# Thank you

Photographs courtesy of **My Story**, a non-profit arts organization that teaches photography to Portland youth. My Story develops projects that engage the imagination and creativity of young people, building confidence in their abilities, and providing opportunities for them to share their stories with the world. For more information, visit us at: www.mystoryworkshops.org.

Photographs courtesy of **Caldera**, a non-profit arts organization that is a catalyst for transformation through innovative art and environmental programs. Caldera's youth program provides underserved Oregon children with year-round, long-term mentoring through arts and nature projects, beginning at age eleven and continuing through young adulthood.

Original artwork courtesy of **P:ear**, a non-profit arts organization that builds positive relationships with homeless and transitional youth, ages 15 to 24, through education, art and recreation to affirm personal worth and create more meaningful and healthier lives. Each year their programs serve more than 350 homeless and transitional young people.
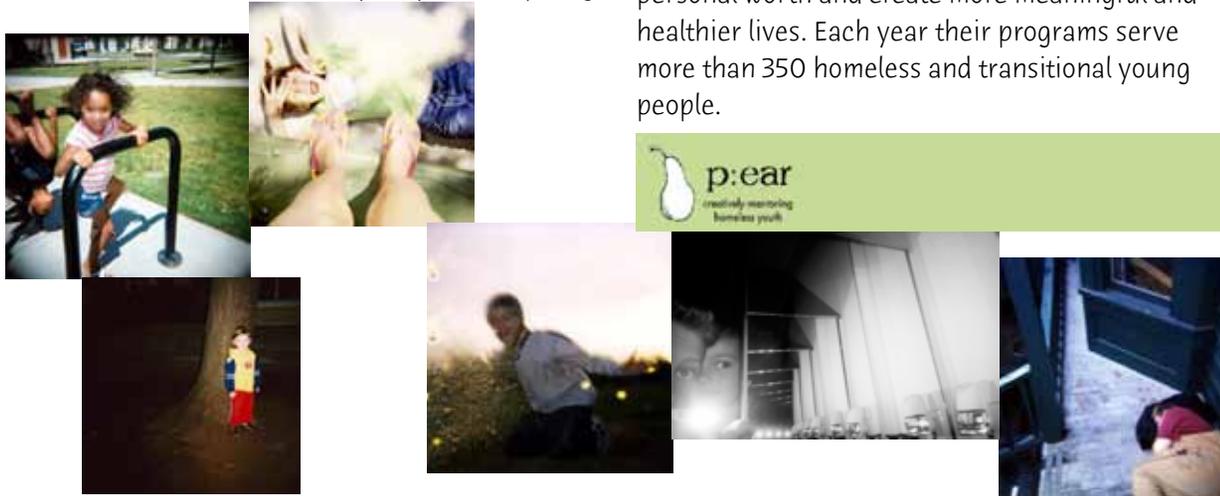
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1 Introduction

Introduction

"Our city can never hope to address our greatest challenges, like our unacceptable drop-out rate, unless we learn to truly empower and engage those who are most affected— in this case our youth."

-Mayor Sam Adams,
City of Portland

So you want to engage youth in local government? Then this is the manual for you! As you use this manual, we will guide you through the different levels of interacting with and supporting youth work and voice. By the end of the process, you will truly be supporting youth empowerment

What's the big deal?

"We are going to be very challenged to bring youth into government in a meaningful way to them, and we have found from our research that that has to start very early, it has to start before they graduate from high school."

-Laurel Butman, Office of Management & Finance (OMF)

But maybe you or people around you are still asking: why should we include youth in local government? They can't vote for the most part, they spend most of their time in school and not in the workforce, they don't pay taxes, and they don't really care about being involved in the process of government, right?

The truth is, youth under 25 make up **one third** of the population of Portland; youth under 18 comprise **one quarter** (current population survey, Census Bureau) and, as Former Mayor Potter said, youth are *"100 percent of the future."* Additionally, because people under 18 cannot vote, they cannot use electoral politics as a way of impacting government policy. To not engage youth under 18 in government, to not hear their voices on the issues going on in the city, is to deny a quarter of the population access to decisions that affect them every day.

There are many assumptions that adults make about youth; for example, where they are and what they're interested in. Many adults don't interact with youth that are not related to them. How often would you say you talk to youth besides your child or your child's friend?

This type of limited interaction hinders adults to see youth as full partners in government work. We hope that you will use this manual as the first of many steps in welcoming youth into government.

Speaking for themselves

"Youth know what youth want and they are the best representatives of themselves."

-Mo Cohen, Rock 'N' Roll Camp for Girls

You may be asking yourself, who is writing this manual? We are the Youth Planning Program, run out of the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability at the City of Portland. The Youth Planning Program was initiated in 2007 as a result of the *Our Bill of Rights:* Children + Youth. This important document was passed by Portland's City Council in August 2006, guaranteeing all youth the right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. The City Council made this commitment to youth voice and we were given the task of figuring out how to make that commitment and vision a reality.

All Youth Planners are in their teens along with one adult Youth Program Coordinator. We created this manual to assist adults in local government to think of ways to integrate youth engagement, empowerment, and voice into the work they are doing.

We spent months doing over 25 interviews, each 30-60 minutes long. We interviewed youth organizers, adult community organizers who work with youth, Portland and Multnomah County government employees, elected officials and business people. We conducted a survey of over 50 youth to see where and how they would like to have power within local government. We distributed surveys to the Parks and Recreation and the Multnomah County Library Teen Councils We held in-depth discussions with members of the Multnomah Youth Commission. We hosted engagement events, focus groups, and panels, all aimed at engaging youth with local government, and also ensuring that local government knows how to support those youth when they do come to get involved.

If you would like a more detailed list of who we interviewed, please refer to the "**List of Interviewees"** appendix of this manual. If you are interested in what questions we asked, please see the "**Interview Questions**" appendix.

The goals of this manual

Our goals are simple:

- to have youth opinions and perspectives considered in every decision that is made that affects them;

- to have successful youth programs and advisory groups in every bureau and every part of local government;

- to ensure that youth enter City Hall and other government buildings confidently, knowing they will find a receptive ear;

- to have strong community youth organizations that know they have many vocal allies within government.

Hopefully, through all our efforts, Portland will one day be known as the *City of Youth Voice*!

So let's get started right now!

The Bill of Rights for the Children and Youth of the City of Portland and Multnomah County

We, the Children and Youth of the City of Portland, OR and Multnomah County, in order to establish our basic rights, to protect our liberties as human beings, to ensure ourselves a valuable education, and to assert the power to make choices for ourselves, affirm this Bill of Rights for Children and Youth. The decisions we make will affect our individual futures and happiness, as well the future prosperity of our local community and of the world. Therefore, we call upon ourselves and upon other individuals, organizations, elected officials, and government bodies to recognize these rights, to uphold them through observance, and to defend them through progressive legislative measures:

I.   Voice: We, the Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County, are entitled to a voice and opinion in decisions that will impact our lives.
  a. **Voice in Education:** Students should have a say in their education and should be represented on school boards and other decision-making bodies.
  b. **Voice in Health:** We have the right to know the reasoning behind any medical decision made on our behalf, as well as alternate options. We recognize that children should not have control over specific medical decisions; however, we expect that children are completely informed of such decisions and their consequences and as they mature are increasingly engaged in their own health decisions.
  c. **Voice in the Community:** It is our right to be accepted and active members of the community. We have the right to ask questions, receive answers, and have our views acknowledged by adults when making decisions that affect our lives. We have the right to engage in respectful and open dialogue with adults and we insist on being taken seriously when we participate.

II.   Education: We, the Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County, are entitled to a quality public education that will help us succeed in the future, beginning in preschool and continuing through high school and beyond.
  a. **Extra-Curricular Activities:** Extra-curricular activities, including athletics, the arts, linguistics, politics, and any other areas in which students express interest, should be made available to all students, and all students should be supported in their pursuits.
  b. **Curriculum and subjects:** Children and youth are entitled to an education that equips them with basic skills and covers a variety of subjects.
  c. **Safety and Health of Students:** Students' physical and mental safety and health should be protected inside, outside, and around their school. Students are entitled to schools and playgrounds that are free of drugs and violence.
  d. **Individual Needs:** Schools must respect and accommodate the learning abilities and aptitudes of all students. Children and youth have the right to express their own identity and to be respected for their individuality.
  e. **School Funding:** Sufficient funding should be provided for all children and youth to have a successful educational experience. This may include supplying nutritionally sufficient foods, well-trained and paid teachers, appropriate and up-to-date materials, transportation to school, as well as any additional resources. Children and youth should have access to athletics and other activities regardless of their families' ability to pay.
  f. **Preparation for the Future:** Schools must provide students the tools deemed necessary for their personal advancement in all aspects of their educational life. Youth have the right to know all their options and choose their own desired path.

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How to Use this Manual

This manual is not meant to be read straight through (though we sincerely hope that you do end up reading all of it). Instead, we tried to structure it in such a way that if you have a question or want to interact with youth in a specific way, you can pick up the manual, flip to the chapter you need, and get all the information that will be relevant in a few pages.


We would encourage anyone who wants to do work with youth to read the introductory chapters: "Youth Empowerment," "Disempowerment Dictionary," "Barriers to Youth Involvement," and "How Change Happens."

However, in the "I Want" chapters, we worked to include information that is relevant to a user's particular needs and interests, which means there is some repetition in the manual. Youth empowerment is a shift in thinking that leads to changes in how we behave and interact between generations and age groups. Our hope is that your use of this manual can help accomplish these changes for government. We believe that ingraining these new ways of thinking and working with youth over and over again will help us attain the goal of true youth empowerment, which is when youth become an integral part of our everyday lives and interactions.

What we've found when we work to engage youth is that youth empowerment is the best way to keep youth involved. If youth are empowered in the engagement process they have a better experience and are more likely to give their full energy to a project. They are also more likely to stay involved. We also believe that involving youth now and providing space for empowerment and voice in government today, has a direct correlation to civic engagement as an adult and especially for Portland's future.

What is Youth Empowerment?
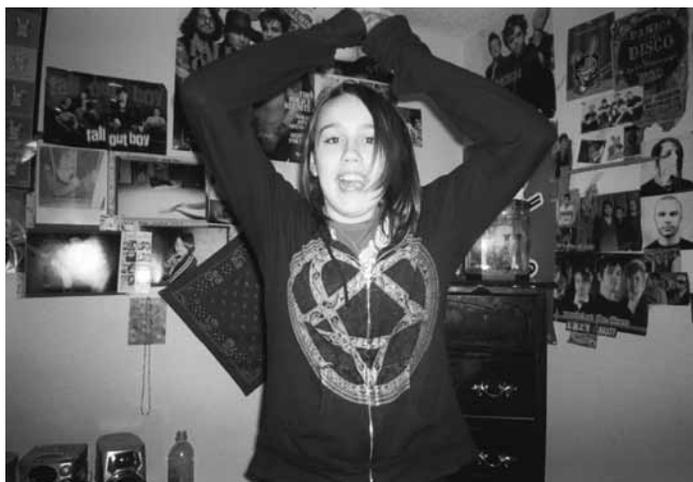
We, in the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, believe that youth empowerment is when youth are given power in all aspects of decision-making which affects their lives, and when youth initiate and take the lead on projects of their interest. In order for youth empowerment to work, all relevant information and trainings must be made accessible for youth to use while leading and making decisions. An adult's role in youth empowerment is simply to support youth as youth lead. Often, adult opinions can be inserted only when asked for by youth involved.

"Youth empowerment is an ongoing process in which people who are experiencing oppression based on others' perceptions of their youth gain the skills, resources, information, and opportunities necessary to effect change in their own lives and the world around them."

–SMYRC (Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center)

"I think youth empowerment requires the teens actually being given power, and the adults that they're working with actually are accountable to that power"

–Jack Mesplay, Village Freeschool

Which rung are you on?

Youth Empowerment Ladder

EMPOWERING
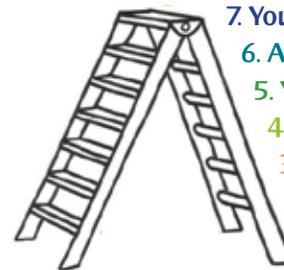
7. Young people lead & initiate action
6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth
5. Youth consulted and informed
4. Youth assigned and informed
3. Youth tokenized
2. Young people are decoration
1. Youth are manipulated

NOT EMPOWERING

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Youth empowerment

Now, what does it mean to support, you ask? Support means gathering resources, information, advice and opportunities as needed, and having them available for youth as they move through their work. Youth can and do support each other, and this is a great way of **reducing** some of the power imbalance, by having youth who've been involved in a program take the lead on mentoring newer incoming youth.

Adults also need to know that they are there as a resource. They are someone youth can come to when they are struggling or have questions, and may be able to supply information the youth were not aware of previously. But that does not mean that adults force their opinions, ideas or plans on youth. ==When we are talking about youth empowerment, adults are there to guide, not lead==. Adults can play many roles in the lives of

youth. Parents, guardians, mentors, confidants (who may also include case workers), or as friends; adults are important to success in a young person's life. When working with youth it is critical that you also build relationships with the adults who play these roles. Youth, like adults, have unique life experiences. Not all youth are in traditional nuclear families. Some experience emancipation, support from other relatives or close friends, or even homelessness. It is always good to stay connected and aware of a youth and their life, supporting them when they request it.

Youth empowerment is NOT:

Youth "earning" privilege or power – Like a drivers license or a degree

Fake opportunities and traps of choice – "If you do this, then you will have to do that."

"The power to make decisions and the privilege of having your decisions respected should be given to all youth, regardless of their 'earning' it."

–SMYRC Youth Empowerment Definition Committee 2008

Being condescending towards youth – "I can't believe you did that all on your own," or "You kids are just so cute."

Basing assumptions of capability on stereotypes – "All youth know how to use technology," or "Youth can't balance budgets, they aren't interested."

Adults and those in power using phrases to deflect youth's opinion and ideas – "You have valid concerns," or "The decision has been made, but your voice is important." Be honest with youth, if there is a reason that their opinion is not honored, tell them. Also, if that reason is connected to a decision made by you or a colleague, tell them that too.

Gate-keeping – Using "qualifications" such as education, access, age and title as the only means of deciding that youth ideas and decisions are valid or important.

Talking down to youth or dumbing things down for them – Just because youth don't know "bureaucratic speak" and the acronyms that you use doesn't mean they don't know common words and phrases.

Isolating youth – Having youth do things on their own with no adult or other youth to help support them.

Appearance without voice – Bringing youth in on a conversation without actually giving them an opportunity to have their voice heard, whether it's intentional or you're just speaking a language that is inaccessible to them.

Youth empowerment means different things to different people. Here are some other definitions from all around Portland. Why is youth empowerment important?

"I think youth empowerment is about not only empowering youth so that they have the rights to make choices, but it's also about holding every single person on this planet responsible." -Will Kendall, Artist Mentorship Program (AMP)

"It's really you [youth] who are going to empower yourselves. And then the adult population, and particularly the elected officials, should be reinforcing that empowerment." -Former Mayor Tom Potter, City of Portland

"A couple of important things about youth empowerment... is meeting youth where they're at, and with art specifically it's about encouraging people to develop what they already have inside of them and pushing that forward." -Mic Crenshaw, Founder, Globalfam Network

"Empowerment is an ongoing action where a young person is developing her voice and being supported in that and is really coming to the table as a major partner." -Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

You may ask, "Why is it that important to involve youth?" Involving and empowering youth is important for many reasons. Bringing youth to the table not only brings qualified ideas to the discussion, it also gives youth the opportunity to **make change themselves**.

"Youth empowerment is not just consulting the youth. It is about giving them opportunities to own something and make change themselves."

-Christy Splitt, Bus Project

Youth empowerment is more than just involving youth. It means that the young people you are involving have an actual effect on what is going on, meaning that their opinions are being implemented. Empowering youth is having them be a part of the decision making process, and if the project is long-term that they can stay involved or have their opinions affect the project through its completion. Having youth participate in these processes brings a new perspective adults may not have. These are some of the many reasons why youth empowerment is important. Youth need to be brought to the table. It is their future and it is imperative they have direct effect on what their future looks like.

Nowhere is this more important than in local government. Youth have the ability and should have the opportunity to give feedback on all the aspects of our community, because as members of the community, it affects all of us. Youth input will also make local government more accessible to

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Youth Empowerment

all people, because becoming **youth friendly is people friendly**. Youth involvement will mean that programs are more vibrant, more engaging, more interesting, and ultimately more effective at involving the public in government.

"If you have the value of long-term thinking about future generations to come . . . then of course young people should be involved and help shape what life is now, and what life will be for the future generations, because they are the future generations."

–Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

Allowing youth to have input now also sets them up for success later. Knowing that their futures are shaped by their own opinions and actions, can encourage them to become leaders and improve upon and continue good process in government. It is their own future, they need to be able to express what is important to them.

Benefits of Youth Involvement in Governance and Organizational Decision-making

You may have heard about how to effectively develop and maintain youth and adult partnerships, but *why do it*? What does the RESEARCH say about the benefits:

Benefits to: YOUTH	ADULTS	ORGANIZATION	COMMUNITIES
Developmental opportunity for youth	The opportunity to learn new skills	Potentially more funding to the organization	Youth community involvement produces countless community improvements
Development of self esteem, responsibility, and problem solving skills	Gain a more positive view of youth	Better decisions will be made	Promotes "healthy" communities
Build communication skills, critical thinking, and acceptance of others	Become better at working in groups and teams	There will be an integration of new ideas, commitments, possibilities, and actions	
Helps to build identity and a sense of purpose	Improvement of "coaching" skills	Become more connected and responsive to the youth in the community	

Adapted from *Youth-Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual*, Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2004.

Disempowered Dictionary

"[Adults] give you no power [as a young person] to make real choice, . . . but they want you, when you're an adult, to be able to make choices and decisions of power... It's a lot of little things that happen every single day that organizations don't recognize, and it's disempowering instead of empowering."

– Jack Mesplay, Staff, Village Free School

Ageism – The belief that someone's age affects their expertise, ability, experience and comprehension. This is used against youth as well as seniors, but for the purpose of this manual, it will refer to youth.

EXAMPLE *"When you get older, you'll understand this was for the best."*

Cynicism – An attitude of scornful or jaded negativity, especially a general distrust of the integrity or professed motives of others; in this case, referring to the belief adults hold that *"things are how they are, and you can't expect change to happen too quickly."*

EXAMPLE *"I've heard so many times equating young people's ideals with things will never get done because it's too hopeful."* - Joshua L. Todd, Youth Development Coordinator: Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families & Community

Condescension– Displaying arrogance for those considered inferior; indicates a lack of respect.

EXAMPLE *"Don't bother asking the youth about next year's budget, it's probably a little above their heads."*

Invisibility – To not be present or represented or seen; in this case, in the public realm and consciousness when issues are discussed and constituents considered.

