations are willing to let go of control if the youth are ready and want to take the lead. They recognize that adults can step back as youth become more confident and competent.

Adapt and adjust as a group. Rather than requiring youth to fit perfectly within the existing leadership structure and norms, some organizations adjust the way meetings are structured or the manner in which information is presented so that the youth feel more comfortable or more in control. For example, some youth find Robert’s Rules of Order uncomfortable or unfriendly. (Robert’s Rules of Order are a set of prompts that structure discussions, also known as parliamentary procedure, such as “I move that we adjourn this meeting.”) Some organizations have youth create modifications to rules and norms in order to help youth feel more invested in them. Other agencies adopt agreements for how the group will work together that have been generated and agreed upon by the entire group. Such agreements might be used in addition to, or instead of, Robert’s Rules of Order.

Work against the common perceptions that youth have of adults. Staff members are encouraged and supported to:

- Leave behind stereotypes.
- Be more open to listening to new ideas.
- Resist making assumptions about the capabilities of youth.
- Take some risks.
- Show confidence in youth.

Recruitment and selection

An agency’s recruitment and selection practices ultimately determine which youth will choose to get involved. Successful youth leadership organizations develop a process for recruitment that matches the right youth with the right leadership opportunities, keeping in consideration that some youth may need guidance to reach the appropriate skill level.

Organizations that have successful recruiting and selection strategies do the following:

Create opportunities for everyone and not just the same youth all the time. Successful organizations recognize that all youth need some type of leadership opportunity. They create opportunities for youth of varied experience levels, and spread leadership roles around rather than recycling those few youth who have high initial levels of interest and confidence. These organizations acknowledge that some youth will require more support and coaching to step into a leadership role.

Take time to develop a recruitment plan and process that will help find the right youth. Successful organizations find the youth who are interested, but not overcommitted. For boards, they find youth who represent the experiences of the youth that their organization serves.

Start young and nurture. Successful organizations may particularly recruit youth who are at the young end of their preferred age range. These youth, when nurtured into leaders, can help to sustain the program in the long term. Organizations may provide tiers of involvement so that youth can feel progress and reach new levels of responsibility and leadership (e.g., rising from activity leader to group leader, to mentor, to intern, to employee).

Search broadly. Organizations recruit through other youth-serving groups, schools (leadership classes, student advisors, counselors and teachers, during lunch time at schools, and student assemblies), and by posting opportunities with the local volunteer center or one-stop center.

Utilize existing networks. Organizations use both youth and adult networks to recruit youth. They often find that youth-to-youth recruitment can be very effective, and encourage current youth participants to use their own networks or schools to recruit other youth.

Personally invite a youth to participate. Staff members use their own relationships to recruit youth participants, recognizing that they may have to ask more than once before youth will agree to step forward.

Let youth know how they will benefit. For example, staff members emphasize the opportunity to learn relevant skills that can go on a resume, to meet influential people, to travel, or to get training.

Have a job description of what is expected of the youth. Job descriptions may include skills that youth need or need to acquire, time requirements, and what their roles and responsibilities will be.

Use a short application form and an interview. Organizations have a contract or agreement that outlines what they are expecting, what they agree

Spotlight on...

Grants Advisory Board for Youth, Sacramento Region Community Foundation

The Program: The Sacramento Region Community Foundation created the Grants Advisory Board for Youth in 2002. The grant-making board of approximately 12 to 15 youth meets on a regular basis for one year.

The youth board issues requests for proposals for youth-led projects, reviews the youth-generated proposals, and then chooses which projects to fund. The board members receive training on meeting facilitation, group process, and public speaking, as well as skills they need for reviewing projects and providing technical assistance as projects are implemented.

The Results: Through the Grants Advisory Board for Youth, participating youth have the opportunity to make decisions about the allocation of funding that directly affects young people and the community.

The youth take their responsibilities very seriously and deliberate in great depth about funding decisions – more so than is seen on many adult committees. In addition the projects that are funded are quite unique. The youth applicants set high goals, and are not afraid to lay out ideas that are seemingly outrageous or have not been done before. They have a genuine enthusiasm and a different vision.

Program contact:

Suzanne Mayes, Program Officer,
(916) 492-6510

to do to support the youth, and what the youth agree to do to be a good participant. Organizations say that this helps screen out youth who might not really be interested. It also provides youth with a chance to practice interview skills for jobs later in life. In addition, it allows for the youth and the organization to decide if this is a good fit.

Spotlight on...

County of Sacramento Children's Coalition

The Program: The County Board of Supervisors appoints a 35 member Children's Coalition to advise the county on matters related to children and families. This board has two youth positions.

The Results: The Board allocates some funds for prevention as well as coordinates the children's report card.

Program Contact:
Sara Wolf at
(916) 447-7063, ext 342

Spotlight on...

PAUSE

The Program: PAUSE for foster youth is a local group of former and current foster youth who organize support groups for foster youth and also advise the Independent Living Program on policies related to Child Welfare Redesign.

Program Contact:
Theresa Thurmond at
(916) 875-5559

Supporting youth

After recruitment and selection comes the challenge of maintaining and sustaining youth involvement. Organizations that successfully involve youth recognize the importance of youth having positive experiences and feeling comfortable, supported, and successful. Many best practices in this category are similar to those of employers who wish to retain their adult staff. Other practices mentioned here are unique to the specific challenges of working with youth, who may lack certain supports or an initial understanding of the new roles they are being offered. Proper preparation and adequate support offers youth (and the organization) the greatest chance of success.

Organizations that are effective in supporting and retaining youth do the following:

Assign support staff to youth. Organizations only assign staff members who have available time to give. Depending on how many youth are involved, organizations allot at least four to 10 hours per week for supporting youth. The support staff may be responsible for developing the youth leadership program parameters, recruiting the youth, serving as a coach and mentor to the youth, advocating for the youth, helping find other opportunities for the youth, helping create positive relationships between youth members, promoting the youth in the community, and connecting the youth to the organization and resources. A job description clarifies this role for the adult advisor.

Attend to logistical details. Successful organizations may do any of the following to encourage youth to participate and help activities run smoothly.

- Provide transportation or a stipend to cover the cost of transportation if this is an issue for the target youth audience.
- Decide if stipends for meetings are appropriate. For board meetings, stipends may begin at \$20 per meeting, and stipends may be provided for all meetings or just core meetings. Note that while stipends can help attract youth who might not otherwise become involved, they generally are not the reason youth *stay* involved. Also, some programs (and even funders) view stipends as “bribing” youth and prefer that youth learn the intrinsic value of the experience itself. At the same time, for some youth the funds are essential for meeting daily living expenses.
- Arrange for youth to get community service or class credit for their involvement.

- Plan meeting times and places that are mindful of youths' schedules. This may include after school, early evenings, or on weekends.
- Provide food for meetings, and don't skimp. Successful organizations all mention this as critical, though so basic that it is often overlooked.
- Provide other incentives like certificates, internships, access to other opportunities, connections to other community resources, field trips, T-shirts, CDs or gift certificates.

Create a youth-friendly atmosphere where youth feel welcome. Some tips for making this happen are:

- Spend time up front creating a sense of community in the group.
- Use icebreakers at every meeting until a sense of team has been established.
- Help the group understand group process and the ups and downs of group work.
- Create group ground rules with their input. Be sure to mention that it is appropriate to ask questions if something is not clear, and that all voices have equal weight.
- Facilitate a group chartering process where the group defines its goals and how it will work together, as well as action plans to get its work done. (See 'Chartering Process' steps in attachments section.)
- Let youth decorate and take ownership of the environment (e.g. classroom, gym, community center).
- Know each youth by name and learn something about them.
- The youth advisor's relationship with the youth will be a key factor in attracting and retaining youth for the group.
- Truly listen to what youth have to say.
- Check in with youth frequently to gauge feelings and level of understanding.

Encourage and acknowledge good attendance at meetings. Some tips for making this happen are:

- Use e-mail if the youth commonly use that form of communication.
- Make reminder phone calls (or text messages) a few days before a meeting. Usually calls need to be made in the evening. This not only helps remind the youth of the meeting but also gives the adult advisor a chance to check in with the youth on how things are going or brief them on an issue they need to be aware of.
- Ensure that the group's purpose and plan are kept visible to the group so that youth keep in mind that each meeting is ultimately driving toward a particular goal.
- Chart progress/success so that youth do not get discouraged.
- Take the time to celebrate achievements.
- Ensure that meetings are useful and productive so that youth (and adults) don't feel their time is wasted. Training youth and adults to use good meeting and facilitation methods will increase meeting productivity.

