

Developing a Youth and Adult Partnership

“Youth and adult partnerships work with, rather than for, youth. Values of equality involve respect, and willingness to listen and learn from each other.”

What are some keys to developing a successful youth and adult partnership?

- 🔑 Help the group to feel comfortable with each other and overcome the initial anxiety.
- 🔑 Outline expectations and responsibilities of youth and adult members. Establish a set of shared values, such as respect, equality, openness, listening, and trust.
- 🔑 Encourage youth and adults to work together as equal partners. Create a balance of youth and adult voices.
- 🔑 Respect youth representatives as having a significant contribution to make and do not view youth only as program beneficiaries.
- 🔑 Work toward meaningful outcomes that address real, genuine issues and needs of youth and the community.
- 🔑 Move the organization beyond its traditional focus on rule making and management to allow youth and adults to learn together and explore new ideas to benefit the program.
- 🔑 Take joint responsibility for decision-making, identifying issues, planning, and implementing plans.
- 🔑 Provide multiple roles that are challenging and relevant for participation within the organization.
- 🔑 Develop an accountability method for youth and adults to check each other's progress.
- 🔑 Evaluate results and give positive reinforcement. Provide time to reflect on the work accomplished.

What should Youth expect from their participation in this partnership?

- ❑ Bring an underrepresented voice to decision making for the program.
- ❑ Share interests and concerns of young people with adults.
- ❑ Bring connections and linkages to other youth in the community.
- ❑ Develop a greater level of community ownership.
- ❑ Bring a fresh perspective and willingness to challenge existing processes.
- ❑ Increase resiliency and self-esteem.
- ❑ Develop personal and social responsibility.
- ❑ Enhance problem-solving skills.
- ❑ Help the organization stay focused on its vision.
- ❑ Help the organization meetings to be interesting, energetic, and productive.

What should Adults expect from Youth participation in this partnership?

- ❑ Pass on knowledge and skills to the next generation of adult leaders.
- ❑ Offer guidance in the spirit of developing a partnership with the youth representatives.
- ❑ Utilize contacts that are not accessible to young people to access human, community, and financial resources in support of the program.
- ❑ Share administrative and programming skills acquired through experience.
- ❑ Learn to see youth as contributors.
- ❑ Gain personal knowledge and competence through sharing decision-making with young people.
- ❑ Develop a stronger sense of community connectedness.

What are the expected results of adults and youth working together in the partnership?

- ❑ Youth involvement in decision-making for the program will become the norm.
- ❑ Members of the organization will be more focused on and committed to its mission.
- ❑ Board members will be more aware of program policies that work and those that do not work.
- ❑ A greater value will be placed on inclusivity and representation in programs.
- ❑ An increased outreach to the community will be realized.
- ❑ Funders who value youth representation will be more receptive to the organization's financial requests.

What potential barriers will need to be overcome to help youth and adults work together effectively?

- ❑ Youth may be skeptical that their voice and vote will count.
- ❑ Youth representatives must be given the opportunity to succeed.
- ❑ Structure and clarity are essential to help ease the transition for youth and adults.
- ❑ Youth representatives may not have extensive experience in basic procedural and programming knowledge.
- ❑ Youth and adults must be willing to share the power.
- ❑ Pay attention to the unique needs of youth (e.g., schedule, transportation, etc.)