EXAMPLE *"We've thought about how the TriMet fare increase will affect elderly, the disabled and workers, so we've covered all the bases."*

Patronizing – To treat in a condescending manner; to talk down to while pretending to be providing support.

EXAMPLE *"When I was your age, I felt the same way about _____. You'll outgrow it."*

Silencing – To not create and/or not encourage or support outlets for voice, self-expression and empowerment, either as an individual or as an institution.

EXAMPLE *"We've heard from parents, teachers and the community at this school meeting, but we don't have enough time left on the agenda to hear from the youth."*

Tokenism – The practice of hiring or appointing a token number of people from underrepresented groups in order to deflect criticism; a perfunctory effort or a symbolic gesture.

EXAMPLE *"We have one youth on the board, so now we're done with this youth empowerment thing, and we can get back to the real business at hand."*

Barriers to Youth Involvement

Now that you know what youth empowerment is and why it is important (see Chapter 3, "Youth Empowerment," pgs. 7 - 10) — so why doesn't everyone do it? In order to find solutions, we need to understand the barriers in the way.

There are many barriers that youth face to be truly empowered in this world. They happen on a number of different levels and ways. There are barriers posed by adults to youth participation. There are personal barriers that come from within the youth, which keep them from feeling like they can or should participate fully. Also there are structural barriers built into organizations, local government and our society at large.
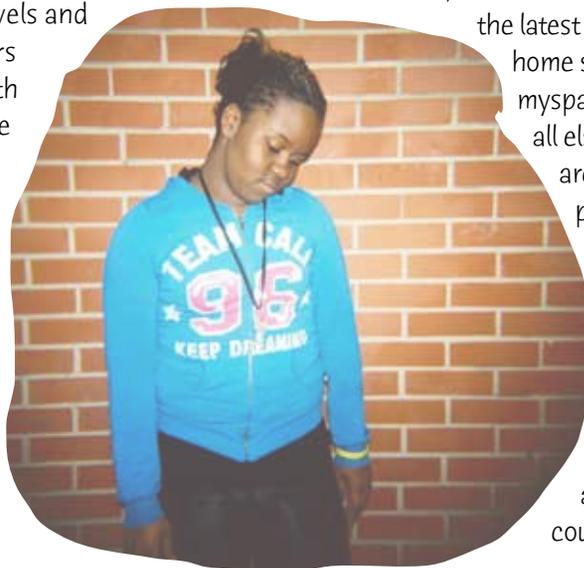
Age Perception
Adult Barriers
Barrier #1: Stereotypes

"Too often, planners, citizens, and officials held stereotyped opinions about young peoples' capacity to grasp the long-term consequences of actions and their perceived limitations of experience and expertise."

-Ramona Mullahey, from "Youth Engagement in Planning"

Adults, often due to popular culture and mass media, hold an image of a stereotypical youth: riding public transportation talking way too loudly with their friends, music blaring from their ipod, talking about the latest fashion and music, excited to get home so they can check their facebook/myspace/myyearbook/email. Above all else, adults can assume that youth are completely disinterested in participating in the world around them in a meaningful and positive way.

REALITY: Youth have been at the forefront of much of the change that has happened in the history of the world, and certainly the history of this country. Youth have been and are leaders, agitators, intellectuals, poets, artists, organizers, demonstrators, and government officials. Youth have shaped the world, the country, and Portland in a positive way.

Youth are individuals, just as different as adults. They are shaped, like all of us, by many different factors: race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, nationality, religion, family, community, education, ability, etc. To judge a whole group by a stereotype is prejudice. (See Chapter 11, "I Want to Engage a Diverse Group of Youth," pg. 35.)

SOLUTION: Get to know youth in a real way. Go to websites devoted to youth empowerment and organizing:

Multnomah Youth Commission: www.ourcommission.org/youth
SMYRC: www.smyrc.org/
United Voices Youth Program www.afsc.org/portland
Teen2Teen: www.cascadeaids.org

Attend open events hosted by community youth organizations.

Find out about the programs that the local government are already running that involve youth being leaders (the Youth Planning Program, the Multnomah Youth Commission, Teen Councils for Portland Parks and Recreation and the Multnomah County Library, or the Portland Police Bureau Youth Advisory Council, etc.).

Barrier #2: Adult attitude and interaction

"Understanding that in general young people in society are completely invalidated and disrespected, in terms of thinking and experience, and are often really talked down to and not understood. People talk about 'you're our leaders of tomorrow' over and over again, when actually young people have a pretty accurate read of the world today and the thinking that happens and the experiences that happen across a broad range of issues."

-Teresa Enrico, Portland Taiko

Often, youth are not included because of the stereotypes adults, the media and society perpetuate through tactics like those defined in Chapter 4, Disempowered Dictionary, pgs. 11-12, from silencing, to tokenizing, to patronizing.

REALITY: Many times adults are well-meaning. They don't intend to disempower or silence young people. Adults also want to make the world a better place. And that's why we made this manual!

SOLUTION: While still being understanding of youth's different needs and barriers, ultimately try to give them the same respect you would give another adult co-worker, in terms of tone and interaction. If a co-worker didn't know something, you wouldn't say, "Yeah, I didn't think you would know about that." You would take the time to explain it in a respectful and helpful way. Try doing the same with youth.

Personal Barrier #3: Time

This barrier is both structural and internal, so we'll talk about both.

Structurally, work-related social gatherings are often held in places that are 21 and over. Meetings are often scheduled at times that are inaccessible to youth: when they are in school, or at night when they have to be at home for curfew. Similarly, there is often not enough consideration given to youth's transportation constraints. (For more information please see Barrier #6: Inaccessibility, pg. 16.)

In addition, there are often tight deadlines on government projects that need to be done with a quick turnaround. This type of constraint lends to quick decision making without the time to consult with youth who may have expertise or valuable information to offer that may change the course of action.

Youth themselves have very tight schedules. Often times it is not just school and homework, but a job, taking care of younger siblings, sports or other extracurricular activities, being a single teen parent, and many other commitments. This means that youth have a limited amount of time to be able to devote to volunteering, working or running a program.

SOLUTION: First, if you want youth to show up, make sure that your meetings, events and activities are youth friendly, in terms of when and where they are planned. Be sure to create fliers and outreach materials that appeal to youth. Also outreach, publicize, and advertise them in youth friendly spaces. You may have to work after 5pm, which is when youth are out of school. You also may at times need to meet with youth in their community centers, faith centers, or schools.

For deadlines and for the limited time available for youth, think about hiring or recruiting several youth. Additionally, we recommend that youth are NEVER hired or recruited as the sole youth voice in a bureau/organization. Having more than one young person allows them to make different commitments and still support each other as they work together as a team.

This is also where investing in long term development and training of youth and youth workers is important. You have to make sure that you are building youth's capacities, so while in the beginning they may not be able to complete an intricate project in the two weeks it would take you (But who knows? They might do it faster and with more innovation!), over time they will bring knowledge, expertise, experience and new ideas to your project. Please see Chapter 17, "I Want to Create a Youth Program/Advisory Council," pg. 68, for more details.

Barrier #4: Youth struggle with self-esteem

REALITY: There are many new things that youth face daily which did not exist in the past. Society and the media tell youth what they should look and act like. If youth don't fit these norms, they may sometimes see themselves as flawed. While media and society force these conventions, youth also try to fit in socially at school which is incredibly difficult in middle and high school. Youth carry these pressures and more all the while trying to keep up their grades. What is important to understand is that youth experience these pressures and not only survive, but thrive in our modern world.

SOLUTION: This is a complex barrier that adults focus on the most, and often feel they can have the most influence. Phrases such as "help a child," or "kids must be fixed," are often used in adult spaces when decisions are being made that directly effect a young person's esteem and overall health. Youth are not broken. They do not need to be "repaired." Much of the time there is an ebb and flow of self-esteem for a young person, just as there is for many adults. Youth ask for compassionate support and guidance, especially when they request it regarding the maintenance or development of their esteem.

Structural Barrier #5: Policies and Laws

"A lot of times I think there can be tremendous unawareness of the heaviness of the oppression that really comes down on young people, and the ongoing invalidation."

–Teresa Enrico, Portland Taiko

REALITY: Many of the laws in our country and our local government are structured in a way that disempower young people, from limiting the voting age, to curfew laws, to age of consent laws. Youth are viewed legally as property of their parents, and have very little rights of their own.

Barriers to Youth Involvement

This is also true for policies and procedures within local government. For instance, youth currently sit on a few boards or steering committees for different government programs, agencies, services, or non-profits that serve and support youth. Although youth are at the table, when budget decisions are made youth must often step aside and cannot "vote" since there are liability issues, and legally a minor cannot assume responsibility for budgets of this nature as an adult board member has freedom to do. This is a mixed message that youth can perceive as "tokenizing:" when they are invited to a decision-making body to assert their voice, but in the end where budgets do determine what activities continue or get cut, youth are not able to participate fully and influence outcomes that directly affect their lives.

Eruption. Wells D. West

SOLUTION: In the long term, laws and policies on all levels need to be reviewed with significant voice and input from youth, to open the laws to empower youth. Bureaus should see if there are ways to be flexible with policies and procedures wherever possible, or if it is possible, alter or amend bureau policies to better support youth. Read more about these issues in Chapter 14, "I Want to Hire Youth," pgs. 55-61.

Barrier #6: Inaccessibility

There are many levels to how government is inaccessible to youth.

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY: Just as meetings are often scheduled at times that are not youth friendly, they are often scheduled at locations that are not youth-friendly. These are locations that often require a car to get to, that have limited public transportation, and places that can be intimidating to youth. Many youth we talked to for this project said they would not feel comfortable walking into City Hall for a meeting or an event, even though it is supposed to be open to all members of the community.

Also it can be hard for youth to identify with many of the people in power. Youth may not be used to office settings or business suits, and many bureaus can be very intimidating to youth.

LANGUAGE INACCESSIBILITY: Government often uses language that is intimidating, alienating or confusing to the general public. Reports are not always presented in an engaging or accessible way, with a lack of colors, graphics and design. We strongly believe that if you make something youth-friendly, it is people-friendly.

SOLUTION: Physically, hold meetings that are easy for youth to get to and that are comfortable for them. It's always best to consult youth, especially the youth you are working with, to see what would make them most comfortable.

Language-wise, cut out the jargon! Write and communicate as if you are explaining it to a friend who doesn't know very much about your work but is really interested in it. And make sure whatever you create for the public is visually inviting. For example, we tried to design this manual in a way that is both professional and still be youth friendly, so that this entire manual is not just talking the talk, but walking the walk as well.

Barrier #7: Powerlessness

"I think if you were to go and ask a kid on the street, a 17 or 18 year old, 'Do you think you'd go into politics right now and be represented and heard if you would go into a meeting with the council,' they would say, 'No. Why? [Because] No one listens to me, so why are these guys gonna listen to me?'"

–Will Kendall, Artist Mentorship Program (AMP)

Powerlessness stems from many different places for youth in relation to government. Sometimes the only way that youth interact with government is at school or with transit police, which often are not positive experiences. Youth generally expect not to be heard, or respected, because of how they have been treated in the past and in the rest of their lives.

Powerlessness also comes from a lack of resources, both on an individual and a collective level. This lack can come from resources being unavailable, because of economic status. It can also come from adults that are unwilling to relinquish control of those resources.

Finally, powerlessness comes from adults that are unwilling to give up the power and control they have over an issue, a project, or government in general.

SOLUTION: Involving youth in political matters has to be a real involvement, not one that tokenizes but one that truly includes, values, and lends power to them. Please see Chapter 15, "I Want to Empower Youth," pg. 60, for more information.

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Barriers to Youth Involvement

Barrier #8: Education

"If a kid doesn't have a basic education, and many youth don't, and street signs seem confusing to them, and the world around them seems intimidating, then they don't see themselves as part of it, and then those resources aren't there. There's the basic education, how to fill out a job application. I know lots of kids that just couldn't. Then how could I ever get a job? Which means that I really don't fit into this society."

-Rob Ingram, Office of Violence Prevention

The reality is that across the nation, public education is in a crisis due to lack of funds, overcrowding, and privatization. But there is an even deeper fundamental disconnect between the traditional learning model and youth empowerment. Pouring information into youth as if they are empty vessels is the antithesis of empowering and engaging a person.

For these reasons and others, many youth are not getting the fundamental knowledge necessary to fully involve them as active participants in their communities. That is the fault and responsibility of all of us. Too often, the youth who have

opportunities for internships and work through the government have money, access to good schools, and are academically successful. We need to make sure that we value all different forms and levels of education, and make space for all youth, and all people, to participate in their government in a meaningful way.

There is also another kind of education lacking: knowledge of and exposure to ideas of youth empowerment. It is not simply enough for adults to put youth in decision-making positions, because many youth have not been exposed to these concepts and ideas before. Instead they need mentors and, if possible, a connection with other youth who have gone through or are going through the same process.

SOLUTION: Long term, increase school funding and make schools places that encourage youth empowerment and voice. Short term, support youth who have different areas of knowledge. Make sure that youth involved in your program have access to information, resources and people who can support them through the process of youth empowerment.

Barrier #9: Authority

"I think there's a really broad barrier that exists for everybody in our society which is this pervasive, constant attack on the value of government, the purpose and role of government, and the ability of anybody to make a difference. I think, and here's my radical philosophy, I think it's intentional. I think it's been created to get people not to engage and allow the people who've always made decisions continue making decisions because 'We're just going to make you believe that you can't ever make change.'"

-Joshua L. Todd, Youth Development Coordinator: Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families & Community

This concept that government is impenetrable is also related to individual powerlessness, but is much more institutional and pervasive. There is an idea that all of us in this country are powerless to change the government, that it is a monolith and will continue functioning the way it has without our input.

There are also many disparities between how youth from various backgrounds are treated by different authority figures. From their teachers to social workers to health care professionals, depending on your race, economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status and more, you will receive very different kinds of treatment. Often this treatment is alienating and intimidating.

For example, countless youth we talked to say their main experience with local government is through the police, specifically the transit police, as youth are a substantial number of those who use public transportation. They feel they are targeted for being youth and are therefore suspect. If they are young and of color, queer, or homeless, they generally experience even worse scrutiny.

SOLUTION: Government cannot just involve youth, but must make sure that all of the ways it interacts with youth lead all youth, not just those who are economically privileged, to feel safe, empowered and in control.

Barrier #10: Identity Barriers

"We're all under a blanket where we don't feel we have to listen to the people who are the most marginalized."

–Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

This is the fundamental basis of this manual and the biggest barrier of them all: Youth are marginalized, silenced, tokenized and all the rest because of their identity, and because they are young. As a double whammy (as Sonali says above) our society generally feels it is not necessary to listen to people from an oppressed group.

Additionally, youth often must work against many other forms of oppression, alongside the various effects of ageism; racism, classism, heterosexism, sexism, transphobia, etc., making it a struggle for youth to simply survive and assert their identity.

SOLUTION: It's important to support youth and all of the identities that they claim and represent. If you don't know something about a part of a youth's identity, such as their country of origin or their sexual orientation, instead of asking that youth, who is already dealing with a lot, take it upon yourself to educate yourself in other ways. It's a lot to expect that a person has to explain or justify themselves to everyone they meet over and over again. **Being a good ally means taking the weight and responsibility off of the other person,** and you can do this by doing your own "homework." Start by reading more about this in Chapter 11, "I Want to Engage a Diverse Group of Youth," pg. 35.

5

Barriers to Youth Involvement

Barrier #11: Lack of Support for Youth Work

"To me, an important barrier is that youth work is seen as an 'extra.' It should be written into job descriptions and institutionalized. Some staff should be hired as dedicated youth workers."

-Joy Hunt, Program Associate, The Neighborhood Partnership Fund

This important barrier is one major reason why the Youth Planner Program set out to create this manual. Youth work is not seen as important or integral to the work of local government, and resources are not devoted to youth development or programming on a large scale, nor an ongoing or permanent basis. If there is not institutional support for youth empowerment within local government, then individuals or even programs that want to engage in youth work will not have the knowledge, ability or resources to do so successfully.

SOLUTION: Read this manual! A lot! Share it with everyone you work with, especially your supervisors and managers. Work on having youth integrated into your program, work on making your program one that empowers youth, and work on creating a youth program within your workplace.

How Change Happens

It's important to keep in mind that change happens on three different levels: on individual, organizational and societal/institutional levels. All three of these areas of change are necessary for real youth empowerment to take place on a larger scale.

1. Individual

This is internal change for one person, affecting how they think about things and how they act outwardly. In terms of empowering youth, for adults this means how you think of youth, speak and interact with youth.

2. Organizational

This is how an organization (or in our case, a bureau) enacts change, and how it shares that change with its members/employees. For our purposes, this is about how the space feels for you, the attitudes about youth that the organization promotes, the policies that are in place to support youth, and the kind of training adults have had as a group to support youth.

3. Societal/Institutional

This is about changing society at a fundamental, and/or institutional level. For our work, this is about how to make youth empowerment a priority in our larger society in every aspect, whether it is media, education, government, or community.

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How Change Happens
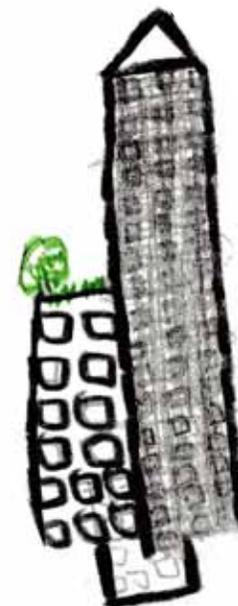
Being a good ally

"In terms of us [adults] being individuals in this, it really does take a personal commitment of looking at where that unawareness is for me, and for each person."

–Teresa Enrico, Portland Taiko

But all of this change can't happen unless adults start changing their individual behavior, advocating for and supporting youth voice, and finding ways to be good allies to young people. There is more about this in Chapter 15, "I Want to Empower Youth in My Program," pgs. 60-63, but some key ingredients are:

Recipe for being a strong ally

- **Do your homework**. Don't expect the youth to educate you – read the books, articles, magazines, find out about youth organizations in your community. For resources, go to Appendix 1 (pg. 75).

- **Think and plan**. You have to put thought into understanding the issues youth will deal with before you create a plan for the work they will be involved in. Youth work is very action-oriented but it also is about more than just the work. It involves supporting the youth in all aspects of their life. Make sure you've thought about this and what it will entail before the youth arrive.

- **Plan and think**. Even our best laid plans need revision, and sometimes a complete overhaul after we get into it. Make sure that your bureau has thought deeply about what it means for youth to work in your organization: where they would work, what training they would receive to be successful, what support they would get, and who they would go to with concerns. And make sure that you are ready to evaluate, and re-evaluate your progress and your work, and you're ready to switch gears if it's not working.

