



Engaging Young Adults in Community Development

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10 Things You Can Do

1. Be Intentional
2. Actively Recruit
3. Provide Space & Resources
4. Have an Engagement Plan
5. Identify Issues to Address
6. Create Mentor-Led Teams
7. Build Capacity
8. Support System
9. Share the Knowledge
10. Tell The World





Be Intentional

- Identify which organizations are already engaging or interacting with young adults and families.
- Assess if collaboration is possible.
- Determine what elements of community improvements would work well for young-adult involvement.
- Seek their input – invite, ask, reach out personally.



Actively Recruit



- Schools
- Youth-Serving Organizations (Scouts, Beta Club, etc.)
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Community Centers
- Malls & Coffee Shops
- Recreation Areas (skate parks and basketball courts)
- Online Gaming or Other Tech-oriented Gathering Spaces



Provide Space & Resources

- Allow young adults to collaborate on site location.
- Identify what resources are needed.
- Identify the young adult point of contact.
- Monitor regularly, maintain, adjust and update when needed.



Have an Engagement Plan

- Get started.
- Be intentional.
- Be consistent.
- Evaluate and modify as needed.



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Identify Issues to Address

- Help young adults feel connected by giving them permission to participate.
- Encourage young adults to learn more about the issues, do their own research.
- Link the community to issues that they are passionate about.
- Connect the issues to broader community challenges.
- Link challenges to root causes.
- Make it simple.

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Create Mentor-Led Teams

- Continually review community issues being worked on to remain relevant.
- Encourage adults to actively mentor young adults and provide training and resources as needed.
- Consider compensation or some type of reward opportunity for young adults.
- Retrain skills every year.





Build Capacity

- Continually train the trainers.
- Model behaviors.
- Continually recruit.
- Develop skill sets.
- Teach young adult leaders what their role is – grow new mentors.
- Be repetitive before young adults fly solo – practice skills, then trust!



Support System

- Identify what skills are needed from adult leaders for each issue being addressed.
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with other community organizations.
- Determine where the gaps in skills are and work to fill the gaps.
- Model coping skills – teach the importance of having a Plan B and maybe even a Plan C.





Share the Knowledge

- Model behaviors and teach the methods to take a plan and put it into action.
- Create opportunities for young adults to speak about issues important to them.
- Provide a place for young people to get hands-on experience making recommendations on community issues, then following the process through to implementation.




Tell the World

- Provide training and teach accepted principles of communicating community stories.
- Identify audiences and encourage young adults to tell their version of the stories.
- Utilize multiple communication outlets.
- Work within the organizational structure to provide an outlet for young adults to be the storytellers.
- Encourage young adults to use their own networks to get the word out.



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Take Aways



- If we don't teach future leaders how to do community development, there will be no future leaders.
- Model the desired behaviors.
- Give them permission to try.

Resource:
Pittman, K., Martin, S., Williams, A. (2007, July). Core Principles for Engaging Young People in Community Change. Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc.

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Q & A

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