Define responsibilities and limits for both youth and adults. Youth need to know exactly what their responsibilities are and the limits of their power. Adults also need youth (and adult) roles to be well defined so that everyone is on the same page.

Spotlight on...

Youth Innovation Fund, Academy for Educational Development

The Project: This project of the Kellogg Foundation funds several communities around the nation to support service learning, youth philanthropy and youth civic engagement.

The Results: Youth boards research issues in their community, analyze power structures, establish partnerships for change, and make grants to local youth-directed groups around civic action projects. Youth are taking action to create sustainable change in their communities.

Program Contact: www.aed.org (search site for "Youth Innovation Fund")

Take time to learn about and discuss differences between youth and adults.

Successful organizations acknowledge when they are bringing distinct cultures together – youth and adult cultures, as well as different ethnic, economic, and geographic cultures. They provide opportunities for youth and adults to get to know each other and share insights about the culture of youth and the culture of adults. Adults are encouraged to consider that the world they grew up in is different from the world of today.

Hold an orientation session for new youth. Some organizations invite parents to attend so that they may learn more about the group and what will be expected of the youth. Topics for an orientation session might include: purpose of the group, rules the group abides by (such as Robert's Rules of Order), who is in the group, projects the group is working on, roles and responsibilities of group members and adult advisors, or technical information such as how to read budgets or financial statements.

Help youth prepare for meetings or activities. Staff members might help youth research the topic they will be asked to speak on or make decisions about. If youth are serving on an adult board, the adult advisor might have a pre-meeting phone call with the youth to see if they have questions, explain some of the pros and cons of an issue, explain technical jargon, or guide them to where they can get input from others on a topic.

Be an ally to youth. In organizations that successfully implement youth leadership, adults are persistent in their efforts to involve youth and don't give up on them. They believe in youth, and show youth that they care. They have high expectations and communicate those expectations. They are also allies and advocates for the youth. Finally – and importantly – they try to make the experience fun for youth and have fun themselves.

Youth on governance and advisory boards

In general, there are two ways to involve youth in governance: directly involve youth in existing adult structures, or provide youth with an adjunct structure that is composed entirely of youth. Organizations may choose one or both of these options. When youth serve on an adult board (one or more may serve at one time), they may participate and vote along with the adults, or they may act as advisors (attending meetings and participating, but not voting). When youth form an adjunct body composed solely of youth, that body might advise the adult board, act as a subcommittee of the adult board, or be assigned a specific task, such as holding focus groups with other youth to collect information. There may be additional benefits to all-youth adjunct boards:

- Youth may work together more easily.
- There are more youth leadership opportunities.
- It can serve as a training ground for youth who want to be on the adult board.
- It can provide a more diverse youth perspective.

Spotlight on...

City of Sacramento Youth Commission and the County of Sacramento Youth Commission

The Programs: The city's Youth Commission is appointed by the City Council. The county's Youth Commission is appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Both advisory boards are charged with advising the elected bodies on policies related to youth. The commissions each meet one to two times each month.

The Results: The County Youth Commission has influenced the county board policies on drug and alcohol prevention. The City Youth Commission is involved in drafting the city's master parks plan and is also involved in issues related to homeless teens and transit safety.

Contacts:

Cheryl Rose, Program Supervisor,
(City Youth Commission)
(916) 808-4066
Joe Barba, Sr. Administrative Analyst,
(County Youth Commission)
(916) 874-5833

Organizations that have successfully included youth in their governance and advisory structures do the following:

Prepare. Successful organizations discuss and clearly define the purpose of the governance or advisory group. As part of this process, they reflect on issues of structure, responsibilities, number of participants, requirements for involvement, and how groups will communicate. (See the Youth On Board organizational assessment and the Preparing for Governance discussion questions in the Additional Tools and Materials section.)

Stay aware of legal issues. In California, youth can serve as voting members on a board, but cannot be the signatories on checking accounts or binding contracts. As a result, boards that make decisions on contracts cannot be composed of more youth than adults.

Decide what age group is appropriate for youth on your board. Older youth in college may bring more skills, but may also be busy with school and work. In addition, a 20-year-old will have a somewhat different view than a 13- or 16-year-old. Ethnicity, income, and geography may also bring different perspectives.

Involve more than one youth. Some organizations have two or three youth (or 25 percent of the total membership) participate on an adult board. This helps increase the confidence of the youth when speaking up and offers broader youth perspectives. It also avoids **tokenism**, when youth appear to be given shared power but in reality have little choice or voice.

Involve youth in all decisions, not just those related to youth issues.

Encourage youth to prepare for meetings. Preparation is key to meaningful youth participation on boards. Some organizations have youth do research so they have something specific to bring in with them. For example, youth may be asked to informally survey other youth about an upcoming policy issue. This provides additional youth input and value to the group, and gives youth increased confidence and a sense of empowerment.

Help youth understand their role as representatives. Successful youth involvement on a policy board requires that youth understand that they represent other youth in the community, not just themselves.

Assign an adult mentor to each youth (on adult boards). This practice can help make youth feel more confident and comfortable in the group. Mentor duties might include: reviewing the meeting agenda ahead of time, checking in with youth before and after the meeting, answering questions the youth may have, helping the youth think through a decision the board will need to make, and helping the youth connect to other resources. Some organizations also training the mentors and develop a mentor job description. Additionally, a staff person might be assigned to coach the youth, recruit the youth, and ensure they are getting the support they need to be successful.

Spotlight on...

The California Center for Civic Participation and Youth Development

The Programs: The Center's flagship program is Capitol Focus, a civic education program that introduces young people to democracy and the state level governing process. Capitol Focus builds confidence and critical thinking skills, as well as plants long-term seeds for civic participation. Other programs, such as the Policy Leadership program, have been developed to help youth get more engaged in the political process around current issues, working from the youth development model. The program finds actual opportunities for policy engagement and creates "just in time" training as needed. The program connects youth to adults and, in the process, helps youth develop well-informed opinions and ideas, as well as the ability to follow through with them. The Policy Leadership program is a resource for forming youth task forces, specifically helping them develop a platform and determining what skills they need.

The Results: As part of the Capitol Focus program, more than 300 adult professionals per year give their time to help train youth, linking youth with the governmental forces that shape our state. The Policy Leadership program recently helped form a youth policy board on obesity programs that is the first-ever institutionalized statewide youth policy board.

Contact:

Jim Muldavin, Founder and Executive Director, (916) 443-2229

Spotlight on...

California Youth Connection

The Program: This is a group of former and current foster youth who advocate for policy changes at the state level.

Program Contact:
Hemal Sharif at (530) 941-7541

Build in icebreakers and “getting to know you” activities. This helps youth and adult board members feel more comfortable sharing ideas with each other. Some boards create ground rules together so that expectations and rules of engagement are clear and mutually agreed upon. They may also develop a process for youth to alert the staff or board chairperson if they feel their voice is not being heard.

Create a regular role or place on the agenda for youth (on adult boards). This might include having youth present an item they have prepared ahead of time, or having a youth serve as a co-chair, a chairperson in training, or as secretary. One agency – The Oak Park Policy Prevention Board – had youth organize icebreakers for the first few months that youth served on their board as a way to give youth a voice and create greater connections between youth and adults who had not worked together before. These kinds of regular roles ensure that youth always have a voice.

Provide youth with skills training on how boards are run. Training might include topics such as taking minutes, working off of an agenda, etc.

Provide youth with acronym and/or definition sheets. To successfully involve youth in board meetings, they need to understand the language being spoken. Organizations may help also help youth understand the issues through orientations, trainings, or by arranging for youth to interview staff to learn about the agency.

Prepare youth for criticism. Youth need to be ready to receive criticism or challenges to their ideas from adults. Assure them that this can be normal operating procedure for decision-making bodies. Criticism from adults can mean that they are treating youth the same as they would an adult colleague.

Identify youth involvement as a priority in the organization bylaws, mission, and operating procedures. This sends a message to the larger organization and helps institutionalize youth leadership.