- **Educate other adults**. It's not enough just to educate yourself. You also need to share the information with other adults on youth issues and youth involvement.

- **Create a safe space**. Make sure the space the youth are entering into is safe and comfortable for them. If other adults are not engaging in a youth-friendly and empowering manner, you're responsible for taking action to support the youth, and make sure the resources are available for youth to be able to support each other.

- **Always be transparent**. Make sure youth know what is happening and why, and what your involvement is in decision-making.

- **Be honest with yourself about your motivations and intentions**. Find support from other adults to discuss issues and complications that come up.

- **Be honest with youth**. Don't promise youth anything you can't deliver on just to make youth happy.

- **Be clear about boundaries**. If you are restricted from sharing information because of your work, they need to know that right away. That way, youth can make a decision if they want to continue working in the space. They also need to know if you are a mandatory reporter, and what the implications and consequences are.

- Of course the first step is just learning how to interact with youth. See Chapter 8, "I Want to Talk with Youth," pgs. 24-26.

"Remember, as the adult of the situation you always have to take the higher ground. And remember, youth are growing and their lives are changing around them."

–Megan Wilson, Sisters of the Road

Q & A with Tiffani Penson

Tiffani Penson is the City of Portland's 2008 recipient of the Youth Champion Award. The award recognizes employees who go the extra mile to involve and support young people in the work of the City of Portland.

YPP: *What were you expecting before youth came to work with you in the Bureau?*

TP: The only expectations I had when the youth came to work with me in the bureau was their success. I knew that the youth I had selected were all bright and would add value to our organization through implementation of new ideas and way to conduct business. I also knew that I, along with staff, would be able to get them interested in the way our city is developed and permitted by giving them examples that were interesting to them, such as their houses, schools, malls, showing them Green Buildings, etc.

Tiffani Penson, 2008 Youth Champion Award Recipient with Bureau of Development Services Director, Paul L. Scarlett.

YPP: *What surprised you about the experience?*

TP: I was surprised by the gratitude and appreciation the students had toward the staff and me for the opportunity. I am also surprised at the lasting relationships that have been built between students and staff. All of the students call me or send me emails on a regular basis.

YPP: *What skills do you think you can gain from working with youth?*

TP: A very important skill that I have gained from working with youth is listening and welcoming change. I have never really been set in my ways of how I do business, but more so than ever I realize that change is good and can be very innovative for the way we do business.

YPP: *Why is youth empowerment relevant to your work as a City employee?*

TP: Youth Empowerment is relevant to our business because it is a way to get youth interested in what impact we have on the development of their city. It is also a great way for our bureau to diversify our environment. We have also permanently hired a student that participated in the 2007 program and he is great and speaks Russian which has helped us a lot with our Russian constituents.

I am not patting myself on the back, but I have and continue to work hard to make this program a success for everyone involved. When they come on board for 7 weeks, I devote all of my time to them and the staff that they work with to make sure they have a great experience. I use my own funds to treat them to lunch and dinner in the Pearl, which is good for their social exposure. I spend personal one on one time with each student to develop a relationship and to help them in anyway that I can.

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I Want to Talk with Youth

I Want to Talk with Youth

Let's start off with imagining you are a youth. You get told where you have to be all day long. You have to go to school or you get picked up by a truancy officer. While you are in school, you are told what to think, and what is important and what to do. You have to ask permission to go the bathroom. You go into stores and you are looked at suspiciously. You get on public transportation with a friend and people roll their eyes. People patronize you and talk down to you all day long, and tell you that "when you're older," you'll understand. Even if you have a job and pay taxes, even if you are emancipated and living on your own, even if you have the responsibilities of an adult, you have no control, no power and no real choices in your life.

Now, go from there.

To make it easier, we've assembled some do's and don'ts. Please remember these are only guidelines and suggestions. Each youth is an individual, just as we all are, in which our experiences vary. In each case, try to read the person. When in doubt, ask in a respectful way, don't assume.

Respect

DO make sure communication happens between youth and all people in the office not just people who are assigned to work with youth. This includes directors and other managers.

DON'T be patronizing and condescending with youth. (See the "Disempowered Dictionary" for more information).

DO be respectful. It may seem completely obvious but oftentimes it's not. Now, respect means different things to different people. A good way of thinking about it is to reflect on how you would like to be treated by a co-worker or someone you consider yourself an equal with.

DON'T order youth around and tell them what to do without providing space for a dialogue, feedback and a chance to have some power in the situation.

DO critically and respectfully engage with youth. Youth should not be put on a pedestal; they are not infallible, just like the rest of us. But again conversations should be respectful dialogues.

DON'T deny when you have made a mistake or try to pretend like you are all-knowing. It's important to admit freely when you have done something wrong, and have a conversation with the youth about how to do it better in the future. Include them as partners.

Power

DO be aware of power dynamics. As an adult, you generally have more power than youth in our society. Youth are, by law, wards of their parents until they are 18. In addition, if you are in a workplace, chances are you will have more power than them there as well.

DON'T begin every sentence with "When I was a teenager/your age," as a way of trying to relate to youth.

DO think about where youth are coming from and, like the above exercise, try to put yourself in their shoes.

DON'T dismiss an idea or a comment because a youth made it. **DON'T** assume that a person's age is related to their experience, expertise or capacity.

"It's a paradigm shift. Adults being able to listen to youth and hear what they're having to say as something that is viable. I think they can but I think [the youth] just have to be very knowledgeable about what they want."

-Kali Ladd, Education Policy Advisor,
Office of Mayor Sam Adams

Authority

DO listen with an open mind to youth input, suggestions, ideas and plans. Realize that youth voice is an important and vital part of our community. And realize that there are many things that youth are experts on. Who really knows more about a school, a parent or a student?

DON'T be offended if youth are being direct. Youth often have a communication style that is not bureaucratic; it is direct. That does not mean they are being hostile or confrontational, just honest.

Addressing Concerns

DO find respectful ways of addressing concerns you have with youth directly to the youth, rather than talking behind their back. If you are unsure how to do this, consult with the youth program coordinator or someone who does youth support work (see Appendix 1, "Youth and Community Organization Resource List," pg. 77).

DON'T quiz youth when you are working on a project, when giving a presentation, or just in normal conversation. This can make them feel like they are at school, and also that you doubt their knowledge.

"What does it mean to really listen to someone, even if we disagree with them? What does it mean that before you listen to someone, to realize and hold your own biases and make sure they don't influence the information you're taking in as much as possible?"

-Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

Space

DO try to reach out to youth in ways that are comfortable for them. This means when planning a meeting, ask where they would prefer to meet. And when working on spreading the word, don't forget

8 I Want to Talk with Youth

the internet (more information can be found in Chapter 10, "I Want to Use the Internet to Engage Youth," pgs. 30-34).

DON'T expect the youth to come to you all the time for meetings, events or to come into your workspace to talk to you.

"I also advise taking it slow and not bombarding youth with a ton of information all at once. Touring places and talking about what we see in a conversational way is much more instructive than sitting in the office and talking about abstract things."

–Deborah Stein, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Tokenizing

DO recognize the array of different youth experiences and perspectives.

DON'T assume any one youth can speak for all youth.

Fun

DO be creative and engaging in your presentations, meetings and discussions. Think of beginning with icebreakers, pay attention to how youth are feeling, and be willing to interrupt your own presentation at any time to do a re-energizing exercise. Take breaks. Have snacks.

DON'T be boring. We're sorry to be blunt, but it's true: sometimes adults, especially those who work in local government, can be really boring when giving presentations. Remember: youth-friendly is people-friendly. It is not just about being accessible to youth, but accessible to the entire community, not just those with specialized training.

"How is working with youth different than working with adults? I would say that with youth I am more conscious and concerned about trying not to be boring or obscure or overly technical, and I am more conscious generally about how successful or unsuccessful I am at communicating."

–Deborah Stein, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Language

DON'T use language like "high density infill development" unless you also define it. Better yet, find another way to say it. Also, don't use acronyms without defining them, not just the words, but the terms and concepts and history behind it.

DO use language that is accessible, rather than language that is intimidating and alienating.

REMEMBER: communication happens on different levels: non-verbal behavior, verbal behavior, and also messages through policy itself and action or implementation of those policies. These are all forms of communication, especially to youth. Here we are speaking specifically about verbal behavior, but that does not mean it's the most important. We cover policy and action in later sections about empowering youth and starting a youth program. Whether or not local government invests financial resources into making youth empowerment a priority carries a loud message for youth.

I Want to Get Youth's Attention (Marketing/ Outreach)

First question to yourself about your materials: is it simple and easy for anyone, especially youth, to sit down and read my materials, my work? Would you be able to understand it without prior experience and background? Is it appealing to the eye? If a young person were walking past this would they stop and look, or pick it up?

1 **We asked almost 200 Portland youth how they learn about events happening in their community. Here are the results:**

HOW THEY LEARNED	NUMBER OF YOUTH	
General media	58	
Newspaper	22	
Internet	22	
Friends	21	
School - Handouts/posters/ signs/flyers	16 13	
Parents/family	10	
Organizations	8	
TV	6	

2 **We asked youth in Portland where they like to hang out (aka, where should you target your promotional flyering).**

The top four spots were:
- Downtown
- Malls
- Parks
- Youth organizations

And some specific streets: Alberta Street, Hawthorne Street, the Pearl District, Mississippi, Belmont, Burnside, and NW 23rd Ave.

"We tend to think of getting people involved by mailing notices of our meetings and through citizen advisory committees. I understand, even if I don't understand the specifics, that there's a whole milieu of ways out there of ways that youth connect."

—Commissioner Dan Saltzman

I Want to Get Youth's Aattention
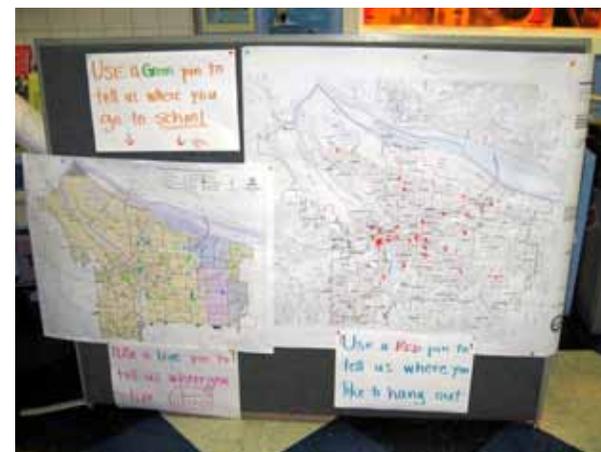
3 **We asked the youth surveyed what activities and issues they are most passionate about.** This is good to know, in terms of catering to youth interest and involving youth in something they care about. Again, we want to remind you that all youth are individuals, and we are not trying to limit youth. However, these examples can give you a general idea of youth's interests.

What activities and issues are you most passionate about?

ACTIVITY NAMED	BY THIS NUMBER OF YOUTH
Sports/activities	30
Arts	29
Community	29
Education	24
Environment	19
Activism	12
Health	10

Some simple tips:

1. **Go to where youth are**; don't expect them to come to you. This is an important lesson. If you look at the information box about where youth like to hang out, these are locations that feel comfortable and safe to them. Getting permission to engage them in these spaces will be much more successful than asking them to come to City Hall.

2. **Go to where you think interested youth will be.** It may not be the best use of your time to bring flyers about a science internship to a dance school.

3. **"Youth engaging youth."** The best recruitment strategy you have is other youth who are interested and excited about whatever you are doing. People in general don't necessarily pay close attention to commercials, and they don't always believe information from a stranger, but they almost always listen to their friends, people they respect and whose opinions they trust. Youth are no different.

4. As you can see from the survey information, **including parents, family and teachers in the outreach process** is very important as well, because youth respect and listen to these people in their lives. This is another reason why youth work cannot be done outside the context of community.

5. **Don't make your outreach material boring.** We have tried to create this manual in a way that is professional and still youth-friendly. Remember to use graphics, colors and photos to make the work more engaging and pleasing to the eye.

6. Before you finalize your materials, see if it is possible to **run them by youth**. If you already have youth working in your program, then it's easy. If not, you might want to do a test run at a youth organization, school or event.

7. If you don't get a chance to ask youth before you go out into the public with your materials, **ask the first youth you encounter for their honest opinion**

about your materials and your outreach strategy. You'll get some great ideas and definitely hear if you are doing something wrong.

8. **Don't rely on a single medium**. Use a combination of different marketing tactics and strategies. As you can see from the survey information box about how youth get their information, it's going to take a variety of approaches to reach a variety of youth.

9. **Be flexible** about the means you use and be ready to change if something isn't working.

10. **Make sure to use technology** but don't rely solely on it. If you want to get a diverse group of youth, you have to remember that a common stereotype of young people is headphones on, ipod full blast, in front of the computer with the television on. However, due to access to money, cultural differences, and lack of opportunity, there are many youth, and people in the community who do not have the same access to technology. Don't forget the old standbys of flyers, posters, tabling at community events, and talking to folks on the street, etc.

11. Think of ways to **incorporate what youth are interested in** either within your outreach strategy or into the project

you are advertising. Be creative: include sports, arts, music.

12. If you are trying to recruit youth to your project, **think of ways to involve the community** and connecting the community to the youth you will be working with. As you can see in the survey box about youth's interests, community is very important.

13. If you are trying to recruit youth involvement in a project you are working on, make sure to **emphasize the skills they will learn** and the benefits they will get out of it. And then make sure it's all true.

14. **Utilize art and creativity to get your message out**. We cannot emphasize this enough! As you can see from the box about youth interest, art was the second highest category. Also remember to think broadly about art — it's not just paintings in a museum. It is hip hop, arts and crafts, fashion, poetry, video and filmmaking, and more.

15. **Think outside the box and make it fun!** Everyone likes fun!

"I think for young people with hip hop being such a powerful medium as it is with such media exposure, there's often a disconnect between what they have access to in their community with what they see on tv with and get bombarded with all the time. So in our community being able to connect the people's bodies and minds to what's going on on a global scale is important."

–Mic Crenshaw, founder, Globalfam Network

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I Want to Use the Internet and Technology
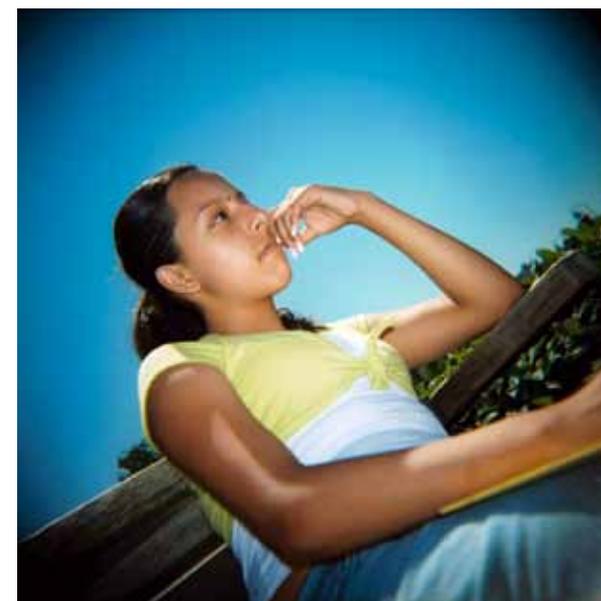
Using Technology to Engage Youth

By Laurel Butman, Office of Management and Finance

Youth are much more likely than other constituent groups to engage in civic life through technology. Most youth today have grown up using the Internet as a main communication and information-gathering tool for school, entertainment, and peer group activities. About 30-40% of youth today have published their own voice online via blogs, social networking sites, or their own web pages. Therefore, the effective use of technology is a key component of any youth engagement effort, formal or informal.

Technology Dos and Don'ts for Youth Engagement

DO:
- Email or post short announcements
- Consider posting announcements on social media (FaceBook, etc.)
- Consider inviting or paying youth to post your info
- Use the PortlandOnline youth portal as a one-stop clearinghouse and feedback mechanism (blog)

DON'T:
- Send youth long email letters or announcements
- Rely only on email; youth use email marginally

About the PortlandOnline Youth Portal – www.portlandonline.com/youth

Between 2007 and 2009, Portland youth and City staff collaborated and built a PortlandOnline youth portal to boost connections between local youth and local government. As Portland youth's go-to web resource for City services and activities, the youth portal is as an important avenue for Portland bureaus wishing to engage youth.

Some suggested uses of the Youth Portal:
- Increase youth access to relevant information and activities
- Develop an ongoing dialogue with youth through blogging and comment features
- Request feedback to improve youth satisfaction with services
- Increase youth awareness of projects, events, and participation opportunities

We encourage bureaus to be creative in their engagement strategy. Here are some readily available tools for all City bureaus to consider; web management staff is available to help you get started.

1. **PROVIDE YOUTH-ORIENTED CONTENT –** Include all youth content in a single portal on your bureau site for increased usability or plan to post all youth-related content directly in the main portal
2. **TRACK-IT –** Quizzes and polls can gather information in a youth-friendly format
3. **ANNOUNCEMENTS –** Place activities & events on a central calendar. Announce opportunities on the Youth Portal to increase response
4. **BLOGGING –** A great opportunity for 2-way engagement

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Rules for Good Web Writing for Youth

Teens don't like to read a lot of words on the web! They get enough of that at school. Post content that is short, easy to scan or that illustrates concepts visually, instead of dense text.

PDF files are best for offline reading. Coming across a PDF file while browsing for basic content breaks the reading flow for all web users. PDFs are great for printing articles and reports for later offline reading or for distributing big documents that need to be printed, especially in a resource area. Otherwise, it is best to convert any information that needs to be browsed or read on the screen into basic text content for easier reading and scanning.

RESOURCES:

Expanded web writing guidelines for bureau content editors/managers: www.portlandonline.com/support.

Site of Jakob Nielson, prominent *usability expert: www.useit.com*

Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability, 2nd Edition, by Steve Krug

Experts suggest following **10 SIMPLE RULES** to improve content usability and user satisfaction.

1. When converting information to the web, **cut paper-based text by 50%**

2. Move vital but tangential or supplemental material to a "**further resources**" area

3. Put key conclusions, ideas, news, **at the start** of the article

4. **Shorten sentences** to one, or at the most two, clauses per sentence

5. **Shorten paragraphs** to no more than five lines and put the main idea first

6. **Beware of cutting** so far that you make the text ambiguous; expand contractions, abbreviations, and acronyms and leave articles (the, an, etc.) in the text

7. **Insert meaningful headlines** and subheads to break up text

8. Turn most lists into **bulleted or numbered lists** instead of run-on text

9. Write in an **active voice**

10. Use easy to understand words (about **7th-9th grade level**)

**10 I Want to Use the Internet and Technology**

10 I Want to Use the Internet and Technology

Scanability is Usability!

