Building Teens
For Better Communities
A Guide for Teens and Adults
Building Teens for Better Communities—Tool Box
A Handbook for Teens and Adults
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The Building Teens for Better Communities Handbook is designed for teens and adults who together want to make a difference in their community. The material gives teams the understanding and tools needed to experience personal and group growth while successfully implementing a small-scale community development project. The Handbook develops an understanding of concepts important to team building and community development, shows how these concepts are applied, and gives practical applications and exercises to try.

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Building Teens for Better Communities Handbook

Introduction

by Nan Booth

Background

Building Teens for Better Communities (BTBC) began as a tri-state effort in 1998 to test the Youth As Partners Approach with a community development project. The program is funded by grants from the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development and Maryland Cooperative Extension. BTBC provides teens with opportunities to increase their understanding of and involvement in the community while improving their sense of themselves as leaders. The program builds on materials and experience gained from previous research and projects and brings together the Youth As Partners Approach with proven community development strategies. Youth involved with Building Teens for Better Communities have the opportunity to learn and practice leadership skills, develop new perspectives on the community and themselves, and establish a network of peer and adult models. A summary of related research on youth and community involvement and project goals are found in the appendix.

Implementing BTBC in Your Community

Four teams in three states piloted BTBC. The lessons learned from the pilot test were used to refine the process of implementing BTBC. The following units are cross-referenced to sections of the handbook that contain more details on the unit, sample exercises to use with your team, and additional resources. Some of these units may occur simultaneously and others may fall into a slightly different sequence, depending on the needs of your group. However, no project should be undertaken without completing Unit 1.

Unit 1: Assessing Interest

Before any decisions are made to implement a BTBC project, an assessment of teens’ and adults’ interest in the project should be undertaken. A focus group is one relatively easy way to conduct this assessment. If your group is larger than ten, you may want to conduct more than one focus group to ensure participation. We recommend a teen co-lead each focus group. The information from the focus group will help you determine if your team is interested in becoming involved with a small-scale community development project, and if they are willing to use a Youth As Partners Approach. It is important to secure a commitment to the process from each team member as one or two disgruntled members can cause a team to be dysfunctional. If you decide to proceed with the BTBC project, we suggest each teen and adult member of your team complete an assessment; this assessment will give you a benchmark upon which to measure progress. For information on focus groups and sample assessments, see “Assessing the Interest of Your Teens,” page 1 in this handbook.

Unit 2: Using Youth Adult Partnerships

Once a decision is made to conduct a BTBC project, involve your teens and adults in Youth As Partners training. One of the goals of BTBC is to increase team members’ abilities (that’s teens and adults) to work as partners in designing and implementing a project. This concept seems so logical, yet it is easier said than done. Most adults and teens assume roles with each other that have been instilled in them from early childhood. By participating in this training, team members will have a heightened awareness of working as partners. Once the initial training is completed, we recommend that periodically the team reflects on how they are doing and what changes, if any, they need to make to create better youth/adult partnerships. For more information on how to implement this training, including suggested training curricula resources, see “Using Youth Adult Partnerships,” page 6.
Unit 3: Breaking the Ice and Bonding
Teams do not function without nurturing and attention. The use of ice breakers and strategically designed exercises help team members get acquainted, have fun, resolve conflict, and learn from each other. Teens and their adult partners should participate in these exercises. Often we think of team building as something to do early in the formation of the group. Team building is important when a group is forming; it continues to be important throughout the life of the group. Plan to regularly use team building as part of every meeting. The “Breaking the Ice and Bonding” unit identifies a number of exercises that may be helpful to your team. The unit also includes additional resources and references.