Other points to consider

The best youth leadership opportunities involve critical reflection, both for the youth and adults involved. Staff members can debrief with youth after meetings to assess how it went, what they learned, or what they would like to be different in the future. This practice encourages analytical skills, and the ability to give and accept criticism. Successful organizations also take time to periodically reflect on how their youth involvement component is working.

Developing individual leaders is important, but developing group leadership can be just as important. Group efforts toward common goals build relation-

ships and teamwork skills. Group leadership also creates opportunities to share the leadership roles and give everyone a chance to practice – by rotating the meeting facilitation and note-taking roles, for example. Organizations that successfully implement group leadership work to develop leadership skills among all youth participating in the group, not just one leader.

Youth greatly benefit from leadership opportunities where the impact of what they do is extended beyond themselves. Youth are passionate about causes and issues. Their energy can be harnessed by developing their understanding of an issue, building their skills, and putting them in real-life contexts to use those skills. When youth are provided with opportunities to make decisions with real consequences, adults need to decide how much authority to give and whether they can allow youth to learn by doing and possibly making mistakes. If adults must step in and veto decisions, they should always clearly communicate why they are doing so.

Successful organizations are serious about assessment. They devote time and resources to determining how effective their leadership opportunities really are. Assessments should happen often and can include self-reflection (for adults and youth), internal and external peer assessment, and most critically, youth assessment of the program. Involve youth in all levels of assessment: setting criteria, conducting focus groups, processing data, presenting findings, and planning strategies according to the results.

Youth can be powerful advocates for programs. If given the opportunity and support, youth leaders can be incredible at networking, speaking with other groups, and presenting to funders.

Youth leadership can be incorporated into virtually any grant. Organizations that are truly engaging youth include the cost of internships and support staff into most grants they apply for. They approach youth leadership not as a separate program, but as part of every program they undertake.

Youth can benefit from long-term (multiyear) projects in a variety of ways:

- Youth develop stronger relationships with peers and adults over time.
- Youth have time to get past the initial learning curve where they develop the necessary skills and knowledge for the project. Then they can build on those prior experiences over the extended arc of the project.
- Youth can experience a greater range of leadership roles progressing from one tier to another over the course of the project.
- Long-term projects often offer deeper and more meaningful experiences.

Youth can also benefit from short-term projects, which might be necessary due to time constraints. While shorter projects don't allow for as much relationship-building and skill-building, they can offer smaller chunks of work that feel more manageable, as well as results that are concrete and more immediately satisfying.

“If you give a young person an opportunity or responsibility to do something meaningful, then they are going to exceed your expectations 99 percent of the time.”

– Suzanne Mayes
Program Officer
Sacramento Region
Community Foundation

*“It takes **time** for young people to really accomplish something. Bring them in for the arc of the whole process.”*

– Jonathan London
Executive Director
Youth in Focus

Tips for and from Youth

Tips for Youth

The following suggestions came from local youth and adults involved with various leadership opportunities and programs throughout Sacramento County. The list also borrows from the organization New Ways to Work and *Younger Voices Stronger Choices*,¹⁰ by L. Leifer and M. McLarney. These suggestions are aimed at youth who seek to be leaders.

- Ask for help and guidance when you need it. It is not giving up your responsibility, it is living up to it.
- When you're selecting responsibilities, be honest with yourself: Is this something you feel you can do?
- Demonstrate your capabilities. Show adults that you are mature and capable. They may not always assume it.
- Accept feedback.
- Practice good communication. Ask questions and say if you have a problem or concern.
- Lead by building relationships and developing trust. Find friends to support you.
- Model the qualities and values you would like to see in your group.
- Project the future consequences of your decisions. Think things out in advance. Then think strategically.
- Remember that you belong and you have a say. You were nominated or invited to participate, so your voice counts.
- Find allies.
- Get the word out about your leadership.
- Know that you are not alone.
- Take responsibility for making it work.
- Don't get discouraged. Adults are also learning to work with you. Sometimes "group process" is hard and frustrating. Sometimes politics enters into situations.
- Attend meetings. Participate and get involved at meetings.
- Have fun.
- Remember that criticism does not equate to condescension. Just because adults don't agree with you does not mean they are dismissing you.
- Be reliable. Make your word count.
- Reassure adults that you want to and can be involved in decisions. Let them know it is okay to not always be in control.
- Reassure adults that they are doing a good job. They are insecure sometimes as well. They just have learned to hide it better.
- Remember that most adults have good intentions. They just are not used to working in partnership with youth.

Spotlight on...

Peer Court, Placer County

The Program: The peer court reviews low level juvenile arrest cases and decides on sentences for law violators.

The Results: Volunteer youth serve in various roles including: teen attorneys, teen juries, teen tobacco and truancy court panelists, teen clerks and bailiffs and peer court interns. Training is provided by the program to prepare youth to serve in their positions.

Program Contact:

Karen Green, Coordinator at (916) 663-9227, ext. #2

Spotlight on...

People Reaching Out, Peer Mentor/Educators Program

The Program: PRO provides drug and alcohol prevention services in the community. They have a youth leadership team that advises them. They also have a peer mentor program that is a zero-period program at Sacramento's McClatchy High School, run by the PRO staff.

The Results: The youth learn leadership skills and then teach Second Step curriculum and serve as mentors to the youth at nearby Bret Harte Elementary School during their after-school START program. PRO has a youth on its board of directors as well.

Program Contact:

Angela Da Re at (916) 576-3300

Tips for Adults from Youth

This list was developed by LEED youth interns and also adapted from the 4-H Council Youth Adult Partnership Training Curriculum. These suggestions are aimed at adults who are working with youth in a youth leadership situation.

- Make sure that you don't hold the youth to a higher standard than the adults.
- Don't give youth too much leeway just because they are youth. Your expectations can and should be high, but also reasonable for the developmental stage of the youth.
- Remember that youth are individuals and do not represent the voice of all youth. Don't ask them to.
- Don't interrupt. This will shut down youth immediately.
- Your role is a partner and not a parent.
- Don't move too fast. Youth are learning and you may need to take time to explain or to let youth process information.

Spotlight on...

Grant Environmental Organization (G.E.O.), Grant High School

The Program: G.E.O. is a youth-led program that works on entrepreneurial garden and community beautification projects. G.E.O. trains youth in horticulture, business, and landscape design principles so they have the skills and knowledge to obtain employment, access higher education, and actively improve the community. Students plan, organize, and manage the G.E.O. flower business from April through September, taking on various leadership positions.

Program Contact:

Ann Marie Kennedy at
(916) 286-1245

Training

Spotlight on...

Youth Impact

The Program: Youth Impact is a program under the Forum for Youth Investment and is operated in the communities of Nashville, Tennessee and Austin, Texas.

The Results: The program trains youth to research issues in their community and to develop action plans to improve their community, including taking policy actions and advocacy.

Program Contact: www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

What Training Do Adults Need?

Training adults to work in partnership with youth is critical. Below are suggested topic areas for adult trainings. Generally, this kind of training involves facilitated discussions to help reveal beliefs and assumptions and reflect on challenges and opportunities for making youth leadership successful. See the Youth Leadership Training Resources section in the booklet *Catalogue of Organizations and Resources in the Sacramento Area* for information on locating training providers.

- Youth/adult partnerships: youth and adults working together in a mutual respectful environment towards a common goal
- Adulthood: how to recognize adulthood and its consequences
- Youth culture: what are today's youth listening to, reading, wearing? What is life like for youth in today's world?
- Creativity and play: how to make work more playful and less stuffy
- Adults as allies: how to recognize the systems we operate in and help youth navigate them
- Participatory facilitation and meeting management: how to manage group processes, support the group as it moves towards its goals at each meeting, and help resolve conflicts
- Project planning: skills to ensure that work stays on track
- Listening/communication: active listening and consensus building skills

What Training Do Youth Need?

Training is critical to ensure youth have the skills they need to participate. Youth especially benefit from relevant, "just in time" training – training that occurs just as youth need it. Below are potential training topics for youth in leadership roles (or youth developing skills to eventually take such a role). Remember also that some training can be offered to youth and adults together.