Seventy-nine percent of Internet users **scan pages; they do not read word-by-word**. Design your online information to be scannable:

1. To make keywords stand out, **highlight liberally**. Highlight about three times as many words as you would when writing for print.

2. **Hyperlinks** also stand out by virtue of being colored, so they should be written to do double duty as highlighted keywords.

3. Highlight only **key information-carrying** words. Avoid highlighting entire sentences or long phrases; a scanning eye can only pick up two (or at most three) words at a time.

4. Highlight words that **differentiate your content from other content** and words that symbolize what a given paragraph is about.

5. **Bulleted and numbered lists** slow down the scanning eye and can draw attention to important points.

6. Each paragraph should contain **one main idea**; use a second paragraph for a second idea, since users tend to skip any second point as they scan over the paragraph.

7. **Start the page** with the conclusion as well as a short summary of the remaining contents ("inverted pyramid" style).

Heat maps from user eye tracking studies of three websites.

The most-viewed areas are red

Yellow areas indicate fewer views

The least-viewed are the blue areas

Gray areas didn't attract any views

Using Blogs as an Engagement Tool

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 12 million Americans were blogging in 2006, with about 57 million reading blogs. Fifty-four percent of bloggers are under age 30.

Benefits of Blogging for Government

Government blogs are another way to spread your message and get people to see your content. Blogs put a human face on government. They can make government more "open" by increasing interaction between government and the community.

Here's what others are saying about the benefits of blogs:

"It's all about openness. People see blogs as a reflection of an open, communicative culture that isn't afraid to be self-critical."

-Bill Gates, Founder and chair of Microsoft

"When the consumer can't put a 'face' on the organization it's easy to see the organization as a faceless entity. Blogging has the potential to give a human face to the organization. The nature of blogging is personal and individualistic."

-Gerry McGovern, Web Content Consultant:

If you ask youth to post comments about your blog article, you have a finger on their pulse.

When blogging, r**emember that the Web has a long memory**. Do not publish any material on impulse. Ask these questions:

- *Who might read it?*
- *Supposing a prospective partner, stakeholder, or customer read it, what would they think?*
- *Would you be willing to have it on the front page of the newspaper?*
- *In what other ways might it be interpreted?*
- *How will it stand up in a year? In 5 years?*
- *As informal as blogs are meant to be, if they appear on a government domain, they're official government communications and part of the public record.*

Examples of Government Agencies Using Blogs

Federal agency external blogs tend to fall into several categories:

- Blogs of high-level officials: HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt's Blog
- Experiences of government workers, such as USA.gov's GovGab

Examples of external blogs from other levels of government:

- Montgomery County, MD, Division of Solid Waste has a blog titled "Talkin' Trash"
- The government of Rhode Island has a media center on their portal with blogs

Examples of external blogs from the City of Portland:

- Water Bureau Blog
- Commissioner Amanda Fritz' Blog

RESOURCES:
The youth portal has a central blog that any elected official, bureau director, or bureau staff can use to interact with local youth. If your bureau or office is interested in posting a blog article or a policy, report, or other document for youth commentary, contact web management staff.

10 I Want to Use the Internet and Technology

10

I Want to Use the Internet and Technology

Youth Web Use Trends

As of 2006:

- In teens internet use, information gathering trumped communication activities.
- 39% of online teens shared their own creations online (artwork, photos, stories, videos)
- 33% created or worked on web pages or blogs for others
- 28% had created their own online journal or blog, up from 19% in 2004
- 27% maintained their own personal webpage, up from 22% in 2004
- 26% remixed content they find online into their own creations, up from 19% in 2004

In addition, as of 2006, the top three teen uses of the Internet were:

1. 81% go to websites about movies, TV shows, music groups, or sports stars
2. 77% get information about news and current events
3. 68% send or receive instant messages (IMs)

RESOURCES:
(Source: PEW Internet & American Life Project)
   Teen Content Creators
   Teens and Social Media

I Want to Engage a Diverse Group of Youth

"In my family, my dad had to grow up fast. At 13, he had to be an adult. He went to Mexico City and started to work for a living... [When are you grown up?] It depends on where you come from. Your background, your culture, it just depends. Some people have to grow up pretty fast."

–Sebastian, youth at the Day Laborer Center

We live in a city where the demographics are shifting, where there are more people of color coming in from around the world. Immigrant populations in Portland are on the rise. In addition, there are many populations of youth, such as queer youth, homeless youth, incarcerated youth, that are often left out of the dialogue when we talk about youth, who have specific needs and concerns.

To see how much you know about the realities that youth of color, queer youth, immigrant youth, homeless youth, disabled youth, incarcerated youth and others have to deal with every day, take the quiz on the next pages and see how many you get right.

I Want to Engage a Diverse Group

Diversity Quiz

1. What percentage of Portland's population is immigrant or refugee?

Activity 1.

FILL IN THE BLANK

_____ voluntarily came to the United States in search of new opportunities for themselves. **REFUGEE** or **IMMIGRANT**?

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: To show the difference between the word refugee and immigrant.

2. New question needed here for activity 2.

Activity 2.

DEFINITION

_____ is related to how we perceive ourselves and expected to think and act. **SEX** or **GENDER**?

Sex is biological and refers to male and female reproductive organs, whereas gender should define your self expression and how you are perceived, or your own unique identity. Gender is not just male and female.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: To show the different meanings between sex and gender.

3. How much of the city is accessible to disabled people?

Activity 3.

WORD SCRAMBLE

GEARLRNN __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __
LANMTE   __ __ __ __ __ __
BOMIYLTI   __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __
NOIISV   __ __ __ __ __ __
NGIEAHR   __ __ __ __ __ __ __
EAACPBL   __ __ __ __ __ __ __

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: The point of this activity is to help people be aware of a few of the types of disabilities that handicapped people deal with every day.

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I Want to Engage a Diverse Group

4 In what year will white people no longer be the racial majority in this country?

5 How much has the Latino population of Portland grown in the last 10 years?

6 How many youth are incarcerated, on parole, or probation in Portland?

7 How many programs are there for youth with substance abuse problems?

8 How many youth in this city are homeless?

**9** How many youth live below the poverty line in this city?

10 What percentage of parents in Portland are teen parents?

Answers on page 39!

8. *Name three organizations that support queer youth in Portland.*

Activity **4.**
CROSSWORD PUZZLE
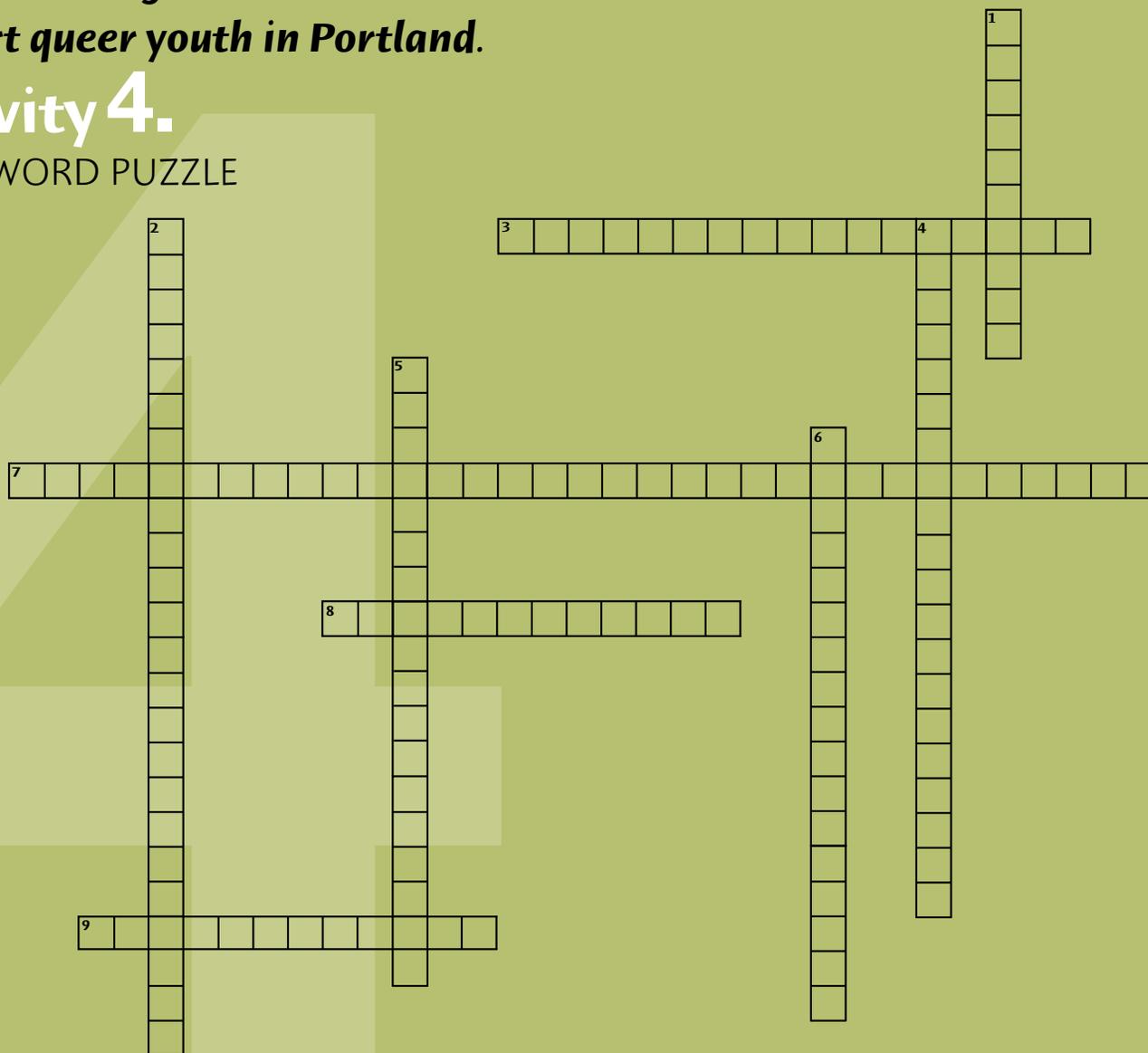
ACROSS

3 Youth empowered education

7 Queer drop-in center.

8 Social justice and youth empowerment.

9 NE Coalition of Neighbors

DOWN

1 After school programs in Portland Public Schools

2 Health inside the schools

3 Help prevent the spreading of HIV/ AIDS

4 Getting youth involved in music.

Answers on next page!

Diversity Quiz Answers

1. *In what year will white people no longer be the racial majority in this country?*

2. *How much has the Latino population of Portland grown in the last 10 years?*

3. *What percentage of Portland's population is immigrant or refugee?*

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I Want to Engage a Diverse Group

Starting points

"We are a country of immigrants and it's the base, foundation and history of our country"

-Margot Kniffin, Development Director Center for Intercultural Organizing (CIO)

It is vitally important when talking about involving, engaging and empowering young people that we don't just think about the youth who are typically tapped for leadership opportunities. These are almost always students from wealthy backgrounds, academically high-achieving, white, straight, native- born citizens.

This leaves out the majority of youth who don't fit into those categories but have just as much or more to say about the ways that local government is run, and the ways it impacts their lives.

Some of those groups (but by no means all), include:

People of color (and that needs to be broken down as well:

- Black, Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American, Middle Eastern/Arab/ Central Asian)
- Immigrant and Refugee population
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning youth

- Homeless youth
- Teen parents
- Youth from various religious backgrounds
- Youth with substance abuse issues
- Incarcerated youth
- Disabled youth
- Poor or working class youth

DISCLAIMER: This four-page chapter does not feign to address all the issues of oppression that exist in our society today. This is more of a brief introduction to the ideas surrounding diversity, to encourage adults to begin to think outside of the box. We strongly recommend that you do much more research, thinking, discussion and self-education before starting a program involving any of these groups.

The basics

When we say diversity, we do not just mean people of color. We mean all of those who are often marginalized, oppressed, silenced or invisible when it comes to creating policy and making large decisions. We firmly believe that everyone should have an equal say in the way their government is run.

In addition, we believe that people who have experienced oppression first hand and who have lived that reality are the experts on their condition. We believe that instead of paying "experts" a lot of money to research a group or issue, rather it is more important to involve the people who are affected by the issues, and make sure they have leadership in the decision making that creates solutions.
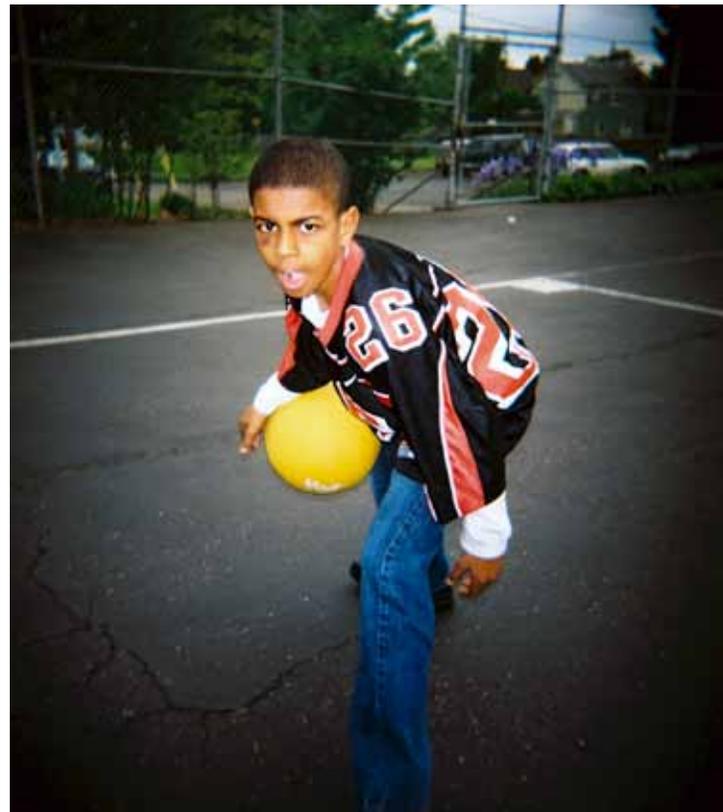
Community

Youth are very connected to their community. They have to be, through schools, parents, friends, friends' parents, teachers, community center volunteers, public transportation, and more, youth generally see more of their communities than most adults do.

In addition, youth from oppressed or disenfranchised communities (see list of groups above) are often much more connected to their communities. You cannot talk about working with oppressed youth without talking about working with their communities, and working on larger issues.

This is especially true with immigrant and refugee youth, who often act as translators, liaisons, and bridges between their family and their community and American culture, let alone local, state, and federal government institutions.

Strategies

TRAINING. It is not just enough to include youth voice. It is important to understand the other issues that are involved in any diverse group and have the foundation and tools to address those issues in order to move forward. We highly recommend that you seek training on ways to dismantle oppression. There are many local, national, and international organizations that provide this type of training for modest fees. Or many of these organizations also make

their curricula available online for those who have had more direct exposure and practice with these concepts. (Please see Appendix 1, Youth and Community Resource List, pg. 77, for more information.) Training comes in many forms that can fit your workplace, from simple exercises, worksheets, and questions that can help you think through and learn different ways to make space and create a more inclusive environment, to in depth weekend-long dismantling oppression retreats that provide experiential learning for your entire staff. If you are interested in such retreats, which can be highly successful tools in employee and organizational development, we also recommend that this type of training include all individuals (staff and volunteers) involved in a project and that it occur at the beginning of any process, so that those participating understand what is expected of them in the workplace.

"Depending on the economic needs of the country, US politicians and citizens target Immigrant/Refugee groups and cause racial tensions. The label 'white' was created to separate and assign power to a particular group in society. It is important to discuss what it means to be 'white'."

—Margot Kniffin, Center for Intercultural Organizing

There are going to be conflicts between folks in your group around race, gender, class, country of origin, and religion. It will be difficult to work through, but having a shared foundation around these issues will ultimately make it much easier to navigate.

SELF-EDUCATION. Do not make one person a spokesperson for an entire group of people. It is not one person's responsibility to explain their life experiences to you. Do not expect people, especially youth, from oppressed communities to educate people. People, especially adults, should be responsible for doing their own homework on the history and the issues oppressed youth deal with, to make sure they are aware and sensitive, allowing adults to be fully supportive of youth.

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I Want to Engage a Diverse Group

"I think one of the biggest things is just cultural competency. In order for the city to know how to deal with these kids, we have to first create a medium where the kids can hear the city and the city can hear the kids."

—Abdul Fofanah

PRIVILEGE. You have to recognize your own privilege. We all have privilege in this society based on our identities. If we are a straight white adult male, we have a lot of privilege. But whether it is race, gender, sexual orientation, class, education, ability, age, country of origin, nationality, or religion we all have some privilege. It is important to be aware of this as you do your work, and pay attention to how your privilege(s) may affect your

"The kid [in school] doesn't understand English much, and doesn't understand how the school structure works, so they show up and they don't understand what's coming out of the teacher's mouth. They don't understand the idea of doing assignments, and the teachers don't understand them because of the lack of cultural competency. So the dynamics are set up for failure."

—Abdul Fofanah

Language is also about the words you use and the way you define (or don't define) terms. If someone needs a master's degree in urban planning or a PhD in government to understand your presentation, then you are again alienating not just youth, but a sizeable portion of the population.

"Language is a cultural thing. It's easier for [elected officials] who speak dominant culture language period, so if you belong from that culture and you feel pretty comfortable in it or you were born here, that would make it easier for you."

—Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

Language is also very important in terms of reclaiming and using language as a way of defining yourself. When transgender people ask to be called by their preferred pronoun, that is about using language as a way of claiming their identity. When someone asks to be referred to as a "person of color" rather than a "minority," it is about choosing a title that is empowering instead of minimizing.

RESOURCES. Make sure to think about making opportunities accessible to youth who do not have access to many resources. If you want youth to attend events, make sure there are youth rates that are low or free. If there's a conference you want youth to attend, work to find scholarship money. And if you want youth to be able to work on an ongoing basis with your project, find ongoing money to provide a stipend for them (more on this in Chapter 14, "I Want to Hire Youth," pg. 55). These resources allows youth with limited access a chance to be involved. It begins to level the playing field.

"The kids I work with are at the back of the line. Our kids don't have computers at home so they're not able to know what opportunities are out there for kids. And their parents aren't economically in the position where they can provide this kind of access for them."

—Abdul Fofanah

INTERSECTIONS. It is vitally important that we think of all of these oppressions and issues as not separate lines, but intersecting webs. People of color and immigrant populations are often poor or working class, as are homeless youth and teen parents. Incarcerated youth will most certainly be working class when they get out and try to find a job with a record. While poverty is a separate item line, it often is a very real factor in all of the other categories, and cannot be ignored.

"There's a sort of web of barriers that revolve around poverty... That includes everything from "I was hungry," or "I don't have parents"... [There are] lots of intersecting issues that are separate but that often surround poverty..."