Unit 4: Deciding on the Problem
Before BTBC teams are ready to implement a small-scale community development project, they need to clearly identify a problem they can successfully address. Problem identification requires skills in community assessment, including how to collect, organize, and interpret information. Skills needed to conduct the assessment will depend on the experience of team members and the size of the community to be studied. It is important to “fit” the assessment approach within the talents, resources, and abilities of the team. In addition to learning how to assess needs, teams may need to learn how to prioritize and sort out what they want to do versus what they are able to do. Our experience in the pilot projects leads us to recommend keeping the projects small, achievable, and outcome-oriented. A step-by-step process for problem identification is described in Unit 4.

Unit 5: Community Assessment Tools
Many times, teams need to conduct community assessments to learn more about a problem. In our pilot BTBC project, we acquainted teams with three assessment approaches. One approach, focus groups, is described in Unit 3. This approach is relatively easy to implement and allows for a cross-fertilization of ideas. Unit 5 is a description of two other community assessment approaches: the surveying or interviewing approach and Creating Community Connections, both of which may be helpful tools in defining the problem or learning about your community in general.

Unit 6: Thinking Through Fund-raising
As your team identifies the types of resources needed, they will need to think through how to secure those resources. One skill that may be needed is proposal writing. A step-by-step guide to writing a mini-proposal and a sample proposal application is included in “Thinking Through Fund-raising.”

Unit 7: Doing the Project
Once a problem has been clearly identified, teams are ready to design a project to address the problem. It is important that the project is realistic in terms of scope and has a high probability of success. A simple action plan including who, what, when, and where needs to be developed; the plan also should identify the types of resources needed to implement the project and how teams will measure the success of the project. The “Doing the Project” unit includes an action plan worksheet and a planning checklist.

Part of the learning in BTBC comes from sharing the project results. Completing the evaluation and reflecting on what worked, what did not work, and what changes to make are important components of this step. BTBC stresses that the benefit of completing a small-scale community development project is not only the contribution the project makes to the community but what the team learned in the process. Once the project is complete, it is important for the team to share what was learned with others. Having your team teach others what they learned helps to build self-confidence and leadership as well as encourage other groups to become involved in their community. This step of the process includes reflection, celebration, and teaching.
Before any decisions are made to implement a BTBC project, you need to find out your teens’ views of working with adults as partners, their perspective on community, and, finally, their interest in becoming involved with a BTBC project. In our pilot project, we found the ideal age of teens at the beginning of the project appeared to be between 12 and 15 years of age. Older youth graduate from high school or are more likely to have competing interests, like after-school jobs, and cannot commit to the 12 to 18 months it may take to complete the project. We found focus groups to be a relatively easy approach to collect this type of information from teens. You can have a one-on-one meeting with the adult or adults involved with your project to obtain similar information from them. The information from the focus group will not only help you decide to initiate a BTBC project, it can also provide valuable baseline information to measure the success of the project. This unit provides background information on focus groups, examples of the type of information you can expect to obtain, a step-by-step process to conduct a focus group, and a sample moderator’s guide to use.

THE FOCUS GROUP APPROACH

A focus group is an organized discussion guided by written questions on a specific topic. It is a useful, inexpensive approach to community problem solving. Usually the group consists of 5 to 10 participants and is led by a moderator. A focus group is a good approach to use when ideas, perceptions, or assessments are needed quickly or clarification on an issue is desired. It is also used when first-hand knowledge is wanted. Because it involves several people, the focus group allows for cross-fertilization of ideas while giving everyone an opportunity to speak.

In a focus group, use a moderator’s guide with a series of questions. During the focus group, take notes so the ideas discussed will not be forgotten. Take notes by hand or record them with a tape recorder. It is usually a good idea to have two facilitators: One facilitator guides the discussion and the other facilitator takes notes. We recommend that you consider using an adult and a teen as co-facilitators. Focus groups generally last 60 to 90 minutes.

In the BTBC pilot project, focus groups were conducted in four communities in the fall of 1998 to assess teens’ interest in community development and their perceptions of youth/adult partnerships. The results of the focus group were compiled in a summary that was used to develop the program. Local teams were encouraged to review the summary to obtain direction on the interests and needs in their community. The examples from the summary of one of the BTBC pilot groups may give you a better idea of the type of information you can expect to obtain from a focus group.