- What it means to be a leader
- Inclusion: how to be able to facilitate leadership roles and avoid cliques
- Diversity training
- How to be accepting of ideas
- Youth/adult partnerships
- Planning/time management
- Group and meeting facilitation
- Communication
- Organizing and outreach skills
- How the policy process works and tips on advocating for issues
- Understanding the systems we operate in (e.g. family, school, city) and how to influence them
- Public speaking and marketing your message or idea

Additional Tools and Materials

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ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Based on Youth on Board's publication

14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making

This checklist is to be used as a guide to help give direction, uncover hidden issues, help understand tasks, and guide commitment to this initiative. Use this checklist as a tool with your board, your staff, young people, or other concerned parties.

- YES = We do this already, and don't need assistance
- NO = We don't do this yet, and want to develop next steps to move forward in this area
- N/A = This is not applicable to us / We don't plan to do this

Please note that we are not suggesting that every organization meet all of these criteria

1) Know Why You Want to Involve Young People

Has your group thought about why you are involving young people in decision making?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Have you articulated these thoughts to others verbally, or in writing (such as in a mission statement)?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

2) Assess Your Readiness

Have you talked to and assessed the commitment of:

- 1) The Board
- 2) Staff members
- 3) Young people
- 4) Other parties involved

Yes	No	N/A
Yes	No	N/A
Yes	No	N/A
Yes	No	N/A

Next steps: _____



3) Determine Your Model for Youth Involvement

Have you considered involving young people directly in an existing adult governing body, such as a board or directors or community task force?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Have you considered creating an all-youth body such as a youth advisory board, youth planning committee, or peer mediation group?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Have you considered putting young people on your staff (e.g. peer leaders or program staff)?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

4) Identify Organizational Barriers

Have you created policies or amended bylaws stating that young people will be a permanent part of governing your organization, advising on curriculum, or developing programs?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Has your organization taken the time to address the budget and staff considerations involving young people?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Are young people's terms of office and voting rights similar or equal to those of adults?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there a replacement system if a young person's term ends early (e.g. due to relocation or other life changes?)

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do young people have access to the resources needed to participate in your group's work, and are expenses paid for in advance as opposed to reimbursed?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there some leeway for a young person's participation in school activities? (Work meetings are often acceptable reasons for adults to miss meetings--is a big basketball game given the same consideration?)

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----



Have you developed a conflict of interest policy if young people are advising in a program in which they are involved?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

5a) Overcome Attitudinal Barriers - Adults

Are young people involved in *all* issues, not just those affecting youth?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Does the group understand that youth members do not represent the voice of all young people?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do you continually ask young people how you can assist them better, and do you take their recommendations seriously?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Have you considered your own negative assumptions and stereotypes about young people in order to learn about sharing real authority with them?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Have you considered adjusting your professional "adult" language to ideas that young people can better understand?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

5b) Overcome Attitudinal Barriers - Young People

Have you recognized the value of having your voice heard?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do you take leadership roles whenever possible (e.g. asking to be on committees?)

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do you share your thoughts even when you are not comfortable?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----



Do you push for policies that promote young people's power (e.g. youth on committees?)

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

6) Address Legal Issues

Are board members aware of their obligations, including the duty of care and duty of loyalty?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Have you researched the specific laws concerning youth governance in your state, and contract laws relating to your governing body?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

7) Recruit Young People

Have you thought out your recruitment criteria?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

When recruiting members, do you recruit in ways that will attract a diverse group of young people?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do you use your recruitment process to educate your constituency about the project they are involved in, as well as the importance of involving young people?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

If an all-adult group, do you select at least two young people to participate so they do not feel alone or isolated?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____



8) Create a Strong Orientation Process

Is an orientation system in place?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is an adult of authority available to explain commitments to concerned parents?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do you have a letter of agreement or contract that describes the responsibilities of the program and the role you are asking the young person to take in the organization?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

9) Train Young People for Their Roles

Is there a system for youth members to train new youth members?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there training for young people on presenting to groups (noting that giving a presentation to all-adult groups may be especially difficult)?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there skill-training for young people on topics such as team building, presentation skills, facilitating meetings, and reading budgets?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

10) Conduct Intergenerational Trainings

Is there training for adults on understanding young people and being strong allies?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Are you innovative in your trainings? Are they experimental and fun?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there room for everyone to listen to each other and laugh at meetings?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____



11) Make Meetings Work

Do you start meetings with warm-up exercises or frequently split up into small groups?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there time for all members to speak at meetings?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do you use appreciations during meetings?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

12) Develop a Mentoring Plan

Is a mentor or "buddy" system in place?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there staff to support youth members? (e.g. preparation, transportation for meetings, etc.)

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there regular contact between youth members and adult leaders? (e.g. Executive Directors, Board Chairs, Principals, CEOs, etc.)

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do mentors make certain that new members attend meetings, have the support they need, and become well-oriented to the organization?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

13) Strengthen Youth/Adult Relationships

Does everyone understand that strong relationships are key to successful programs and social change movements?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----



Is there informal time for young people and adults to build close relationships with each other?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do you keep your commitment to young people consistent, not letting them be overshadowed by "more important" meetings and commitments?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Do you make sure young people are given the opportunity to speak on every issue, not just programmatic issues?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

If young people seem not to have an opinion, do you attempt to elicit an opinion by providing more information or further discussion?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is equal weight given to the opinions of young people?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Does the organization involve parents from the start?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Does the organization let the young person know it will be speaking with their parents but not breaking confidentiality?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

14) Create Support Networks

Do young people keep in touch with their peers about their leadership roles and their program?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there specific time for young people to network with other youth leaders doing similar work?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Is there time set aside for adults to network with other adults doing similar work?

Yes	No	N/A
-----	----	-----

Next steps: _____

Exemplary Practice #7 Ensure Meaningful Youth Participation

The following indicators will help you determine your program's progress in this practice area. They're designed as a self-assessment for you as a Program Director or Site Director, and to be used by your staff and partners to provide you with a way of identifying areas in which you are especially strong and those where you can improve.

- Key:
1. We're just beginning to work in this area.
 2. We've done some work, but have a long way to go.
 3. We've made significant progress and are doing reasonably well.
 4. We've achieved a high level of success in this area.
 5. We're doing extremely well in this area.

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
1	We define participation as a practice that gives every child and young person in our program opportunities to set goals, create plans, design projects, solve problems, make decisions and take actions in areas that directly affect them.					
2	We systematically provide opportunities for participation and ensure that this leads to a sense of belonging, a feeling like they belong, that their ideas count, and that they have opportunities for leadership.					
3	Young people have opportunities to take responsibility for program space and equipment.					
4	Young people are able to choose activities that are attractive to them and reflect their interests.					
5	Our program offers young people opportunities to make meaningful decisions regarding program goals, design and direction.					
6	Our program provides young people with a range of opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills from assisting in simple tasks to designing or leading exercises.					
7	Our staff receives training and ongoing support in group facilitation and decision-making, fading facilitation and developing youth as leaders.					

Exemplary Practice Indicators		1	2	3	4	5
8	We recognize the value of community service and the positive helping others has on impact of students and provide opportunities for this to happen.					
9	Our staff takes time to identify the leadership potential of individual participants of different ages, styles, talents and personalities.					
10	Our staff demonstrates flexibility in its leadership and coaching roles enabling young people to increase their independence and group responsibilities.					
11	Our program maintains some flexible resources to support staff and youth in creating activities or events that reflect their current projects and interests.					
12	Our program involves young people in the design and implementation of ongoing program assessment and evaluation.					
13	Our organization regularly gathers and acts on input from participating youth on whether they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + feel like they belong; + feel like their ideas count; + have opportunities for leadership; + have a chance to make choices. 					
14	Average of responses to the questions = sum of response numbers divided by the number of indicators.					

Source: Developed by the Center for Collaborative Solutions & the Community Network for Community Development; March 2003.

Leadership Assessment

Staff _____ Date ____/____/____

Youth Name _____

Rate each item listed in the matrix below from 1 to 4 according to the general description for each numerical rating. If the question is not applicable to the youth please make a N/A notation in the score column.