–Nate Waas Shull, Education Strategies Youth Coordinator, Office of Mayor Sam Adams

SAFE SPACE. Work to create an environment that is open to different types of groups. Make sure it is not just a space that is comfortable for youth who have more "social capital" in the world. Create an environment that is open to different types of groups.

An example of one way to do this:

"We've had walk through where people from different minority populations literally walk through the space and give feedback as to how inviting the space feels to them."

–Zan Gibbs, Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC)

DIFFERENCES. Even within oppressed groups, there are a great many differences. This is especially true within the category "people of color," and even within individual racial categories. The African immigrant experience is in some ways incredibly different from the African American experience, but both are put under the label "Black." In the end, we must recognize that each person is an individual and should be treated and respected as such.

"Immigration is typically portrayed as a Latino movement/issue but it involves so many more groups than that."

–Margot Kniffin, Center for Intercultural Organizing (CIO)

MOST AFFECTED. Include youth on issues that affect them and that they have experience in. When you are talking about the criminal justice system, include the voices of youth who have been incarcerated.

"The problem I'm facing is I work with teen parents and they have to worry about paying child support, work and a lot of times they only get minimum wage and it's not enough for child care and the things they have to do."

–Phu Dao, Multnomah County Juvenile Justice

POTENTIAL. Look beyond schools where you imagine youth with potential for leadership are. Look to alternative schools and youth organizations. Often youth that don't thrive academically thrive elsewhere. People who are looking to give youth opportunities often gravitate toward high schools that are more academically successful because they have more resources and often times greater community support; not because of the real potential available, but because of their own assumptions about which youth will achieve.

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I want to engage a diverse group

"Lincoln kids have more opportunity than Roosevelt or Madison kids. The social position of their families translates inexorably into what they're exposed to. They're more ready for school, and supported in school, so the opportunity is not equal"

–Steve Griffith, Lincoln High School volunteer

ASSUMPTIONS. Watch your assumptions. This is why doing your homework is so important, because we are often given distorted or inaccurate information from the mainstream media on important issues.

This is especially true regarding assumptions about queer and transgender youth. Assuming that everyone in the room is straight and acting accordingly erases the presence of a core part of many queer people's identities. To assume someone's gender based on your own perception of their physical appearance completely annihilates transgender people's identities.

Don't assume gender identity. Don't assume sexual orientation. Educate yourself to understand these two issues more deeply, and understand that they are not related to each other. Gender identity is the gender someone identifies with. Gender identity can definitely be different than the gender someone was assigned at birth. People can identify as a boy,

girl, male, female, both, neither, or somewhere along that spectrum. That has nothing to do with someone's sexual orientation, which is to whom they are attracted.

CULTURAL ORGANIZING. Recognize that cultural activities are very valid and important forms of organizing and empowering youth. It is important for government to acknowledge, respect and support the abilities of youth groups and communities to express their culture and find empowerment through organizing.

"Taiko has given me an opportunity to get in touch with my Japanese culture. I have met so many great people from so many different backgrounds. It is nice to have a place to go and know I will be accepted for who I am. No one will judge me because of my race or how tall I am or anything else. I feel like I have a second family in the Taiko community..."

–Meredith Wood, Portland Taiko

SPREADING THE WORD. Many communities do not respond well when asked to get involved in the same old way, by going down to City Hall, speaking to City Council, filling out a survey, or coming to an event. We have already said how these methods can be intimidating for youth. They can be even more intimidating for youth from communities that experience oppression.

"Loss of identity, confusion about identity; this lack of identity pushes many of the immigrant kids into finding identity within gangs which is becoming more and more prevalent within the Somali community in Portland. Another issue is resisting temptations of pop culture."

–Muslim Educational Trust

Abdul Fofanah shared that since 9/11, the Muslim immigrant communities he works with have been very concerned about being targeted based on legal status, deportations and detentions. So the idea of coming into City Hall, into a government facility, voluntarily does not always work for this population. Historically, Muslim immigrants around the country have been told to report to a government facility, and when they did, they were deported. Fofanah says it's a much better idea to go into the community, to hold an event at a local mosque, a school, or another trusted community space.

Filling out forms is also an issue. In addition to language and education barriers, forms can be intimidating, alienating and confusing. It is often much more engaging to have a dialogue with people, whether in a focus group, oral surveys, community events, etc.

"It's important to have a city policy-making team that is as diverse as the city...for instance, someone like me comes from the IR [immigrant and refugee] experience, so if I get in a position in there then the policies will respect that because I'll be mindful of this group as we're coming up with these policies."

–Abdul Fofanah

NEIGHBORHOODS. Often certain areas of the city are heard from more often in local government and have more of a voice in decision-making. This is generally because areas that are not heard from are poor or working class, immigrant/refugee, people of color, etc. So when thinking of bringing diversity into your program, also think about areas of town, like outer East Portland, North Portland, or parts of Northeast Portland, that may be heard from less because of issues related to money, color, and/or ethnicity.

"East Portland needs more focus, especially because they are dealing with a lot of areas of tension, changing demographics, gang violence, poverty has gone through the roof. Even within young people, we want to serve everyone and also we want to look at those who are struggling the most with these barriers."

– Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

"When we had the very first YBOR [Youth Bill Of Rights] meeting at Dishman [Community Center], we had a lot of Jefferson [High School] presence and just hearing the perspective of folks from neighborhoods is very eye opening and there's a lot of lack of service in that community still."

–Sarah Ryan, Teen Services Specialist, Multnomah County Library

"Each neighborhood is isolated. Every single one of them has different sorts of issues and different access and different systems built in for the community voice, or lack thereof."

–Nate Waas Shull, Education Strategies Youth Coordinator, Office of Mayor Sam Adams

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I want youth input/voice in my project

"My favorite junctures where youth got involved, there was someone at least to direct you to it, or motivate you, or support you, or plant that seed. That's what outreach does. It's that vehicle that gets kids from where they're at to where they need to be."

–Rob Ingram, Office of Violence Prevention, City of Portland

The youth of Portland say . . .

We asked Portland youth where they would like to have decision-making ability in a survey. **Overwhelmingly**, **the top three answers were**:

Schools

Parks

Transportation

The other categories listed involved:

- health
- the economy
- libraries
- homelessness
- gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer issues
- community organizations

Why is youth input important?

We strongly believe that youth should have voice and input into every area of our city, our communities and local government. After all, an adult community member has that right, at least in theory. They can go to open meetings and have their voice heard. They can vote on ballot initiatives on a wide variety of issues. It is only fair that the youth of Portland, **one third of the population**, have the same right to give their input. We can't quantify the value that youth bring unless they're in the room to give their opinions and feedback.

Youth voice makes a difference

A big 'ol truck was roaring towards New York City when it rammed into the Lincoln Tunnel at 70 miles per hour. The truck was too tall and got extremely stuck and the cars backed up for miles. You can imagine the traffic jam.

The fire department showed up to help with the Army Corps of Engineers — along with many others. With cranes and saws and jackhammers all tried to get the truck unstuck from the tunnel. But to no avail. Finally, after several hours, an 8 year old girl walked up from the long line of cars, looked at the truck and said, "Why don't you let the air out of the tires?"

Youth have a different perspective and see different things. It's always valuable to get those different perspectives. Youth are often the brilliant ones who will say, "Why don't you let the air out of the tires?"

The basics

The most basic level of youth involvement in a project is consultation, getting feedback from youth, or seeking their ideas. This can be in the form of:

- Focus groups
- Written surveys
- Oral surveys
- School presentations
- Community events

There are many other ways and we encourage you to be as creative as possible. But again, always remember that this is the beginning step to including youth voices in a more meaningful way, and, in the end, fostering youth empowerment. Listening to youth does not mean that you have empowered them. The listening must be followed by action in order for youth empowerment to occur.

The rules

The #1 rule: Make it fun and interesting.

"Government sounds boring. The government should pretend it's not the government."

-Mo Cohen, Rock N' Roll Girls Camp, Volunteer

We have talked about this before. If you are trying to get youth's input, you have to do it in a way that is interesting and engaging to them. No one wants to give feedback on something they don't care about.

As an example, two interns from IRCO (Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization) worked with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability to design a survey for the Eastside MAX 82nd Station.
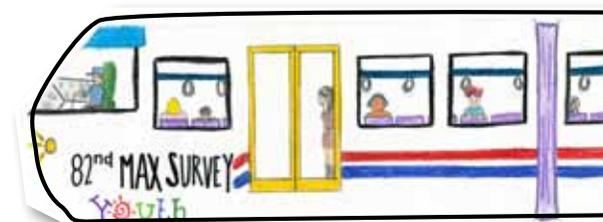
Their survey was shaped like a MAX train and folded out like cars. Even this simple design change made youth much more willing to pick it up and fill it out, and take copies for their friends.

#2. Make work accessible.

No one can give feedback when they can't get to a place because there is no public transportation, if it is an hour away via public transportation, or during school hours. These are simple things, but all too often we forget them and that means youth can't even have their voices at the table, let alone heard.

I want youth input/voice in my project

#3. **Be respectful and accountable**.

"Remember that it is an honor and privilege for adults to hear from youth and ensure that their input is treated equitably and respectfully and that this is demonstrated."

-Mafifa Ahmed, Office of Neighborhood Involvement, City of Portland

This is an ongoing theme throughout this manual. But when we say respectful in this case, we mean that the time the youth are giving you and also the information they share with you is precious. They should be treated in a respectful and accountable manner. Youth should know where the information is going, how it will be used, and what impact their voice will have. There is nothing worse than giving input and feeling like it didn't make a difference, which is what happens to youth too often.

#4. **Keep it short and simple**.
If you are giving youth surveys to fill out, they should not be 8 pages long. They should really be no longer than a two of pages or even just front and back. As Abdul Fofanah noted, surveys are not usually the best way to engage immigrant and refugee youth. In fact, it is not the best way to engage a lot of different kinds of youth.

Think more about community events, and ways to get feedback where there is a personal interaction. Where youth can see representatives of the government and engage with them directly as real people, not as questions on a sheet of paper. But in this case keep the interactions short and simple. Remember to not lecture youth, but rather have a dialogue. Also offer refreshments as a way to make it interesting and to promote a social atmosphere that creates dialogue. You could even have a music group, a film, or a youth group present. All these things make it interesting for youth, and in turn, get them involved and engaged.

If you do decide to do surveys, don't just hand someone a survey and walk away. Talk to them, walk them through it, answer questions they might have, and jot down notes on information they provide that may not be asked in the survey, but may be useful regardless.

13. Please draw what you think is missing in Central City.

more brown people

maybe the city could give more permits to brown people so they could bring their business here+ a popeye's :

#5. Build relationships.

Recognize the importance of long-term relationship building with youth. How you interact with them is how they will view local government. Again, we ask you to think about this as just the beginning step in a longer process toward youth empowerment. Make sure to talk with them, get their contact information, and keep them updated on the project. And when you get to the point where you need volunteers, or you are hiring, or want to form a youth program, let those people know.

If you are going into schools, don't think of it as an assignment. Interact with the youth. Go to one place several times, whether it's a school, the mall, or

Pioneer Square, so the youth who are regulars will get to know you. Ask youth questions in informal ways. Don't just shove a survey in their face right away.

#6. Plan for the long-term and stick with it.

Many youth have been marginalized and silenced for so long they feel (with much justification) that government is not interested in their voices or opinions. Recognize the powerlessness many youth feel and that it may take a while to break that down. Be respectful, persistent and supportive.

"I don't think I have an impact on the city. But they have an impact on people, you know, they have an impact on us"

–Sebastian, Portland VOZ Day Labor Hire Center

#7. Make sure to involve youth on projects that affect youth.

And most projects do. From the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, the County Health or Community Justice Departments, to the Children's Investment Fund, we believe youth are impacted by pretty much every aspect of government. As we said before, most adults get to vote on issues in their community, even schools, which they don't attend and which they probably have no contact with unless they have a child. Youth should be involved in their community in the same way.

At the very least, youth voices should be included in the areas that most affect them. As you can see from the survey results, youth want power in schools, parks and recreation and transportation, at the very least.

#8. Provide incentives.

We cannot stress how useful this is: pizza, small prizes, candy, a gift bag, or a gift certificate – whatever you can think of depending on the level of involvement. But please offer youth something. Incentives engage youth, making them feel the information they are sharing is worth enough to make a difference. Plus people like candy. People stop for candy.

#9. Have youth gather the information.

Youth are more likely to be honest with another youth than with an adult, especially one who works for government. This is where the long term relationship building comes in. After you do a round of surveys, try to get youth volunteers or better yet hire youth (read the sections on both before doing so) to go out and do the next round. Whether it is surveys, focus groups, or planning events, youth will be creative, energetic and more approachable to other youth, which allows them to gather more accurate and valuable information.

#10. **Have different levels of involvement**.

"It's important to come up with different types of opportunities, because not everyone is going to be able to take on a long-term commitment like an internship, or serving on a board. So making sure there's room for the person who has two hours to come to a focus group, just making it be a sort of continuum of possible ways to be involved"

–Sarah Ryan, Teen Services Specialist, Multnomah County Library

It is important for people to have multiple opportunities to speak about the issues that concern them. They should be part of all the different levels of work: planning, design, decision-making, implementation, evaluation, and be genuine partners in all levels.

#11. **Be creative**.

This is tied in with making it fun. Ask youth what they would be most interested in. Perhaps organize a community hip hop show to get feedback on a plan for urban revitalization. Or a carnival with other community-based youth organizations to get survey results from a variety of people. Think of ways that are fun and creative to engage people, getting their attention. People will remember those events and those surveys more, and the next time you return to work with that community, you will receive a positive response.

#12. **Be ready to be wrong**.

It happens. When adults are trying to work with youth, it happens a lot. There are ways to minimize it of course (which is why we created this manual and why you are reading it). You should always ask a lot of questions, present ideas to the youth for feedback, and try to do all the things we are listing here. But in the end, know that it's okay to falter, as long as you learn something from it for the future.

"As a society, failure is not a good thing to have. Failure is something we don't want to ever experience. We try to minimize the experience ... Sometimes it's okay to be human, and we make mistakes too, and you can get help when you make mistakes and fail. We have to be human in order for us to work with youth."

–Phu Dao, Multnomah County Juvenile Justice
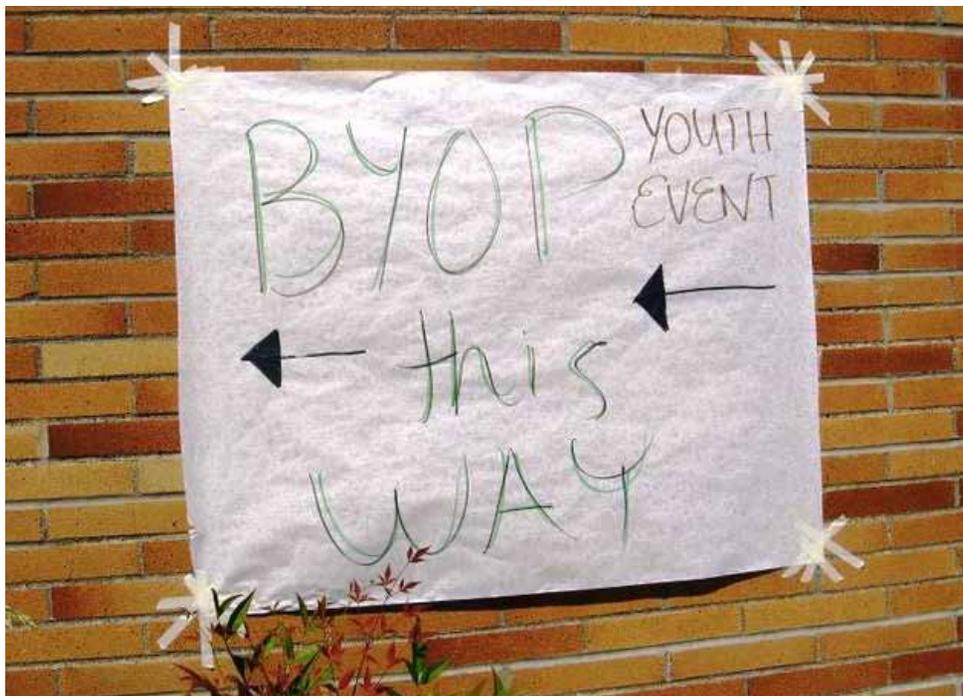
#13. Get feedback from the youth and change your plan for the future.
Since your plan is to reach youth, you need to ask youth what they want, what you could do better, what would be more interesting to them. Have specific questions ready – it's sometimes hard for anyone to answer a vague general question. But have space for them to give whatever feedback they want, and then use it.

"[Mayor Potter] and I spent a week at Jefferson. We were moving all over the school. We spoke to a few hundred youth and what we did was split our presentation about us and what we do, and then we asked them to give us ideas and suggestions on how we could fine tune what we do and what we're missing. We learned a whole lot from that week."

-Rob Ingram, Office of Youth Violence Prevention, City of Portland

#14. Remember this is only the first step.
Again, this is part of a longer process. This will give you valuable information about what youth are interested in, and will provide youth voice and perspective. It will link you more to the community, and take you out of your cubicle and into real people's lives. It's up to you to follow up on that.

"Working with youth puts the planning emphasis back on the street and allows everyone to consider, as a group and firsthand, what's working and what isn't at any given location. It creates a learning environment based more on sense of place than on technical and process-oriented tasks of planning."

-Kim White, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability planner, working with youth

WARNING: Making things mandatory through a teacher or a principal is NOT the best way to get youth involvement and input. It is a good way to make the youth resent your project, and gives you the very least amount of energy the youth can get away with. Don't you hate it when your boss makes you do something without asking or consulting you? Also, remember that youth aren't getting paid. Maybe we should start thinking of other ways to compensate youth for their input or work.

13

I Want Youth Volunteers in My Program

"As for advice for other adults considering working with youth, I would simply say you should work with them as often as you can. Youth provide a unique perspective and put some fun back into planning — two things you can never get too much of, in planning or in life."

–Kim White, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, planner working with youth

If you want to have youth involved in your program or project as volunteers, you need to ask yourself, and your co-workers, the following questions before you bring a youth onboard:

- ☑ Are we prepared for youth to be here?
- ☑ Is this a youth-friendly space?
- ☑ Have we done our homework on youth empowerment and engagement?
- ☑ Where are the pitfalls of bringing youth onboard and how do we avoid them?
- ☑ What are the barriers?
- ☑ What are some issues that may arise?
- ☑ What are the expectations for the project? For the youth? For the adults?
- ☑ What results do we want? Are those results realistic?
- ☑ What role is appropriate for young people to play in this project?
- ☑ Where do we really want youth involvement?
- ☑ Are we ready to do the work to have youth involved?
- ☑ Do we have a system set up when issues arise?
- ☑ Do we have support, in our bureau and in the community?
- ☑ Do we have the resources to do this appropriately?
- ☑ What do we want to gain by involving youth?