Example 1

Question: What comes to mind when you think of your community?

- Bad, but not as bad as people think
- Quiet and peaceful
- “Baddest” neighborhood in town
- Cheap
- Dirty
- It’s a ghetto
- Lots of people
- Too many little kids
- Empty
- Hold “trick and treat” too early in the evening
- Not too bad, all right
- Crazy people
- Noisy
Example 2
Question: What motivates teens to participate in community service?

✏ Opportunity to meet new people
✏ Satisfy service learning requirements for school
✏ I get to meet community leaders like the mayor
✏ Like to help people
✏ My friends are involved in the project too
✏ Helps me to stay out of trouble
✏ Have nothing else to do

Example 3
Question: What discourages teens from becoming involved in their community?

✏ Don’t like to be told you have to participate
✏ Peers may think it is “not cool” and ridicule you
✏ Afraid I may not know or not like the other people involved
✏ Might not be understood
✏ Takes time away from doing things
✏ Scared
✏ May not have the opportunity to follow through on the whole project

STEPS USED TO CONDUCT A FOCUS GROUP

Step 1: Identify Your Topic

What do you want to find out? Try to be as specific as possible. In the case of the BTBC pilot project, we wanted to assess teens’ interest in community development and in the Youth as Partners Approach. You may want to use these or develop others.

What is your topic: __________________________________________

Step 2: Select Your Participants

With teens, we found it is best to limit the number of participants in a focus group to about 10. If you have more teens that you want to involve, we suggest you consider having two focus groups.

Who will you invite: _________________________________________

Step 3: Develop a Moderator’s Guide

A sample moderator’s guide is included at the end of this unit. If you decide to develop a guide on your own, you need to start with the most general questions and work toward the more specific questions. Once you have a draft, pilot test the questions with teens who will not be involved with the focus group. You want to be sure your questions are clear and can be answered within the time frame (60 to 90 minutes).

Step 4: Firming Up Logistics

Plan to hold your focus group in a setting where members feel comfortable and there is some privacy. Chairs can be set up in a circle or around a table. If everyone does not know one another, use name tags or place cards. Select a facilitator who you know will do a good job: someone who can relate to the teens, keep the process going, and finish on time. Decide on how notes will be taken. You should ask permission from the participants if you decide to record their discussion. We found it helpful to have light refreshments, especially if the teens were coming from school or meeting in the evening.

Location of your focus group: ________________________________
Name of your moderator: ____________________________________________________________

Your note taker, if needed: ___________________________________________________________________________________________

Refreshments: _________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Materials needed: name tags/place cards, easel and newsprint, markers, moderator’s guide ____________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Step 5: Holding the Focus Group

On the day of the focus group, the facilitator should arrive early to greet the participants as they arrive and try to set an informal, friendly atmosphere in the room. The following outline, used in conjunction with your moderator’s guide, can serve as the agenda.

✏ Greetings. Have everyone introduce himself or herself and write the name they want to be called on a name tag/place card. Spend a few minutes on an ice breaker to put participants at ease. (See Unit 3.)

✏ Describe the purpose of the meeting and how the meeting will be conducted.

✏ Present draft ground rules for the discussion. Ask the group to add on to your list or make changes.

✏ Tape the list to the wall so everyone can see it. (An example of ground rules is listed in the sample moderator’s guide at the end of this unit.)

✏ Follow your moderator’s guide to ask questions. Be sure to give everyone the opportunity to speak and not let any one person monopolize the discussion.

✏ Stay within the timeline. If you need to move the group along, let them know how much time is allocated for the discussion. For example, say, “We have 10 minutes to complete this next question.”

✏ Allow 10 minutes at the end to summarize the discussion. Tell participants how the information will be used and the next step, if any. Thank them and adjourn on time.