Rating	1	2	3	4	Pre	Post
Team Building	<p>Dominates group activity, bossy, doesn't acknowledge value of others in group.</p> <p>Has become isolated from the group. May complete duties but does not participate in discussions and decision making.</p>	<p>Initiates discussion and fulfills defined role but is often the cause of group conflict. Often does not conform to group norms (i.e. being on time, sharing information, staying on task, respecting others' opinions).</p>	<p>Understands what it takes to be a team player; keeps group on task, seeks information, and initiates discussion. Sometimes does not feel a part of the group. Avoids conflict and placates members.</p>	<p>Demonstrates ability to work as a team player; joins in, offers to help, and recognizes contributions of others. Commitment to the task comes 1st.</p>		
Leadership and Trusteeship	<p>Possesses any combination of the following traits: quiet, uninformed, unskilled, disliked, is late/misses meetings and/or expresses strong unqualified assertions.</p>	<p>May provide a vision and direction. Leads through rigid dictatorial style. Dominates conversation, bullies group members, uses offensive/abusive language.</p>	<p>Provides a vision, direction, encouragement and communicates competently. Has difficulty in times of crisis, accepting accountability, and/or resists change.</p>	<p>Provides a vision, direction, and encouragement. Provides a solution in time of crisis and accepts accountability. Is a competent communicator and adapts to change.</p>		
Respecting Differences	<p>Makes insensitive comments about others based on cultural and/or personal beliefs and values. Believes his/her personal view is the best and berates those with differing opinions.</p>	<p>Is unaware of cultural differences. Unknowingly insensitive when working with others.</p>	<p>Understands the value of different cultural and personal backgrounds. Sometimes is not sure how to adapt to, and help the group benefit from, cultural differences.</p>	<p>Appreciates and adapts to different cultural norms. Encourages differing opinions, perspectives. Sees differences as a path to creativity and innovative decisions.</p>		
Planning, Organizing and Facilitating Meetings	<p>Facilitates an unorganized and unplanned meeting. Does not stay on task and uses meeting time to socialize. Decisions are not reached.</p>	<p>Uses a rigid agenda that does not leave time for sharing of ideas. Often dominates the group, makes decisions for the group and/or creates a competitive climate.</p>	<p>Uses an agenda that is either too short or too lengthy. Sometimes has difficulty keeping group on task. Works toward collaborative decisions of vocal members but does not draw quiet members out.</p>	<p>Prepares an organized and brief agenda; effectively facilitates meetings by using an ice breaker, drawing others out, managing time, and staying on task. Effective decisions made through collaboration of shared ideas.</p>		

Advocacy and Mobilizing for Action	Stalls action by creating conflict, plays devils advocate for too long, isolates self from the group, and/ or does not complete assigned tasks.	Identifies stakeholders but sometimes fails to consider their needs when approaching the action plan. Does not research action plan or discuss barriers. Divides up work evenly based on a time-line.	Identifies stakeholders and collaborates for best plan. Researches action plan implementation process but does not discuss barriers or reflect. Divides up work evenly based on a time-line.	Collaborates an action plan with stakeholders. Researches how to implement action plan, discusses barriers, reflects, divides work up evenly, sets up a time-line and strategy for completion.		
Community Organizing	Does not understand what makes a strong community. Sees the negative attributes of community instead of the assets.	Understands what makes a strong community and the importance of community involvement. Does not effectively and appropriately collect the research data.	Appropriately and effectively researches community assets. Does not build relationships with contacts for possible advocacy.	Appropriately and effectively researches community assets. Creates liaisons with skilled residents and leaders of institutions, associations for future advocacy.		
Defining an Issue	Takes action before determining vision and goals.	Understands the importance of researching the issue but does not always utilize the most appropriate method of information collection.	Researches issue utilizing focus groups, data/information collection, and questionnaires where appropriate. Has difficulty incorporating gathered information into vision, goals, and/or plan of action.	Researches issue utilizing focus groups, data/information collection, and questionnaires where appropriate. Defines vision, goals, strategies, and an action step.		

Comments:

Youth-Adult Involvement Rating Tool

Please complete the following survey. You DO NOT have to include your name. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Project Location (City/Town) _____ State _____ County _____

1. You are (Check one):

A Youth Participant

An Adult Participant

4. What is your age group (Check one)?

13-14

15-16

17-18

19-25

26 and over

2. How do you describe yourself?

Asian

Black/African-American

Hispanic/Latino

Native American

White/European-American

Other _____

5. Please select one that best describes the area in which you live.

Rural/Farm

Suburban

Urban/City

Other _____

3. What is your Gender (Check one)?

Female

Male

6. Is this your first time participating in a project that involves youth and adults working together (Check one)?

Yes

No (If not, what other project(s) have you worked on that involved youth and adults?) _____

For more information contact:

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Youth-Adult Involvement Rating (YAIR) Scale

When completing this part of the survey, think of your current community project and the youth and adults in your group/team. The purpose of this survey is to allow you to rate the levels of youth involvement with other youth, adult involvement with other adults, and youth working together with adults. Place an “X” on the line (within the middle boxes) near the statement that you feel is the most accurate. For example, if you feel the statement on the right or left best describes your situation, you would place an “X” in the box closest to that statement. If you believe that both statements are accurate or somewhat accurate, then you would place an “X” at or near the middle. See the example below.

EXAMPLE

Youth & adults do not have lots of fun.										X		Youth & adults have lots of fun.
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---	--	----------------------------------

Youth Involvement Indicators

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Youth take little initiative in working on projects.											Youth take lots of initiative working on projects.
Youth show up late for meetings/events.											Youth arrive to meetings/events on time.
Youth make few decisions for themselves, often relying on the decisions of adults.											Youth rely on themselves to make key decisions.
Youth have very little access to information that is needed to make decisions.											Youth have full access to information that is needed to make decisions.
Youth rarely share ideas about things that matter to them.											Youth frequently share ideas about things that matter to them.
Youth do not have an equal vote in the decision-making process.											Youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process.
Youth do not help one another in developing new skills.											Youth help one another in developing new skills.
Youth have no interest in being involved with this project.											Youth are very excited about being involved with this project.

Adult Involvement Indicators

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Adults display a sense of wanting to control youth.											Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership.
Adults never listen to the suggestions of youth.											Adults always listen to the suggestions of youth.
Adults always take over everything when working on project activities.											Adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities.
Adults do not learn new skills from one another.											Adults learn new skills from one another.
Adults never take the ideas of youth seriously.											Adults always take the ideas of youth seriously.
Adults command youth to follow the directions of adults.											Adults encourage youth to come up with their own ideas.
Adults have no interest in being involved with this project.											Adults are very excited about being involved with this project.
Adults are not very concerned with community change.											Adults are very concerned with community change.

Youth-Adult Interaction Indicators

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
There is arguing/tension among youth and adults.											Youth and adults get along well together.
Youth appear uneasy and intimidated by adults.											Youth seem comfortable working with adults.
Adults appear uneasy and afraid of youth.											Adults seem comfortable working with youth.
Adults do not consult with youth on project activities at all.											Adults actively and consistently consult with youth on project activities.
Adults provide little or no direction and mentoring for youth.											Adults provide direction and mentoring for youth.
Youth and adults rarely agree with one another.											Youth and adults often agree on most decisions.
Youth and adults work separately on project tasks.											Youth and adults work together as partners on project tasks.
Youth and adults learn little from one another.											Youth and adults indicate mutual learning from one another.
Youth and adults rarely help one another develop new skills.											Youth and adults frequently help one another develop new skills.
Youth and adults never engage in respectful conversations.											Youth and adults always engage in respectful conversations.

Youth-Adult Partnerships Self-Assessment Tool

This is not a test! Rate yourself on a scale from 1-5, "one" being a beginner in this area. In the first column, put where you see yourself now. In the second column, put where you would like to be.

Where I am now: Where I would like to be:

- | | | |
|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | _____ | I am familiar with resources about youth participation and youth and adult partnerships (e.g., technical assistance, books, etc.). |
| _____ | _____ | I affirm and support both young people and adults' feelings and ideas. |
| _____ | _____ | I treat all group members with respect, regardless of age. |
| _____ | _____ | I appreciate and incorporate the strength of similarities and differences among people (gender, spiritual, class, etc.). |
| _____ | _____ | I resist the urge to take over. |
| _____ | _____ | I am careful about interrupting people of all ages. |
| _____ | _____ | I provide opportunities that allow youth to reflect and learn. |
| _____ | _____ | I believe in the potential and empowerment of all youth. |
| _____ | _____ | I trust youth to have the power to make decisions on how a youth program is designed. |
| _____ | _____ | I have the ability to identify positive possibilities in difficult situations. |
| _____ | _____ | I listen carefully to people of all ages. |
| _____ | _____ | I get involved and provide support to persons when they are being put down. |
| _____ | _____ | I seek to learn from people. |
| _____ | _____ | I expect youth to make their own decisions. |
| _____ | _____ | I say something when young people's rights and due respect are being denied or violated. |
| _____ | _____ | I celebrate people's successes. |
| _____ | _____ | I advocate for improvement of youth / adult partnerships in teams, organizations, and communities. |

Adapted from Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 502, Takoma Park, MD 20912 + (301) 270-1700 + Fax: (301) 270-5900 + www.theinnovationcenter.org



Getting Teams Focused

By Cheri Douglas

Lots of people work in teams, but not all teams work! In fact, some teams become downright bogged down. But the ones that do work, really work. The benefits of great teamwork are astounding! Great teams frequently accomplish what previously appeared impossible.