We'll assume you answered the above questions positively, and will then proceed. Both this and the "I Want To Hire Youth" chapter are tied together. We recommend reading both of them to get a full picture of what involving youth in your program will be like.

First steps

Make sure that your process and your program are youth-friendly. Again youth-friendly is people-friendly. Being youth-friendly will also make it more comfortable for community members and the public to be involved as well.

1 **Make sure your materials are fun**, interactive, easy to understand and free of jargon.

2 **Plan meeting times for after school or weekends**. Consider the curfew in Portland. For youth under 14 not yet in high school, it is 9:15 pm to 6 am on weekdays and 10:15 pm to 6 am on weekends. For youth 14 and over in high school, it is 10:15 pm to 6 am on weekdays and midnight to 6 am on weekends. When you plan an evening meeting, make sure to factor in time for the youth to get home before curfew. Again, this is very simple but is often forgotten, so youth cannot be a meaningful part of a program.

3 **Make sure to factor in travel time** when you plan meetings, and give youth a reasonable amount of time to arrive after school.

4 **Hold meetings in a youth-friendly space** (i.e. local community center, school, or at youth organization).

5 If you can't hold the meeting in a youth-friendly space, **make sure the space that you do have is youth-friendly** (i.e. find comfortable chairs, bring in music, bring snacks, or maybe even have games).

6 **Hire youth staff as co-facilitators/coordinators/contractors**. There are a lot of youth organizations that can come in on a contract basis and help facilitate a meeting, figure out how to use youth volunteers effectively and appropriately, and help you think strategically about including youth.

Compensation

Even though youth are volunteering their time, it's important to try to find ways to compensate them for their efforts. Youth are in school for eight hours a day, and then they have homework. That is the bare minimum they have to do. This does not include extracurricular activities, jobs, taking care of siblings, or a host of other responsibilities. Small compensations let youth know that you understand their time is valuable and you appreciate their presence.

1 **Bus tickets**. We recommend always providing bus tickets. Otherwise students are paying to be a volunteer, because they have to take public transportation. If you have someone who is volunteering regularly for a set time period, we recommend buying a bus pass, so they don't have to keep asking an adult for bus tickets. That can be a very disempowering situation for a youth.

2 **Food at meetings**. Youth are often coming straight from school where they haven't eaten since lunch. Feed them. Or at least give them snacks.

3 **Honoraria for participation**. Even if you can't pay cash, you can give gift cards or certificates.

4 **Training and skill-building opportunities**. Make this something that will benefit the youth. Send them to trainings, conferences and workshops they are interested in. It grows not only their capacity, but also your own program.

Hire youth staff as co-facilitators/coordinators/contractors.

5 **School credit**. We want to emphasize while this is useful for youth, it does not mean that you don't have to keep everything else in mind. Just because youth are getting school credit does not mean you can make it boring, rote and menial tasks or labor. Youth should still be empowered, engaged, having fun, and learning. Remember, youth can get school credit from many different places, so you have to give them incentives and reason to work with you.

6 **Resume building**. Again, find out what youth are interested in, and find out what they want to do after high school. You can tailor their volunteer work to further those goals. And of course, writing a letter of recommendation (or letting them know you'd be willing to write a letter of recommendation) is helpful as well.

Restrictions

"Some barriers are other responsibilities, so if you've got a job taking care of your siblings, if you are doing extracurricular things that tie you up during the times that meetings typically occur. So [there are] a lot of structural barriers with the way government happens and where it happens."

-Sarah Ryan, Teen Services Specialist, Multnomah County Library

- **Be realistic with your expectations**. As we said before, youth have a lot of restrictions on their time. Whether it's school, homework, after school activities, jobs, family responsibilities, or being a single parent; youth time is limited. Work with youth to know what they can do, and stick to that plan.

- **Different youth also have different abilities to commit to projects**. Youth who have more money and privilege in society may have more time. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't make a sincere and sustained effort to reach out to working class youth, youth of color, queer youth, immigrant and refugee youth, disabled youth, etc. Each of these categories is different and requires different outreach techniques. Do YOUR homework! Build relationships with youth organizations. (For more information, see "I want to engage a diverse group of youth" chapter).

- **Youth are often part of specific communities**, and it's important to involve not just the youth but the larger community and the issues that that community is dealing with. For example, it's not enough to just engage immigrant youth, without talking about the larger issues their families, parents, community and the people in their country of origin are dealing with, what forces caused them to immigrate and what are they dealing with now as result of that move.

Meetings

"We have a Parks board [where] citizens advise us on programs and policies. The trouble is these meeting [s] usually occur at times of day where it is difficult for youth to participate, or involve a workload that youth just don't have time to do. But the ideal [would be] . . . to have youth involved, we just don't know how to make it work, given the real time constraints [youth] have in [their] lives."

–Commissioner Dan Saltzman, City of Portland

- **Think exciting and engaging, and not boring**. We have said it a lot, and we'll keep saying it. If meetings are boring, full of jargon and inaccessible to youth, you will lose them. This goes for volunteering and hiring.
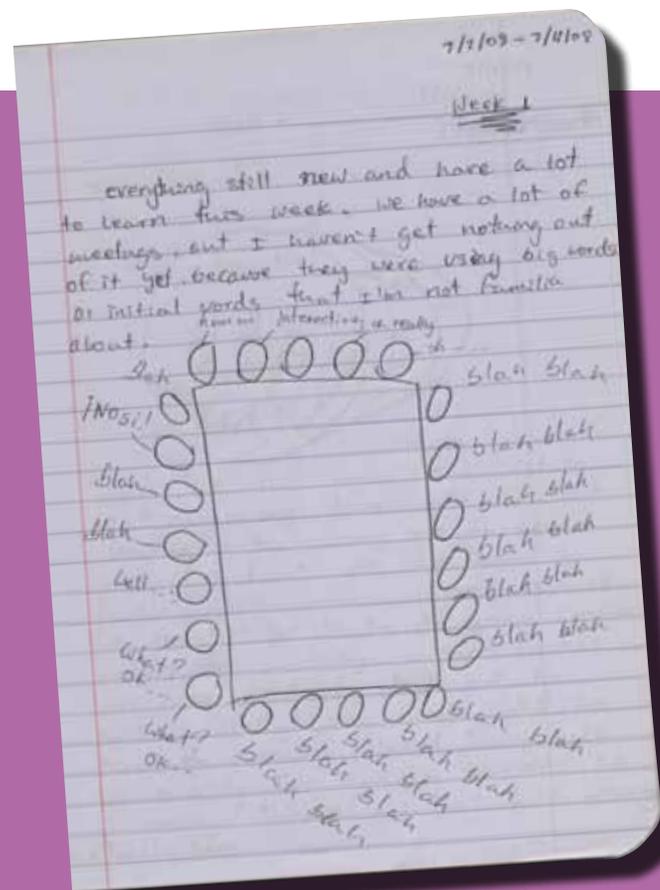
"Everything [is] still new and [we] have a lot to learn this week. We have a lot of meetings, but I haven't got nothing out of it yet, because they were using big words or initial words that I'm not familiar about." – Week 1 July 7, 2008 Journal Entry

–Viengsavanh Phomvongkoth, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability Intern, Immigrant and Refugee Organization Summer Youth Employment Program

What does work:

"When you do that [imposing yourself on youth], it causes them to shut down, or they rebel. When they shut down, rebellion is the next thing because now you guys aren't engaging."

–Abdul H. Fofanah, Youth Coordinator and Community Activist

- **Be patient and plan ahead**. It is going to take time for youth to get acclimated to the project, and it's going to take time for you to figure out how to support them. Often we have very short deadlines in government. The best experiences working with youth are the ones that are planned out well and planned long-term, with enough time for youth to grow at a pace that doesn't feel rushed.

- **Don't impose yourself on the youth**. Youth will shut down if they perceive you are forcing them to see things your way.

- **Take time to build relationships**.

- **Let them know their time is appreciated and valued**. This comes in the form of verbal support, compensation listed above, and making sure youth work is integrated as a long-term part of your program.

- Have the time and energy, as an adult working with youth, to **pay attention to youth**, to help them and support them, to come to them and

I Want Youth Volunteers in My Program

ask what they need, even if they don't come to you.

- Know that it is a program and project goal to not only fulfill goals and accomplish work , but also to support youth and **spend time helping them build their capacity for leadership**.

What doesn't work:

"It's about finding that delicate balance between I need this work done and I need it done by this time, but I also want to make sure the experience allows leadership by whoever the other person is."

-Christy Splitt, Bus Project

- **Youth should not be treated as slave labor**. The work should be interesting, engaging and useful to them. You wouldn't treat a volunteer as free labor to do the work you don't want to do, which means you shouldn't treat youth that way.

- **Avoid acting in an authoritarian way**. This can include: acting like you have all the answers; dictating to youth instead of involving them in a dialogue; not asking their opinions; not allowing their input or leadership; or forcing them to do tasks they're not interested in.

- **Balance structure with flexibility**. While we definitely think structure is important,

there has to be flexibility to it. Youth have to have space to be able to bring their voice, talents and interest into play.

- **Treat youth as colleagues**. Working with youth, especially volunteers, should be empowering and fun. Youth often shy away from teachers as authority figures, since this is a source of anxiety in their lives. Avoid quizzing youth for the "right" answers, instead share with them your professional and collegial environment as you would with any other co-worker.

"Working with young people, even though it's incredibly action oriented, you'll get a checklist of stuff done, but at the same time you're really listening and building relationships. I've found that takes time always, and it happens in different modes and different fashions, and you have to be flexible."

-Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

I Want to Hire Youth

"When we employ youth . . . we try to interact not only with that individual but also with that individual's family, their parents and the school, so that we are all on the same page. As far as why this individual [is] interested in working, what are their goals and how does that relate to their school activities and family? What's the understanding, so that everybody know[s]? I think that is really important and without that, if you just [think about] them separately, you can have problems."

–Tom Mears, CEO Burgerville

Youth-centered Hiring

The Multnomah Youth Commission has a very unique and youth-friendly process for selecting new members.

During the recruitment process, they have youth submit an application which includes four short answer questions, contact information, and an optional "box" that they can do anything they want

with, as well as one peer recommendation and one adult recommendation.

A selection panel comprised of youth and adults reviews the applications. Then there are two sets of interviews, one at Gresham City Hall and one at Portland City Hall; that way the interviewees can pick which destination works best for their schedule.

Interviews are not done individually, but as a group. At each interview session, the selection committee shares first, talking about the MYC and their personal involvement. Then everyone — interviewers and interviewees — plays a game called *"The Maze."* Everyone has to get through the maze without talking, as a way of seeing how people work together in a team. After *The Maze*, there is a group discussion about how the game relates to MYC and how people feel about it. Then applicants are broken into 3 to 4 small groups, with five-eight applicants in each group and a member or two of the selection committee. Each group is given a policy scenario to solve. After time is up and all the groups have come up with an organizing plan for their scenario they present their plans to the selection committee. This activity gives applicants a chance to see exactly what the work of the MYC is like during the interview itself.

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I want to hire youth

For the final part of the recruitment process, the applicants are put into pairs of two and rotated around to be asked a series of questions by the selection committee members. These small interviews give applicants a less intimidating setting to talk about themselves and provide one more different way for applicants to engage and show their skill sets.

Most importantly, all of this process is youth-led. Two adult staff are present to support in facilitation, but all of the discussions and exercises are led by youth.

Doesn't sound like any job interview you ever went on before, does it?

But this is what hiring youth means, that our "business-as-usual" has to be re-examined and reassessed. We have to find new ways of doing things that are less intimidating and that redistribute the power to all those involved. That is what youth empowerment is about.

This section and the "*I want youth volunteers*" section are tied together. We recommend reading both of them together to get a full picture of involving youth in your project.

Hiring youth has to involve an ongoing commitment to those youth and to youth empowerment. We have presented to you both short-term and long-term ways of supporting youth

in staff positions. We hope that both will happen together. If policies and structure are not flexible and reactive to youth, they will eventually have to be changed institutionally if you want youth involved long-term.

"I have found the most important thing for [youth] is for them to have something they can own, they have a project that has a beginning, middle and end."

–Laurel Butman, Principal Management Analyst, City of Portland Office of Management and Finance (OMF)

Short term strategies

"We started working on our next project, which is creating surveys for eastside MAX stop. Planners that have worked on it gave us an assignment, specifically they want us to work on the 82nd MAX stop . . . We kind of have problems with it because the planners didn't give us the specific people, like who are we targeting? Is it youth or is it like people in general. They didn't' really talk to us about it, they just look really nervous, like they don't know how to talk to us . . . Overall it would be really nice for them to not just drop off the assignment and go, it would be nice for them to talk to us about it."

–Viengsavanh Phomvongkoth Roosevelt High School (SEIS) 2010. Former Youth Planner

- The hiring process cannot be as long as other positions. Often it takes two months or more to get hired in local government. Youth often need to find out sooner, if they need employment or money, or have to figure out their schedule for the school year.
- Hire youth in pairs at the very least. Hiring

only one youth often leads to tokenization. And being the lone voice in any group without others who understand your experience and can validate and support it is hard enough, let alone without the power dynamics between youth and adults.

- Structure the work the youth are doing around what they are interested in, and not the other way around.

- Make sure youth are given a thorough orientation and have that orientation be accessible. Explain any acronyms and make sure youth have all the basic information. Have time for them to read information and absorb it, then ask questions. Make it fun! You can have a quiz show with all the new youth and give out prizes for the right answer. You could be Alex Trebeck, think about it!

- Understand there is often a difference in working style with youth. Youth often multi-

task and work at a faster pace. However, there also needs to be an understanding there needs to be time for relationship-building and leadership-building in the process as well.

- Be aware of other commitments the youth may have and create a reasonable and realistic work plan based on that (see "I want youth volunteers," chapter for more information).

- It is important to have ongoing check-ins with youth and make sure they don't feel overwhelmed by the amount of work they are doing, or the type of work they are doing. These have to be a conversation, not an adult dictating work load to them. Also, not all youth are the same, some may need more or less of this type of support. Ask youth specifically what they need from you as an adult in order for them to be successful with their work.

- It is really important to have ongoing dialogues with youth about the projects they are working on. Make sure they understand not just the work, but the ideas behind the work, and have space to give their input.

– Be aware that youth schedules often change. Obviously there is a large difference between youth availability from the summer to the school year, but also during the school year too. What worked three months ago may not work now. Be prepared to be flexible.

- It is important to pay youth, and to pay them a living wage. Having money to pay youth for their involvement means they don't have to

choose between being involved in their local government and taking a job to supplement their family income, buy supplies for themselves, or have pocket money.

- You should also be supplying a bus pass for students to get to their job (see Chapter 13, "I want youth volunteers in my program," page 52).

- Make sure the rest of the staff has thought about youth empowerment and how to engage with youth. Give them this manual! Do training with the Youth Planner Program. And have discussions about it together BEFORE the youth get there.

- Make sure that the youth are integrated into the staff, and do not feel separate. This can create feelings of distance, resentment and conflict.

- Celebrate accomplishments! It's important for everyone to acknowledge the good work that's been done. Whether that's through parties, flyers, newsletters, websites, ceremonies or whatever, makes sure people are celebrating good work.

- Have reflection sessions built into the plan, so that youth and adults can have an equal, open and honest dialogue, with feedback – what went well, what could have gone better, how did you feel, how would you do it differently, etc. These should be regular sessions, not a one time deal.

- When planning for the future, ask the youngest

employee there what they would like to see. They're the ones who will most likely stay longer, and so they are the ones who should be at the center of the planning.

- And, until the policies change, it is the adult's responsibility to "protect" the youth from the bureaucracy of local government. While it is important for youth to know the process of things, often times the bureaucracy can bring youth morale down. You have to be flexible and find creative ways to work within policies until they can be changed.

"The advice I'd give is to approach working with youth with an open mind and to try to treat youth like they would any other co-worker."

-Leslie Lum, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, planner working with youth

Long-term strategies
Systemic change

"The system has to be both flexible and personable so youth can wrap the system around them."

-Andrew Mason, Open Meadow

"A lot of time when we work with youth we want to be really creative, but we can't be because policies say this is the way you do things."

-Phu Dao Multnomah County Juvenile Justice

Again, we come back to that idea that you have to be creative, (i.e. making building entry, supplies, and tools more accessible to youth staff) and as we all can agree, government policies and procedures are not always written to be flexible and allow creativity. Without intending to, these policies often stifle youth empowerment and the avenues

to get to it. It's really important to find ways to push the policies, to maneuver within them, and with a long-term goal of changing them to support youth empowerment (see "I want to hire youth" chapter).

The bottom line in hiring youth:

- Many of the hiring policies local government uses do not have youth in mind at all. Those will have to be changed.
- Right now youth do not have the ability to be full time staff because of labor laws. They cannot receive benefits because they cannot work full time. Most youth are also only hired on a temporary basis.
- There are many youth who live without health care. Youth should be able to have at least partial benefits if they want them, even if they aren't working full time. Changing that policy would allow a youth whose family cannot afford health care, who is homeless, or who is emancipated to be able to take care of their health and well-being, and ultimately perform better in the workplace.

Youth empowerment goals for hiring in local government:

- Youth staff and youth workers should be in every bureau.
- Create and implement a youth involvement training force for all government staff.

I want to hire youth

Checklist for Youth in Public Processes

(Abridged from the City of Vanouver's *Involving Youth in Public Processes* Training Course)

Resources

Ensure that a budget is put aside to engage youth in the planning process. When drafting a budget, consider things such as:

- Youth contractors/facilitators
- Food for meetings
- Bus tickets for transportation
- Financial or other compensation for youth participation
- Youth-Friendly
- Handouts and other material is easy to understand, looks appealing and is a fun layout
- Variety of activity formats are used in public processes:
- Youth-only consultation
- Intergenerational workshop
- Focus groups
- Written feedback
- Interviews
- Participatory research
- Meeting space is safe, comfortable and familiar
- Icebreakers and energizers added to process

Logistics

- Meeting times are after-school or weekends
- Meetings are held in a location accessible by TriMet

Support

Adult allies are important for youth to participate meaningfully. City staff are allies to young people when they work with, connect, partner and unite with young people. Adult allies are serious about sharing decision making power.

- Shared decision making power
- Training

In order for young people to feel prepared to fully participate, training should be offered.

- Orientation session
- Educational component of the issue
- Opportunity to debrief the experience

Additional training (if interest and resources allow):

- Facilitation skills building
- Presentation and public speaking skills building
- Conflict resolution training
- Tap into youth passions

I want to empower youth within my program

"You know it's one thing to do things for people. It's another thing to do with people. And to me, what we're talking about is how does, not just the city council, but the people of Portland do things with the youth."

