

Tips for Youth & Adult Partnerships

ACCESS

WHY

There are many great reasons for involving youth, but deciding to involve youth is only the first step. Making youth/adult collaborations accessible to youth in all ways is a way of showing your respect and commitment. It helps set the stage for healthy relationships. Part of your role as an adult partner is to open doors.



WHEN

Schedule meetings/functions that include youth after school hours whenever possible. Be sure to think about time of day whenever youth are asked to join and if the event is during school hours, facilitate them getting time off from school, with credit if applicable. Also have food available when possible if you are inviting youth (or adults) to attend after school or during the dinner hour.



WHERE

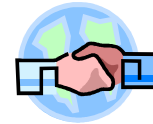
Keep in mind that many youth rely on others to get places. Check with them to see if they have rides or if they need any help figuring out how to get to where you are asking them to go. Provide directions verbally or in writing.



RELATIONSHIPS

POWER

Check your assumptions about youth and be ready to challenge yourself to work with youth as EQUALS if you discover you are not already working with youth in this way.



TRUST

Trust is key to any good relationship. Both parties must earn this trust. Show youth that you can “share the stage” and that you will take their ideas, feelings, thoughts seriously. Do this repeatedly so they know you are genuine.

COMMUNICATION

All cultures have certain “speak.” Make sure youth participants understand the words you are using, especially if there are acronyms for departments or other pieces of information that are considered common knowledge within your group. They will most likely teach you some words you don’t know, too.



TIME

Spend time with the youth you work with. Ask them questions about their lives and engage with them in conversation. Take time to have fun with them whenever possible and remember adults and youths often have similar needs: respect, care and attention.

LEADERSHIP

ROLES

Provide youth with meaningful roles within the group. Ask them to lead committees and offer positions of power when possible. Invite more youth to the table, especially if only one or two are in a group of many adults. This may help counter any feelings or experiences of “tokenism” that might exist.



SPACE

Give youth time to talk. It is often difficult to share “air time” especially if there are many more adult than youth on a team or committee. Be mindful of sharing the space and be willing to speak to other adults who might not be doing this. Resist the urge to take over.



TRAINING & INFORMATION

Provide the most adequate and up-to-date information and training available to youth. Be sure you give youth participants adequate background on the committee or group you are asking them to join, if they have not been part of creating it. Take time to answer any questions they might have and offer them support in receiving additional training and information in their area of interest.