A team gets bogged down, its members don't know what they're supposed to be doing, why they're a team, or how to recognize success. This lack of shared focus calls for some serious work on the team Charter. Here are a few tips.

- The charter is the agreement and shared vision by which the team manages its work. Members should develop their own charter as one of their first team functions. If someone else gives the team a charter, members should edit and revise it to make it their own. The best team processes result when managers provide just the outcomes and/or deliverables they expect as customers of the team. The team can integrate this information into the Charter.
- The charter should include ...
 - Team Mission:* A statement of purpose describing why the team exists.

Team Vision: Inspiring description of a future state which will exist when the team has accomplished its mission.

Success Indicators: A list of achievements which will signal that the team is making progress toward the shared vision. The list should be organized in order of priority and utilized as a basis for action planning and team check-ups.

Operating Norms: A description of the how the team will work together, including expected approaches to communication and decision making, meeting schedule, meeting management agreements, and roles and accountabilities for team members.

Improvement and Celebration Plans: A schedule of follow-up dates for team check-ups for continuous improvement planning and achievement celebrations

Without a charter, a team usually finds itself making many false starts and struggling to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of its members. It's the proverbial ship without a rudder! 🚢

Team Charter Format

I Mission

A brief statement describing the purpose of your team.

II Success Indicators

Vote for
priorities

• _____	
• _____	
• _____	
• _____	

A list of signs of success envisioned at a specific future point when your team is WOWED by their accomplishments.

III Vision Statement

A brief compelling and inspiring statement describing a future state when your team is successful.

IV Team Values

A brief list of the beliefs of the team which are embedded throughout their success indicators.

V Team Norms (Social & Operating)

• _____
• _____
• _____

Team agreements and expectations of each other in:

- Social/Communication Interactions;
- Meeting/Operating Procedures;
- Specific Roles (ie. Facilitator, Recorder, Funmeister)

V Team Member Roles & Interests *(Optional for Project Teams)*

A brief specific description of team member roles, talents, temperament & interests.

VI Start-up Action Plan

Beginning steps including actions, lead person, target dates.

VII Follow-up Agreements & Linkages

A description of follow-up steps, timelines, and who gets meeting minutes.

*Success Indicators are developed by asking the following question of the team:

Assume it is (your timeframe...ie.6 months/1 year) from now and you just woke up to find that you are WOWED by your own success with this charter. What do you see? What is happening? What have you achieved? How do you feel? What are people saying? Write each answer as a sign of success in a list.

© Designed by Cheri Douglas, Positive Impact Consulting, Sacramento, California

Team/Project Charter Format

I Mission

A clear statement describing the purpose of your team.
Why do you exist?

II Success Indicators

Vote for priorities for early action

• _____	
• _____	
• _____	
• _____	

A list of signs of success envisioned at a specific future point when your team is WOWED by their accomplishments.
What will the future look like, feel like be?

III Vision Statement

A brief compelling and inspiring statement describing a future state when your team is successful.
A summary of themes of the Success Indicators

IV Team Values

A brief list of the beliefs of the team which are embedded throughout their success indicators.
What IDEALS will you protect during the process of succeeding?

V Team Norms (Social & Operating)

• _____
• _____
• _____

Team agreements and expectations of each other in:

- Social/Communication Interactions;
- Meeting/Operating Procedures;
- Specific Roles (ie. Facilitator, Recorder, Funneler)

V Deliverable Milestones & Timelines

A brief description of critical deliverables which mark developmental points during the project life cycle

VI Start-up Action Plan

Beginning steps including actions, lead person, target dates.

VII Follow-up Agreements & Linkages

A description of next steps, communication timelines, approval points and who gets meeting minutes.

IS Self-Directed Team

Customer Satisfaction Survey
Planning Session (Date)

Survey Project — SAMPLE — Team Charter

Mission

The mission of this project is to support the Organization X strategic plan for customer satisfaction by developing a sustainable survey process as an ongoing vehicle for providing continuous improvement planning benchmarks from a broad array of our IS customers.

Success Indicators

If this project were incredibly successful, what would it look like in 2 years?

Priority Votes	Success Indicators
8	Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Continuous customer feedback + Feedback is positive from all + Open communication between internal and external customers + Public, constant mechanism for feedback
8	Customer Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Anticipate customer requirements + Complete understanding of customer needs
8	Metrics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Have documented data to make decisions + View able customer s/t metric data
5	Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Continuous improvement is mind set at personal (individual) level + Efficient processes + Have process improvement methodology in place + Process in place to address problems
5	Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + 100% service requests done on time + Exceed service level requirement + New products and services available timely + Production services like dial tone
4	Employee Moral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Level of individual productivity increases + People can't wait to come to work + Whining becomes a non-existent function
4	Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Clear understanding of role and responsibility + Consistent ideology amongst staff and customers + Customer support at budget hearings + Looking out for mutual good of each other
3	Expertise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Considered the experts + Users don't have to train us

Vision Statement

We make our work productive and satisfying by forming strong, effective and loyal partnerships with our customers through value-added customer satisfaction. This enables us to maintain our position as provider of choice by continuously improving our processes and services, based on customer input.

Shared Values

Teamwork

Honesty

Open Communication

Excellence for the Customer

Mutual Respect

Team Meeting Groundrules

1. Attend and participate fully.
2. Be on time.
3. Speak up if you disagree and share your thoughts.
4. Support team decisions.
5. Keep personal interactions during team meetings confidential.
6. Utilize interactive meeting methods and rotate facilitator and recorder roles.
7. Sarah and Joe alternate as funmeisters with educational 5-minute ice breakers.
8. Lead persons on action agreements see to it that the action is accomplished, though they may enlist help from others.
9. We will meet the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month from 8AM-12NOON
10. Steve will send out agendas on the Friday before the meeting — get agenda requests to him on voice mail by 9AM that Friday morning.
11. Recorders will record on the flip chart and have minutes distributed within 2 days of meeting.
12. Anyone may bring snacks at any time!

Specific Output Statement

Develop and pilot survey by mid-May, so that it can be distributed to customers during the first week of June and have data returned, analyzed, and distributed by September 1, 1995

Start-up Action Plan

Preliminary Agreements

Survey will become an ongoing input tool for continuous improvement planning.

Focused survey externally with internal involvement and testing.

Develop a broad set of questions which cut across a grouping (subset) of 80 services, yet specific enough to provide direction in planning improvements.

Utilize a 2 part answer to contrast *How well are we doing?* with *How important is this to me?*

Categorize function of respondents in demographic ID on survey.

Plan for staff involvement.