–former Mayor Tom Potter, City of Portland

"There's no way for a program to truly grow without youth involved."

–Shelagh Johnson CAP (Cascades AIDS Project) Teen2Teen

There's a difference between having a program that works on youth issues, and supporting youth to come up with their own solutions and ideas about the issues that affect them. There's also a difference between just having youth in your program, and working to ensure they are empowered within your program.

What we are talking about is not just including youth as workers, but empowering them as leaders, making sure they have the support, training and foundation to take part in real decision-making. What youth are involved in needs to have real world applications, and their input and recommendations need to be taken seriously and implemented. If youth see that none of their ideas or input has an impact, then it won't be long until they stop contributing.

Good example

The Multnomah Health Commission wanted to spread information about sexual health. They recruited a team of 15 students who went into their high schools and surveyed their peers. They asked what youth already knew and what they would like to know. They asked how the youth would like to learn the information. They then created a curriculum and presented it to the community and the Health Commission.

Bad example

(This is a hypothetical situation based on examples we heard during interviews.) The school district hires an outside consultant to research how to reduce school violence. The consultant does research for a year and returns saying that the implementation of school uniforms would reduce school violence. The school district agrees, and holds a meeting for parents to tell them of their decision. Youth pressure their parents to oppose the school uniforms, and their parents say they don't want that for their children. The school district is forced to abandon the issue.

First steps

"You have to find a balance between micromanaging and not really giving any management at all."

– Christy Splitt, The Bus Project

1. Youth have to be trained. We have said it before, and we'll say it again. This is about capacity building. Youth's capacity to organize and provide their own leadership is a long-term process. You cannot just create a position and dump a youth into it.

2. There has to be ongoing support.

"Overall it would be really nice for them [planners] to not just drop off the assignment and go, it would be nice for them to talk to us about it."

–Viengsavanh Phomvongkoth Roosevelt High School (SEIA) 2010. Former Youth Planner

3. Youth cannot work in isolation. As we have said before, bringing on one youth can often mean tokenization is taking place, whether it is intended or not. You need to hire several youth at one time. The youth also need to be connected to the other work happening in the bureau, as well as youth organizations in the community.

4. Know that your role is not just about advocating for youth, but ultimately is about being a good ally, providing support, training and access so they can advocate for themselves.

5. Collectively, as adults and youth, create guidelines for how people will act and participate together. It is then everyone's responsibility for informing newcomers of the community decisions, and holding each other accountable. This means that adults need to inform other new adults of these guidelines and be responsible not only for their own behavior, but for other adults' behavior as well.

6. Always be aware of the power dynamics. Pretending that you as an adult have the same power as the youth is not only untrue, can also be dangerous, because it allows you to continue to control power while denying you have it. A better way of dealing with a power difference to acknowledge it and finding ways to shift power to youth. But it is critical that you acknowledge it.

"It would be cool to give the youth the same amount of power in any circumstance as adults do even if adults feel like they should have more power because kids are just kids. I feel like kids are just as valuable as adults."

–Mo Cohen, Rock N Roll Girls Camp Volunteer

Meetings

The youth empowerment process can even be done during meetings, and is a good microcosm for the larger process. As the adult, you should in the beginning help facilitate the meeting process, while still encouraging the youth to set the actual agenda. Make sure that there are breaks scheduled in, and re-energizing activities.

In the YPP, we rotate facilitation and note-taking, so that everyone gets the opportunity to learn those skills and feel comfortable with them.

As the adult, you should be as hands-off during meetings as possible. Let the youth work out what is interesting, useful, and necessary and make decisions based on that. This may take longer than if you were telling people, but recognize that part of what you're doing is not just getting to a decision but building leadership capacity. That should be as or more important to you than getting through an agenda quickly.

15 I want to empower youth within my program

15

I want to empower youth in my program

Leader on all issues

"It's actually a pretty simple vision. It's that they be a part of all of the functions of government, not just in planning, but in all areas. I was driving back from Pendleton... And I was thinking, wouldn't it be nice to have a council seat for a youth."

–Former Mayor Tom Potter, City of Portland, about his vision of youth involvement in the city of Portland

Former Mayor Potter's quote highlights the difference between asking for youth's input on issues that adults have predetermined, and inviting youth to contribute as vital members of our community who should have equal say as any adult might have.

"[I envision] young people who are grounded in all these issues, power and privilege, race issues, being placed within these commissioner offices and bureaus, either as interns or employees, but having more of a pressure, and having good support."

–Sonali Balajee, Independent Consultant

Popular education

"Think about using the popular education model, where everyone is a teacher and has the knowledge to be a leader in some capacity in the conversation."

–Margot Kniffin, Center for Intercultural Organizing

Empowerment means a fundamental paradigm shift for this society, especially for adults, a change in the way we think of things. We commonly think of sharing information like school: an individual person, who is the teacher, has all of the information. Everyone else, the students, are there to absorb it. Students are seen as having no knowledge or input of their own. Working towards empowerment means acknowledging that we all come with our own information, knowledge, wisdom and insight. We can all learn from one another. We respect everyone as a leader and an educator, and treat each other as equals.

"I think leadership looks like different things and feels like different things on a cultural basis, not only on an individual basis. Not only what does it feel like but what are the models for it, and what is the cultural attachment or point of view to leadership and I think that sensitivity is important. I also think it's wonderful to hear young people go, yeah, I am a leader."

But sometimes young people or even older people don't often know they are. They are just doing their work and someone says you're a leader and you go, "No I'm not." It's attached to you as a label as opposed to necessarily something that someone goes "I am a leader." That's another interesting dynamic to leadership."

–Olga Sanchez, Teatro Milagro

The values of having youth involved in government cannot be overstated, although it is important to make sure that youth are not put on a pedestal. It is important to know where youth input is appropriate, and also to know that, like all of us, no youth is infallible. Respectful, ongoing dialogue needs to happen for youth to be a part of a larger team, and not just given free reign with no training or support.

Plugged in

"You have to determine the appropriate scope of work to demonstrate an understanding of capability and interest of the youth. Youth don't need to be involved in every part of the project, they need to be involved in the appropriate parts of the project."

–Andrew Mason, Open Meadow

We believe Andrew's quote is about building capacity. Youth need to be involved in that decision-making process of where they are involved, and where and how they want to be involved. Over time, as their capacity grows, they may decide to be more and more involved in more aspects of the program. That is the process towards true empowerment.

We do want to say that even if youth are not involved in every aspect of a project, they should be kept informed about all aspects of the project, so that they know how all the pieces connect.

We recommend budget meetings always be open to youth, even if they do not at that point have a say in how funding is allocated.

"The school gets its budget, $5200 at the start of the year that the students are allowed to spend as they wish . . . In that sense they have their own little micro-budget within the budget that they organize and execute separate budget meetings to spend."

–Jack Mesplay, Village Free School

Providing opportunities

"When we talk about youth training or youth performances or store performances, I bring [the entire management team who are all youth] in on everything. When we do our lease negotiations, I bring them in because I think the sooner they can get these skills, the better off they're going to be"

–Will Kendall, Artist Mentorship Program

In terms of building capacity, it is very important to provide as many opportunities as possible for youth to see how work is done, and then to become involved in it. This demystifies the process for them, and empowers them to know that they have the knowledge and skills to be able to handle workplace and work-related situations on their own.

"I think we need to flip the question [of where should youth have more voice] and think about where do we need youth [as the City], and where are we going to need them when they are 25 or even 30. I think there are a lot of areas"

–Laurel Butman, Principal Management Analyst, City of Portland Office of Management and Finance (OMF)

Good example

"Our school actually gives [the students] a real voice and power in what the rules of this school are, meaning their vote – one student's vote in an all school meeting – is equal to mine as a staff person. So if a five year old votes 'no' and I vote 'yes,' it cancels out. And in a school with 50 students and 8 staff people, we're outnumbered pretty enormously. I think that's basically the gem of what our school does."

–Jack Mesplay, Village Freeschool

Bad example

Youth on the Library Teen Councils and Parks and Recreation Teen Councils had mixed reviews when we surveyed them. Some said they felt empowered by the experience, mostly when they were able to plan events and programs on their own and they were given control of the resources and decision-making. But many felt disempowered by the fact that they couldn't change policies that didn't work for youth. They felt they have little say in what activities and classes are offered, and instead they often have to support an adult's idea of what youth want.

I want to make sure my program addresses youth concerns

"It's an historic adult mistake to think that adults know what kids need...So when adults just look at adult issues from an adult vantage point, we look at other things that aren't as important as what do the kids need to develop?... I don't think there's any issue that should rise above youth."

–Rob Ingram, Office of Violence Prevention, City of Portland

So you have youth volunteers, you've hired youth, and you've worked to make sure that youth aren't just working in your program, but are empowered in it, and are taking up leadership responsibilities and positions.

You're doing a pretty awesome job then.

But you always want to make sure that your program is addressing youth concerns and youth issues. It's often much easier to integrate youth into the work that is already happening, then shifting that work in a way that makes sure the way youth perceive an issue or are affected by it is heard and integrated.

Youth are affected by all the issues adults are affected by, but because of their legal status, age restrictions, and different issues they are affected in different ways. It is important that their voices are heard, and that government programs make sure they are addressing issues in ways that encompass youth's experiences.

"I do think youth should be involved in juvenile justice. What kind of programs do they want to see happen? They know what they want best in terms of programming."

–Phu Dao, Multnomah County Juvenile Justice

Some real-life examples:

Transportation
If you look at the issue of transportation, the Multnomah Youth Commission took this issue as it related to youth specifically by advocating for the YouthPass. MYC proposed an inter-governmental policy that would give free bus passes to all students under 18 in Portland Public Schools. The Commission successfully lobbied City Council to pass a resolution in support of the idea, by showing that without free transportation, youth often miss school, don't participate in after-school activities and can't find jobs. The MYC took the issue of transportation and talked about it in a way that addressed youth concerns and needs.

Parks and Recreation
"If there's something that's going to involve youth, for example, and going to excite them, then that's absolutely a way to get them involved."

–Christy Splitt, The Bus Project.

Christy then went on to share with us an example from her youth. There was a skate park built in her neighborhood, and they outreached to youth who were not often involved in civic activities, namely the skaters.

They were able to get involved in the planning for the skate park, and when it was finished, they felt like it was truly theirs.

Profiling

"Racial profiling is a big problem in this city and that would seem a really important thing for youth to be involved in, with this sort of misconnect with issues about gangs and racial profiling where the Portland police will target specific neighborhoods of color, that would need to be a principled campaign that the youth committee could take on."

–Danielle Milan, Teatro Milagro

While there is much discussion about racial profiling in the local and national public realm, many of the youth we talked to shared an intersection of profiling based on both race and age, which is not often discussed. Young people of color are targeted more than older people of color, especially when riding public transportation. They are more likely to be asked for their tickets, and given a fine instead of a warning if they don't have one. There needs to be work around this issue that specifically addresses youth of colors' experiences and needs.

"The transit officers are mean and they are never there when you actually need them."

"Transit officers, they have treated me unfairly in the past because of my skin color, some transit police do not know how to do their jobs without targeting/offending people of color."

–From the Youth in the Central City Survey, Summer 2008

64 % of youth asked said yes, they have problems with public safety in the Central City (including gangs, police, crime, and transit officers).

Ways of addressing these issues

"In my eyes, 50% of youth development is art, music and that whole genre because I think self expression is the thing that really separates us from ants or other animals on the planet."

–Will Kendall Artist Mentorship Program (AMP)

We surveyed Portland youth on the top five issues or activities that interested them:

- Sports
- Arts
- Community
- Education
- Rights

Not only can these be issues that youth want addressed, but also these can be creative ways to speak to those issues. For example, youth could plan a soccer tournament as a fund raiser for their school. They could host a display of incarcerated youth's art as part of a larger campaign around the issue of incarcerated youth's rights.

It's not just the issues you address, it's how you address them as well. When we at the YPP held the Arts and Culture panel, we involved Teatro Milagro, which addresses issues Spanish-speaking Latino youth identify theater performance. We had Taunki Taiko which used traditional Japanese drumming as a way of helping Asian youth find their voice. We also invited the GlobalFam Network which uses hip hop as a way of raising awareness about community issues and people's rights globally as well as here in Portland.

"I really hope you folks can think about ways to bring artists into the policy realm. I know you're doing it already, but there's going to be some good issues coming up, with City oriented stuff . . . There are important issues where there could be a creative group element to advocate one way or another. There's a vacuum or gap there."

–Audience member, Arts and Culture panel

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I want to create a youth program/ advisory council

"I think the County spent something like 25-50 million dollars directly on services just for young people, not just shared services. And the majority of those dollars have no oversight by young people so I think there's a huge opportunity"

–Josh Todd, Multnomah County

"So I am looking forward to the day more young people on the council, more young people involved with the different bureaus of the city, I would like to have every bureau of the city have a youth advisory group. They could advise all the way from planning, to where you know to put the off-leash dog parts [laughs] in the park."

–Former Mayor Tom Potter, City of Portland

Why a youth program?

Why should you consider funding a youth program? You already have youth volunteers, and a couple youth working on specific projects. Isn't that enough?

We think the two quotes above are very important. Again it goes back to accountability and control. Youth are one third of Portland's population, and yet, they have no voice in how funds are spent, even with funds that are specifically for services meant for them. Following Former Mayor Potter's suggestion and having a youth advisory group, youth program in every bureau, or a young person on City Council would mean that youth voice was truly integrated into local government, and their voices would be represented and heard.

Some other reasons for supporting and funding youth programs:

- Youth programs/councils can help change the perception about the role youth can and should play in the community
- The program would allow youth to identify issues specific to them, and talk about other issues in ways that include youth experience
- It would allow youth an opportunity to change policies that directly affect their lives and their communities
- Adults and youth would learn to work together in an equal relationship as decision-makers
- Youth would feel like the government values their voice, input and work, and supports youth empowerment
- It creates an institutionalized mechanism for building youth's leadership capacity and pushing youth voice.
- It aids government in creating solutions that work for all of our communities, and for all members of this city.
- For the biggest reason of all, having youth in your program will make your work in government more effective and more responsive to ALL stakeholders

Think you're ready?

You think you're ready to create a youth program? Good for you. We hope if that's true, you have read over other parts of the manual several times, and

done outside research and education around youth and community issues.
So what do you need to get started?

"What you need in place in order to do that includes strong leadership, a very sincere connection to youth development agencies and organizations, very sincere. Maybe memorandums of understanding because trust is low. Budget. The leadership piece is important, but without the budget you don't have [programs] being supported in whatever way."

-Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

There are three key aspects to any successful youth program:

1. **Ongoing commitment**. There has to be a real ongoing commitment by the bureau or department to a youth program, as well as by adults in the program. Youth empowerment and leadership development is not going to happen in a single year. One time funding can be worse than none at all, because youth will feel like they are not a priority and not supported.

2. **Resources**. This means financial resources as well as personnel resources. You have to put money behind a youth program, and treat it as an important priority. You also

have to hire full time staff, perhaps an adult in the beginning and then transitioning to one of the youth who has gone through the program. This person will be the liaison to the rest of the department and make sure the youth feel supported and heard. This does NOT take the place of all of the adults in the bureau, who share the responsibility of empowering youth.

3. **Training and support**. Youth will need ongoing support in this position. Support is not just about the job, but also about their personal lives, about school; about their future as well their present. In addition, they need to be supplied with training that will allow them to fulfill their duties, and prepare them for more responsibility in the future.

Commitment

"This isn't something that we do if we have excess funds. This should be a part of all decision making."

-former Mayor Tom Potter, City of Portland

Again, the commitment to starting a youth program needs to be long-term, and not just about fulfilling project results and goals, which the youth will do, but about supporting youth voice and empowerment.

Youth need to be involved in designing and shaping what the youth program looks like, what the responsibilities are, how decisions are made, and what area of work is done.
A youth-designed program should be kept as it is, and if it is changed in the future, that should be because the youth are the ones who decide to change it, not because of outside adult pressures and decisions.

This is where the memorandum of understanding that Sonali spoke of above might come in handy, so that everyone understands the decisions that are being made, and there is a level of commitment from everyone involved, including the youth, adults and the department.

And it's important to remember that youth empowerment work is not always going to move quickly. It will be challenging, difficult, maddening, and scary a lot of times. While we have many successful examples to pull from, supporting youth empowerment is not the norm in this society. You

will often be stepping out into unknown territory. But the positive side is that if you do this work, it will be some of the most fulfilling and rewarding you will ever do in your lifetime.

"For me, working with youth and outreach, one is not giving up, sticking with it. You're trying a new project and it may not be immediately glamorous or attractive . . . How do you figure out a way to not necessarily change what you're doing to make it glamorous or attractive but to get the youth involved? Because part of it is word of mouth because if your project is an attractive one and the youth feel it is one of benefit and they're participating."

-Olga Sanchez, Teatro Milagro

Resources

"Currently, not enough resources are put toward youth programs and youth inclusion and training for government to understand youth empowerment, however I think we are starting to take steps in the right direction."

-Afifa Ahmed-Shafi, Office of Neighborhood Involvement

While resources come in many shapes and sizes, and all are important, money is very important. Dedicating ongoing money to a youth program shows both the youth and the community that government is committed to supporting youth voice and youth empowerment.

We understand there is a limited amount of money to be allocated each year based on the budget. We at YPP have found a great way of dealing with limited resources in creating partnerships, either with other projects, bureaus or community organizations. For example: two interns were hired through the Immigrant Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)'s Summer Youth Employment Program. Other projects in our bureau have seen the importance of youth involvement, and have lent parts of their budgets to bring on more youth planners.

Another great way of raising resources is having the youth involved in that aspect of the project as well. This is important so youth know how to sustain the program on their own, and aren't reliant on adults getting them their funding.

Whether it is attending budget meetings, going before City Council, writing grants, talking to funders and donors, writing press releases or appeal letters, make sure youth get the opportunity to learn how to do it. They will probably be excited to be involved and have creative ideas regarding how to improve your fundraising strategies.

Budget

A budget for a youth program, as we said above, needs to be consistent, ongoing and adequate for the needs of the youth in the program.

Things you need to keep in mind for a budget:
- Full time staff member (at least one, hopefully as the project grows, more)
- Pay for youth (making sure the pay is consistent with a living and fair wage and that all youth are paid equitably. Do not create a hierarchy in payment that is seen as uneven and unfair).
- Transportation for the youth (bus passes, preferably, or bus tickets)
- Snacks and food for meetings
- Trainings and conferences and meetings. Youth should have opportunities to grow their understanding of the issues and expertise, and then share that information with others. Identify different events happening that youth are potentially interested in and this would be beneficial and make sure there is money in the budget for it. This includes transportation, meals and lodging, and registration fees.
- Outreach materials. Because youth are so tied with community, there will probably be more flyers, surveys, handouts and other materials going out to share the work that youth are doing.
- Honorarium. This money would go to

members of the community who act as consultants, speakers at events, and co-organizers. It is important that the government, and especially the youth, support the work community organizations with limited resources do (see "I want to support community/youth organizations" section).