Using Team Think (Positive Impact's automated group process software), staff will respond to a draft survey and suggest customers to include as respondents

Staff Involvement Plan

Goal - Survey Input & Customer Identification

Activities

1. Customer ID is pre-work managed by Div Deputy.
2. Involve 10 reps per division.

Guidelines

- One year with organization
- Good cross section of levels
- Diversity of function - ranging from Management through Support Staff

Next Action Steps

1. Send planning notes and charter to Beverly

Lead: Cheri

Wed, 3/8/95 AM

2. Draft Survey

Lead: Beverly & Jeff

Delivered by 3/21/95 and

Reviewed in 3/23/95 Team meeting

3. Select staff representatives

Lead: Joe & QST Give to Team on 3/23/95

4. Collect names and addresses for identified customers

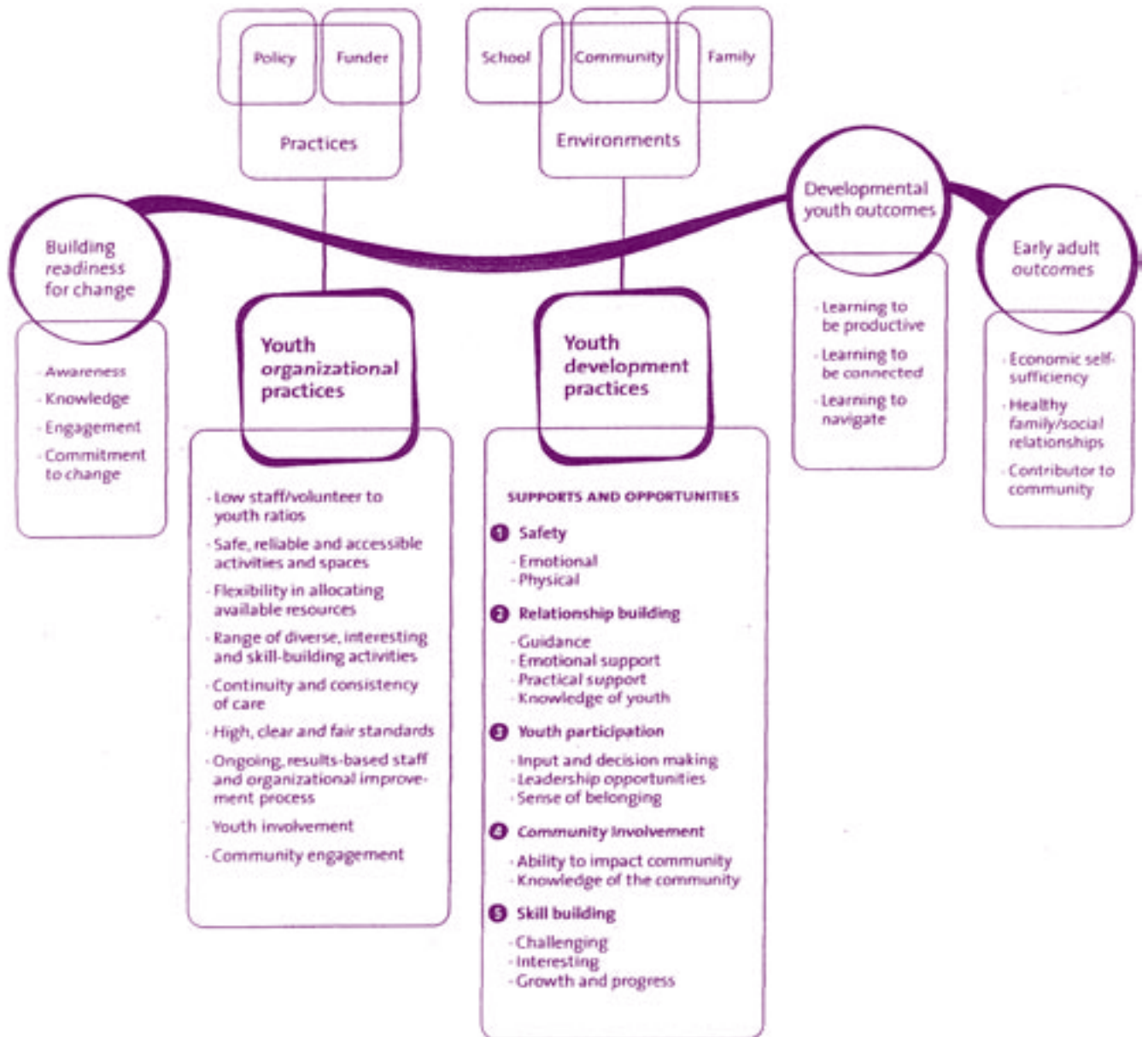
Lead: Steve Give to Team before 4/10/95

Follow-up Linkages

1. Keep staff informed by publishing notes and charter in monthly newsletter
2. Send minutes to Quality Council team members routinely

The Youth Development Framework for Practice

Youth Development Framework for Practice



Preparing for Governance

As your organization prepares to create a youth advisory board, or to add youth to your adult board, you may want to schedule meeting time to reflect on the following questions. Having answers to these questions will resolve many of the issues that tend to come up during the process.

Discussion questions

What will the adults' role be?

Will the structure be formal or informal?

Who does the advisory group report to?

What issues will they advise on?

How will issues be brought to them?

How much decision-making authority will they have?

How many youth are in the group?

What kind of youth?

What are the ages of the youth?

Who will staff the group?

What kind of budget do you have to support them?

What kind of training will be provided?

How will conflict be managed?

How will the agency staff know about the advisory group so that the agency makes use of the group with meaningful issues and tasks?

Organizationally, is the staff for the advisory group in a place where he/she has access to the director or the agency board so that youth issues and concerns can be acted on?

Tips for Promoting Youth Engagement in the Classroom

Relationships

- Greet students at the door
- Speak to or call each student by name
- Invite discussions; be patient & encouraging to English-language learners
- Build safety
- Make positive statements as often as possible
- Accept opinions different than yours
- Recognize that trust is reciprocal. Start as an authority figure. Be confident, you can be friendly & still be strict
- Be authentic. Be a real person to students
- Attend a student event outside the classroom to show your support such as a rally or a dance. Eat in the lunch room or quad with students.
- Show concern for students personal active learning
- Be FAIR—not prejudiced or disposed to favoritism
- Find ways to honor youth for the full range of their achievements & efforts: helping their peers, community service, academic achievements, and effort.
- Make eye contact, smile, & greet all students
- Invite the principal, VP, or counselor on group presentation days

Environment

- Emphasize teacher-student interaction
- Strengthen the sense of community in the classroom
- Ask casual questions about students. They also want to know about you
- Explore teaching methods for meaningful student involvement
- Listen attentively
- Explain things well, coach students, answer questions
- Involve students in establishing a set of classroom rules/agreements
- Appreciate. Don't put down
- Create leadership opportunities in the classroom.
- Use cooperative, project based & policy for missing & making-up
- Help students connect with each other through class meetings, daily communication circles
- Link curriculum to each students personal experiences: photos of family/friends, life goals, ethnic/racial identity, culture, and future dreams in writing assignments
- Connect students to books they enjoy possibly something reflective of their community
- Communicate about academic performances & discuss options to improve before it's too late

Empowerment

- Give students responsibilities in the classroom
- Think of youth as responsible and resourceful
- Encourage students to be problem solvers & then accept & honor their solutions
- Use a student-led parent-teacher conference model
- Provide students links between school & community-based learning experiences
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in designing course curriculum
- Give students Choices in the classroom: timing of activities, ways to provide evidence of learning
- Use students strengths to help them overcome weaknesses
- Help students explore the dynamics of difference in the classroom: research & share histories of various ethnic groups, interview a classmate different than themselves, explore the issues of social justice & oppression in the community
- Allow students to determine the growth homework assignments
- Designate an area for students to keep their class binder if they do not need to take it home
- Discuss what to expect on quizzes, tests, essays, or projects. Build their confidence & they will rise to the challenge
- Treat students like adults not kids. Remember many of them have adult responsibilities like jobs, children, & bills.
- Help set priorities. Students, like you, have more than one class



INVENTORY OF ADULT ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

This inventory was designed to give adults who interact with young people an opportunity to consider their beliefs, approaches and the framework from which they work with young people. It works from the assumption that attitudes are closely related to behavior and that by examining our attitudes it is possible to make sound decisions about how we can best influence an organization’s approach to working with young people.

The statements below explore various aspects of the processes of planning; operating and evaluating the work of youth focused organizations. To what extent are young people involved in these processes, and how do the attitudes and behavior of adults within the organization affect the relationships of young people to the organization as regards these processes? Young people can participate in using the Inventory by indicating how well the statements describe the approach they see adults in the organization or system taking. This perspective is tremendously valuable. Let’s face it, we don’t always have the most accurate self-perception.

The Inventory includes 24 statements. Each person selects a number from the opinion scale and place it in the space provided to the left of the statement. The use of numbers from the lower end of the scale indicates that the statement is unlike the way the respondent approaches things. The use of numbers from the upper end of the scale indicates the person uses an approach similar to the statement.

OPINION SCALE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Never my approach		Seldom my approach		Sometimes my approach		Often my approach		Always my approach

STATEMENTS

- _____ 1. As an adult leader, I engage young people in program decisions when I think this engagement will be a growth experience for them.
- _____ 2. It is most appropriate that adults determine what the programs for young people will be.
- _____ 3. Young people have a vantage point that is valuable for evaluating the successes and failures of specific programs.