- Rental space, for outreach events and gatherings
- Value the time and work of the adult youth workers (historically underpaid like teachers due to sexism)

Staff

"In my experience I've seen kids get tokenized . . . I always said you need 3 youth there because it allows them to lend support to each other. And no longer am I [the youth] just here and risking getting ganged up on. And I also think you need to keep on continually sending the message to adults that youth need to be valued and sometime adults just need to be told to shut up."

-Rob Ingram, Office of Violence Prevention, City of Portland

We have said throughout and we will say again, we don't believe it's every a good idea to bring on just one or even two youth. We agree with Rob, that at least three youth should be brought on together, to provide support for one another, and to be able to address issues that come up as a collective rather than a lone individual.

We also believe that every youth program needs a youth coordinator, This would be a full time staff member whose job it is to coordinate and centralize the work of the youth program. They are also the individual that makes sure youth are being trained properly for the work, and give enough support. And they are the person who deals with concerns and friction between the youth and adults in the rest of the department.

This youth coordinator position is often an adult. If that is the case, this person has a lot of responsibility riding on their shoulders. They need to make sure they have done their homework, around youth empowerment, dismantling oppression, and equitable working structures. Ideally, it will be an individual who has done work supporting youth in the past.

Most of all, this adult staff needs to remember that they are there to facilitate youth leadership in a youth program., Youth empowerment is about the decisions and actions that youth see as appropriate responses that shape their lives. It is not about what adult partners deem important for

youth, or about what an adult partner finds true for themselves.

"The adults that are there are not there for their own agenda, they're there for the youth's agenda."

-Zan Gibbs, SMYRC

Training and Support

"I think a lot of efforts [to involve youth or create youth programs] are well-intentioned, but people are paid to deliver certain outcomes . . . So to have people try and do it when they don't know how creates bad experiences. They then think, 'Well, that was a waste of time.' And that failed result causes a reluctance to think creatively . . . A lot of people just don't have the time to reach out. They're paid to get outcomes not to get to know people. It's all about relationship building but they tend to focus too much on the task at hand... You need to be able to recognize that the relationship is a valuable outcome itself."

-Andrew Mason, Open Meadow

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I want to create a youth program/advisory council

We believe Andrew's quote covers the need for ongoing support, training and commitment. The training and the support is about building relationships and capacity, so that youth feel supported, and so they can continue to grow and take on more responsibility.

It is very important that youth are trained in all workings of the youth program, and in the workings of the larger department or bureau they are under. When youth in a program have a full and clear picture about the work they are involved in, they are also then positioned to eventually take over the work of adults and continue it.

It is very important to make sure that youth are involved in intergenerational activities within their program. That way the youth aren't isolated from the other work, and other adults working in the department get to know the youth and understand the work they are doing, rather than seeing it as separate from their own work.

Lastly, supporting youth involves making sure there are clear levels and procedures for accountability and program evaluation. Ways for making sure that memorandum of understanding (whether it was written or verbal) is honored and followed. And there are ways of making institutional changes to the program as needed, led and guided by the youth.

Snapshots: Examples and visions

The City of San Francisco has a youth commission. It is a formal process Everyone submitting a budget that affects specifically designated issues that affect youth have to go through. It would be akin to the Planning Commission here. "Any policy that has a youth impact needs to go before the youth commission before it's heard by the board of supervisors."

–Sarah Ryan, Multnomah County Library

"We have a Student Review Board for every building... Because the Review Board of course only represents a subset of the school population, they formally solicit feedback and information from the rest of the students."

–Andrew Mason, Open Meadow

"Our steering committee is made entirely of youth and make all decisions in the space except for decisions involving safety and budget. The space was started entirely by youth. In the beginning, every decision about how the space would look and work was a decision of the youth. That system hasn't changed in 10 years."

–Zan Gibbs, SMYRC

"One idea is having a training program that goes to all the divisions and says this is what it is to engage young people, the basics, putting them on your board with everybody as partners, not just placing a young person unsupported. To hold very standard trainings within the bureaus or looking for ways that people can partner with the Children and Youth Bill of Rights."

–Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

"[My dream of youth involvement in government is] a Portland where youth have multiple channels for empowerment and engagement via City programs and projects. Where all government projects take youth into account. Where youth are part of the government. Where there is a strong and present organized youth voice, as well as an overall youth awareness regarding resources and channels available to youth. Where a wide diversity of youth feel comfortable engaging with the government."

– Afifa Ahmed-Shafi, Office of Neighborhood Involvement

I want to support and empower community youth organizations

"The decisions made for our community must really represent our community."

–Nate Waas Shull, Youth Engagement Coordinator, Office of Mayor Sam Adams

We firmly believe that to truly create a city and a world that believes in and actively supports youth empowerment, it will take all of us working together, individuals, communities, and government.

It is important for our government to know that there are so many organizations in the community, whether youth organizations specifically or not, that have a long history of working towards youth empowerment. Government can learn valuable lessons of what to do and what not to do from these organizations.

But government should also be collaborating with these organizations' work in whatever ways possible. These are the vehicles used by the community and by youth to enact successful community youth empowerment organizations, like the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC), that was founded by youth, that is run by youth and that is a space where youth feel safe and comfortable going. Rather than attempting to recreate this, government needs to support organizations doing that work. (See the last section for a list of youth and community organizations working on youth empowerment).

There are also many organizations that are not solely youth organizations, but that organize around issues that affect youth and their communities intimately. An example of this is the Day Laborer Center. This is a space where individuals, many immigrants but not exclusively, can go to get daily work in a space that provides a minimum wage and worker protections. While it is not a youth space, many individuals using the services are youth, and it is a vital resource for securing a wage people can live on and use to support their families.

Why?

"Youth have no ceiling in their ability to perceive, reason and to answer vital questions involving where are we going as a government? Where are we going as a community? They're very vital."

–Tom Peavey, Office of Violence Prevention, City of Portland

Why is supporting the work of community organizations important? And is that the job of local government? We believe it is, and we think it's vitally important. Government is often removed from the community, and from everyday people. Government has to make an effort to reach out to its constituents (as this manual proves). Community organizations, on the other hand, are based in the community and made up of the community. They understand the issues facing their different constituents more intimately and expertly than any consultant or research team could.

It is important to honor the expertise of those most affected, and those who work tirelessly on the ground every day, with limited resources and support to address those issues.

Also, supporting community organizations and their work can give you more insight into how to run a program, and give ideas for how to

incorporate the work already being done or start new work within the government. By building long-lasting relationships with community based organizations, government is able to support and respond to the needs of the community more efficiently, at the same time as providing services that are more relevant to communities. Two examples:

"Our program was designed so that there are no outcomes; there is no structure unless a youth asks for it. Because so much of what happens within government funding for these programs, it has to be structured outcome based curriculum. What we want to do is just allow youth to come in and have the same opportunities that youth coming from more stable housing, and more financially stable environments would have"

-Will Kendal, Artist Mentorship Program (AMP)

At the Day Laborer Center, everyone who has come to get a job puts their name in a raffle. As work comes in, names are drawn out of the raffle in a random fashion.

"Nobody [makes that rule]. Not the people that are in charge and staff. They don't make the rules, we make the rules. I think like the first day we were open, the raffle thing was the people's idea."

-Eduardo, Day Laborer Center

Dangers

There are dangers to work to avoid when supporting community organizations. Some of these are:

- **Tokenizing**. Make sure you are not just tokenizing the involvement of a community organization to avoid doing the work you and your department needs to do to involve the appropriate stakeholders at your project's table.

- **Exploiting**. This is a major danger. Do not exploit the very limited resources of community organizations by asking them carry the financial burden, or do all of your outreach through their contacts for events. The point of partnering and working with community organizations is to take some of the pressure off all partners involved.

- **Volunteerism**. There is a difference between adults volunteering to help or even "save" young people, and working towards

true youth empowerment. You need to make sure the organizations you support are working on youth empowerment. Also that youth have a strong voice in decision-making, and that youth experiences and issues are addressed in a substantive way.

- **Commitment**. Again it is so important to stay committed to community organizations. You have to be clear, realistic and honest about what you can do in regards to partnership and support, and then you have to follow through on that. You can renegotiate in the future to see if it's working, but you must honor the commitments you make. There is already broken trust between government and many communities; the goal is to repair that broken trust, not damage it further.

One precautionary story: Josh Todd of Multnomah County told us about a dialogue that was happening in the Native community in Portland between youth and elders that was being funded by the government. The government had agreed to a certain level and time line for commitment. Half way through the project, the government decided to switch focus and abandon the community. "It broke relationships and trust. It disrespected the value of community engagement," says Todd.

Types of support

Partnering. The YPP planned an event in May 2008 called "Build Your Own Portland." The idea behind it was to explain the Portland Plan to youth. we brought in community organizations to be part of the event, to present about their work and to offer youth different ways of getting involved. The message was not, "It's our way or no way." Rather the message was, "There is so much to be done and so many ways to be involved. Whatever you are interested in, we can help you find it."

"If there's a way to create programs that both serve the purposes of this youth empowerment program that the city is implementing through the arts, that would be exciting, if programs get created that are specifically designed to mesh those, that's exciting."

–Olga Sanchez, Teatro Milagro

Honorarium. Providing an honorarium to community and youth organizations that speak at government events, or that assist in planning and promotion, are ways of showing the community that their work is valued. It is a clear message that government is not just piling more work on their plate, exploiting their resources and connections and giving nothing back.

Access

Many community organizations do not have access to funding, resources, information about projects, or even feel like they have access to elected officials and government employees, in order to discuss issues and concerns. Providing that access would give greater voice to the community. By providing access through community organizations, you provide more access to the community.

"These organizations play on a level where anyone who enters in there has access. So if I know these opportunities are available for the kids that I work with at the Boys and Girls Club, or at the community center, or even the schools, then I can steer my kids into these agencies that have access to that."

–Abdul Fofanah, community activist who works with youth

18 I want to support & empower community youth organizations

18

I want to support & empower community youth organizations

Information

The first beginning step is just demystifying the government, and streamlining the information discrimination process so that folks have access to the fundamental information about government.

YPP held an event at City Hall and about 70 youth attended. They were asked the questions "How many of you are in City Hall for the first time?" About 80 percent of the audience raised its hand.

When YPP held their Arts and Culture Panel at City Hall, we just told attendants that it was at City Hall. One of the presenters, who has been organizing in Portland for 15 years, had to ask where it was.

In our minds, these examples prove there are levels of inaccessibility and a lack of information for people that government often overlooks. We also think this is good place to start engaging the community about those gaps.

"[It would be great to have] people to talk to that can inform young people so they can have been access to resources, who we should know, who the contacts are, and we should have their phone numbers and email addresses."

–Mic Crenshaw, Globalfam Network

Remember, this section, and this entire manual, is just the beginning, a jumping off point. We hope, as the YPP, we will get to continue to build with you towards true youth empowerment within our government.

"There has to be continued support or organizations and systems working to build that youth voice in collaboration amongst different organizations, because that pressure is actually what makes city people listen."

–Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

Appendix 1: Youth and Community Organization Resource List

Name of Organization	Address	Web Address	Phone
Bus Project	333 SE 2nd Ave Portland, OR 97214	busproject.org/	503-233-3018
Center for Intercultural Organizing	700 N Killingsworth Portland, OR 97217	www.interculturalorganizing.org/	503-287-4117
Coalition for a Livable Future	107 SE Washington, Suite 239 Portland, OR 97214	www.clfuture.org/	503-294-2889
GlobalFam		globalfam.org/	503-929-6723
Human Solutions	12350 SE Powell Blvd Portland, OR 97236	www.humansolutions.org/	503-548-0200
KBOO Community Radio 90.7 FM	20 SE 8th Ave Portland, OR	kboo.fm	503-231-8032
Milagro Teatro	425 SE 6th Ave Portland, OR 97214	www.milagro.org/	503-236-7253
Multnomah Youth Commission			
New Avenues For Youth (NAFY)	314 SW 9th Ave Portland, OR 97205	www.newavenues.org/	503-224-4339
Artists Mentorship Program of Portland (AMP)		www.myspace.com/ampyouth	
Promoting Avenues to Employment (PAVE a program of New Avenues for Youth)	1220 SW Columbia Portland, OR 97201	www.newavenues.org/what_we_do/skill_building	503-224-4339
Open Meadow Corps Restoring the Urban Environment (CRUE)	7654 N Crawford St Portland, OR 97203	www.openmeadow.org/	503-978-1935

Organizing People Activating Leaders	PO Box 4642 Portland, OR 97208	www.opalpdx.org/	503-997-3853
Outside In	1132 SW 13th Ave Portland, OR 97205-1703	www.outsidein.org/	503-535-3800
P:EAR creatively mentoring homeless youth	338 NW 6th Ave Portland, OR 97209	www.pearmentor.org/	503-228-6677
Portland NAACP Branch 1120	3527 NE 15th Ave, #125 Portland, OR 97212	www.pdxnaacp.org/	
Portland Youth Builders	4816 SE 92nd Ave Portland, OR 97266	www.pybpdx.org	503-771-2309
Rock N' Roll Camp For Girls	P O Box 11324 Portland OR 97211 Site: 8900 A NE Vancouver Wy Portland Oregon 97211	www.girlsrockcamp.org	503-445-4991
Society For Haitian Arts and Culture	P O Box 33472 Portland, OR 97292-3472	www.shacnorthwest.org/	503-257-1014
Somali Women's Association Youth Group			503-452-4386
Tanuki Taiko a program of Portland Taiko	3230 NE Columbia Blvd Portland, OR 97211	www.portlandtaiko.org/about/tanuki-taiko.html	503-288-2456
United Voices Youth Program of the American Friends Service Committee	2249 E Burnside Portland, OR 97214	www.afsc.org/portland/	503-230-9427
Urban League	10 N Russell Portland, OR 97227	www.ulpdx.org/	503-280-2600
VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project and the Day Labor Hire Site	1131 SE Oak Portland, OR 97214	www.portlandvoz.org/	503-233-6787
Youth Employment Institute	1704 NE 26th Ave Portland OR 97212	www.yei.org/	503-280-1058

Appendix 2 Data Collection and Manual Methodology

Interviews

Sonali S. Balajee, Independent Consultant

Laurel Butman, OMF

Mo Cohen, Rock N Roll Girls Camp

Phu Dao, Juvenile Justice System?

Abdul Fofanah, organization?

Zan Gibbs, Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC)

Stephen Griffith, CPE?

Rob Ingram, Office of Violence Prevention

Shelagh Johnson, ?

Will Kendall, AMP

Margot Kniffin, Center for Intercultural Organizing

Andrew Mason, Open Meadow

Tom Mears, CEO of Burgerville?

Corine Eavan Moore, Students for a Democratic Society (Reed College)

Muslim Educational Trust

Tom Peavey, Office of Violence Prevention

Tom Potter, Mayor of Portland

Sarah Ryan, Multnomah County Libraries

Dan Saltzman, City Council Commissioner

Sebastian and Eduardo, Day Laborer Center

Christy Splitt, The Bus Project

Josh Todd, County Youth Development Coordinator MYC staff

Nate Waas Shull, City Youth Engagement Program MYC staff

Jonathan Weedman, ?

Megan Wilson, Sisters of the Road

Jack Mesplay, Village Free School

Panel Discussion Participants

- Arts and Culture Panel Discussion

- GlobalFam: Mic Crenshaw and Bo Mandela?

- Milagro Teatro: Olga Sanchez, Diego Vazquez? and Danielle Milan?

- Tanuki Taiko: Teresa Enrico and Moira Gueon

Survey Collection

- Surveys distributed across the city to over 100 youth

- Focus group held and surveys distributed to the Parks and Recreation Teen Councils

- Focus group held and surveys distributed to the Multnomah Library Teen Councils

- Discussion group held and surveys distributed to ten planners who worked with Youth for the first time in the Bureau of Planning

Interview Questions

1) What percentage of the people that you work or volunteer with your organization are Youth? Are any of those paid staff?

2) What youth do you work with and try to engage? (for example in terms of race, gender, identity, class, orientation, religion, issues, etc.)

3) What are some of the greatest issues facing the Youth that you work with?

4) What does Youth Empowerment mean to you and why is it important?

How to Run a Youth Program

5) How do you start a Youth program?

6) How do you effectively keep a Youth program running?

7) How do you make sure that your Youth hiring process is successful? What are some barriers/ obstacles when hiring Youth?

8) How do you maintain a good working relationship between Youth staff and Youth volunteers?

9) How do you keep Youth engaged in your work and participating in your organization?

Youth Outreach and Voice

10 How do you get Youth involved in your work, events, or projects?

11) How do you get Youth opinions in a youth-friendly way? Do you use any type of incentives to encourage Youth to participate?

12) What does Youth voice mean to you and how does your organization work to implement it?

13) What have been your most successful strategies for engaging Youth and why? What strategies have been least successful and why?

14) Do you know of any organizations that are particularly effective at engaging Youth?

Youth-Government Relationship

15) What are the greatest barriers to Youth getting involved in Portland's local government?

16) What is the importance of Youth voice in our government?

17) How can the government be more responsive to Youth issues?

18) Some complaints about the current way we involve Youth in our government are that programs and officials simply include Youth in ongoing efforts as opposed to restructuring government with the needs of Youth in mind. How would you envision an ideal government that listens to and involves Youth? In your experience, what shifts would you recommend in order to guarantee that Youth are not only incorporated into government but actually contribute to directing its efforts?

19) Are there services the city provides that Youth should have more voice in?

20 Are there communities in Portland or areas of government where Youth voice is lacking or in particular where the Youth's needs are not being met?

21) Do you know of any success stories of youth involvement in government? And on the other hand an example where government done has alienated Youth?

22) Do you believe city government is accessible to all youth? Why or why not?

23) Do you believe some Youth have greater opportunity to have their voices heard than others? Who and why?

24) Do you believe that city government can impact the issues you're working on? If so, how? If not, why not? (Here is where we could share with them, how you they can benefit from a relationship with government i.e., I could share some of my experiences if you would like.)

25) Do you believe Youth can or should change the government? If so, how? What sort of improvements could they initiate?

26) Do you believe certain Youth have a greater opportunity to have their voices heard and access to local government than others? Who and why?

Manual Suggestions

27) What could the City do to support its Youth better and how could this manual guide its efforts? In other words, as we present the manual to city programs, officials, employees, bureaus, etc. what information would you like to make sure is included about how to effectively engage Portland's Youth and the issues facing them today?

28) What do you want the city and government officials to know about youth and youth work?

29) How could this manual support your work?

30) Do you have any suggestions for the layout or design of the manual?