OPINION SCALE

- | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|-------------------|---|--------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| Never my approach | | Seldom my approach | | Sometimes my approach | | Often my approach | | Always my approach |
-
- _____ 4. Training programs designed to improve organizational effectiveness should teach adults how to encourage young people to accept the organization's expectations, processes and programs as adults have designed them.
- _____ 5. Adults can share carefully selected management roles with those youths who are ready to learn, under close adult supervision, from the experience.
- _____ 6. Young people are encouraged to assume leadership responsibility within a youth/adult partnership in carrying out youth programs.
- _____ 7. In our organizational decision making, adults should make the decisions.
- _____ 8. I believe that allowing young people to participate in organizational roles can open valuable learning opportunities for them.
- _____ 9. As an adult leader, I engage young people in making program decisions at the earliest point.
- _____ 10. Asking young people to review adult-determined program plans will communicate to the young people that the adults respect them.
- _____ 11. Adults are in the best position to evaluate the successes and failures of a specific program.
- _____ 12. Training programs designed to improve organizational effectiveness should teach adults how to engage young people's participation in those organizational decision processes that will help the young people learn to make more responsible decisions in real-life situations.
- _____ 13. Youth participation can enhance and enrich the various management roles within our organization.
- _____ 14. Fewer mistakes are made in carrying out a program for young people if adults perform the leadership roles themselves.



INVENTORY SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

Transfer the numbers given to each statement in the Inventory to the appropriate box.
Total the numbers at the bottom in each column to determine the ranking for each style.

Statements	Style #1	Style #2	Style #3
1		<input type="text"/>	
2	<input type="text"/>		
3			<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>		
5		<input type="text"/>	
6			<input type="text"/>
7	<input type="text"/>		
8		<input type="text"/>	
9			<input type="text"/>
10		<input type="text"/>	
11	<input type="text"/>		
12		<input type="text"/>	
13			<input type="text"/>
14	<input type="text"/>		
15		<input type="text"/>	
16			<input type="text"/>
17	<input type="text"/>		
18			<input type="text"/>
19		<input type="text"/>	
20			<input type="text"/>
21	<input type="text"/>		
22		<input type="text"/>	
23			<input type="text"/>
24		<input type="text"/>	
TOTAL POINTS	-----	-----	-----
RANK	-----	-----	-----



Youth Engagement Tool

“Are we there YET?!”



PURPOSES

The YET is designed to help you assess how much and how well your program is involving members. Specifically, the YET is about:

★ **Group Effectiveness**

How well the group functions – establishing trust, meeting goals, setting high standards, and providing enjoyment – and whether it accomplishes what it sets out to do

★ **Youth Voice and Opportunities**

Chances to be heard, respected, and taken seriously

★ **Impacts**

What members and the program gain—improvement, knowledge, skills, and abilities

The YET takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. At the end, there is space for you to provide comments and for you and your organization to add questions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Put a checkmark in the blank that applies to you or write in your answer.

Your gender: male female

Your age: under 18 18-24 25 or older

You are: a program member a staff member a volunteer

About how long have you been with this program? years and months

Name of the specific program being assessed: _____



PART 1: GROUP EFFECTIVENESS

Indicate how well each statement describes your group. Circle your answer.

1 = Isn't usually true in our group; we could do much better.
2 = Is sometimes true in our group, but we could improve.
3 = Is very true in our group; we don't need any improvement.
n/a = Not applicable

- | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| 1. In this group, youth get what they need (people, information, and materials) to be effective. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 2. In this group, youth get to make choices and decisions about the things they want to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 3. In this group, it is clear that youth and adults really respect each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 4. Youth don't feel dominated by adults in this group. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 5. Youth learn a lot from adults in this group. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 6. Youth have a say in setting the agenda or goals for the work of this group. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 7. People in this group talk honestly with each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 8. People in this group really seem to like each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 9. Members of this group trust one another. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 10. Adults learn a lot from youth in this group. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 11. Members of this group are excited about the things that are happening here. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| 12. There is a good balance of power between youth and adults in this group. | 1 | 2 | 3 | n/a |



PART 2: FOR YOUTH ONLY (ADULTS SKIP TO PAGE 5)

Indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

Circle one response for each statement.

Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree a Little	Agree a Little	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
13. In this group, I get to express my ideas, concerns, and opinions publicly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
14. In this group, I have enough chances to work closely with adults to carry out activities and events.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
15. Adults in this group help me solve problems and give me guidance instead of telling me what to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
16. The responsibilities I have in this group are challenging and interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
17. If I disagreed with what everyone else said in this group, I would not hesitate to speak out.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
18. My ideas and suggestions are taken seriously by others in this group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
19. Working in this program has made me more confident to express myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
20. My involvement in this group has helped me strengthen my planning and coordination skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
21. My involvement in this group is helping me move in the direction in life I want to go.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a



	Strongly Disagree 1	Mostly Disagree 2	Disagree a Little 3	Agree a Little 4	Mostly Agree 5	Strongly Agree 6	Not Applicable n/a			
22.				Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree 6	n/a
	Because of my involvement in this group, I know where to go in my community to get support for the things I think are important.									
23.				1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
	In this group, I've gotten to know adults I can call on in the future.									
24.				1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
	My involvement has helped this group make better decisions.									
25.				1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
	Adults' involvement has helped this group make better decisions.									

Skip ahead to page 7...



PART 3: FOR ADULTS ONLY (YOUTH SKIP TO PAGE 7)

Most of these questions ask about your observations of things going on with youth. Answer them to the best of your ability based on your observations and your experience.

Indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements. Circle one response for each statement.

Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree a Little	Agree a Little	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
26. Youth in this group have enough chances to express their ideas, concerns, and opinions publicly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
27. In this group, I have enough chances to work closely with youth to carry out activities and events.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
28. Adults in this group help youth solve problems and provide coaching and constructive feedback rather than telling youth what to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
29. The responsibilities youth have in this group are challenging and interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
30. If a young person disagreed with what everyone else said in this group, s/he would not hesitate to speak out.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
31. Young people's ideas and suggestions in this group are taken seriously.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
32. Working in this program has made the young people more confident in their ability to express themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a



Strongly Disagree 1	Mostly Disagree 2	Disagree a Little 3	Agree a Little 4	Mostly Agree 5	Strongly Agree 6	Not Applicable n/a
--------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------------------

	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree 6	n/a
33. Young people's involvement in this group has helped them strengthen their planning and coordination skills.							
34. Young people's involvement in this group is helping them move in the direction in life they want to go.							
35. I expose young people in this group to contacts in the community that can support the things youth think are important.							
36. Young people have gotten to know adults through this group whom they can call on in the years to come.							
37. My own contributions have helped this group make better decisions.							
38. Young people's involvement has helped this group make better decisions.							

Go on to the next page...



PART 4: COMMENTS

Tell more about what you think. Write in your answers.

39. What are one or two best things about this group or program?

40. What are one or two things about this group that you would really like to see improved in the coming months?

PART 5: ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)

If you or your organization would like to add questions to this assessment tool, please do so below.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Mostly Disagree 2	Disagree a Little 3	Agree a Little 4	Mostly Agree 5	Strongly Agree 6	Not Applicable n/a
A.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
B.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
C.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a



SCORING

(Optional. Please calculate scores for each section of the YET that you completed if you are interested in figuring out your own individual scores.)

Group Effectiveness

Add your responses to questions 1–12.

Total _____

Divide total by 12 for group effectiveness average.

Average _____

Youth Responses: Youth Voice and Opportunities

Add your responses to questions 13–18.

Total _____

Divide total by 6 for youth voice and opportunities average.

Average _____

Youth Responses: Impacts

Add your responses to questions 19–25.

Total _____

Divide total by 7 for impacts average.

Average _____

Adult Responses: Youth Voice and Opportunities

Add your responses to questions 26–31.

Total _____

Divide total by 6 for youth voice and opportunities average.

Average _____

Adult Responses: Impacts

Add your responses to questions 32–38.

Total _____

Divide total by 7 for impacts average.

Average _____



NOTES

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4. WestEd. *California Healthy Kids Survey: California RYDM data 2004/2005*. Downloaded 2005 from
www.wested.org/chks/pdf/ca_rydm_0405.

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