Step 6: Writing Up Results

As soon as possible, write up the results of the focus group. If you wait too long, you may not be able to accurately interpret your notes. The benefit of having two facilitators is that one person can draft the material and the other can critique it for accuracy. The formality of your report depends on its function. If you intend to use it as leverage to seek grant funds, you will want it to contain more documentation than if you are using it just for your group. Whatever the uses, it is important for your summary to contain at least the following information: profiles of those attending, the time and place of the meeting, a copy of the moderator’s guide, the major themes of the discussion on each question, and possible implications for the project.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Butler, Lorna Michael, et al. Focus groups: A Tool for Understanding Community Perceptions and Experiences, Community Ventures Series. (May be ordered directly from the Extension and Experiment Station Communications Office, Oregon State University, 422 Administrative Services, Corvallis, OR 97331-2119; telephone number 541-737-2513.)


EXAMPLE

MODERATOR’S GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP

INTENT:
Identification of youth’s ideas on Youth as Partners and their interests in becoming involved in a community development project.

AUDIENCE:
Teens (ages 12 to 16) in Maryland (3 groups), West Virginia, and New Jersey.

BEFORE MEETING:
Send letters out to each group confirming meeting place, time, and purpose.

FORMAT:
Small groups of 7 to 10 teens; total meeting time 90 minutes; one facilitator serves as moderator and one facilitator takes notes; preferably no adults should be present who work directly with the teens; be sure every youth has the opportunity to respond to every question.

ROOM SETUP:
- Chairs in circle
- Flip chart available; markers; stickers
- Index cards
- Name tags
- Cold drinks or light refreshments

WELCOME (5 MINUTES):
1. Brief welcome; introduce selves as moderator and note taker.
2. Refer to confirmation letter and review purpose of the meeting (identify ideas on Youth as Partners and their interests in becoming involved in a youth-led community development project); tell them they have been selected to participate in one of five focus groups in three states.
3. Review ground rules for discussion (confidentiality, respectful listening, and time frame); solicit ideas for any changes or additions. Post ground rules on wall.
4. Review format for the session (introductions, series of questions, summarizing).

INTRODUCTIONS (15 MINUTES):
Ask each participant to introduce themselves using the name they would like to be called during the session (fill out the name tag); ask them to say what grade they are in, where they live, and what community projects, if any, they have been involved with during the previous 12 months; ask them to tell what word or phase comes to mind when they think of their community.

QUESTIONS (ALLOW ABOUT 10 MINUTES PER QUESTION):
Our first four questions deal with partnerships:

1. Recently, many people have begun to talk about Youth As Partners as an important factor in increasing youth’s participation and involvement in community decision making and program planning. What elements do you see as critical in any partnership?
2. What do you see as the strengths of involving youth as equal partners in defining, developing, implementing, and improving programs that affect them and/or their community?
3. Now that we’ve identified the strengths of this approach, what do you see as the possible downside of using a Youth As Partners model?
4. If you were going to be involved in a program using the Youth As Partners Approach, what type of training do you think would be important for the adults involved in the training? For the youth?

We are now going to shift our focus from partnerships to community development projects. For the sake of our discussion, let’s define community development as a process that brings together people from many perspectives to solve a problem. A successful community development process should result in some improvement in the community.
1. A recent national survey found that about half of youth in grades 6 through 12 participated in community service during the 1995-1996 school year. Why do you think these youth participated; in other words, what motivates teens to become involved with community projects? What discourages them from becoming involved?

2. What types of factors do you think are important to include in a youth-led community development project? Are there any factors that you would avoid?

3. What do you think are the most positive benefits to teens who participate in a youth-led community development project? Do you think your community would benefit too? How?

4. Are you interested in participating in a community development project that used the Youth as Partners Approach?

**SUMMARY (10 MINUTES)**

Thank participants for their contributions. Repeat that other groups will be meeting and you will use this information to develop a proposal to implement their advice. Tell them how you will keep them informed.
The basic premise of Using Youth Adult Partnerships is to have adult leaders perceive young people as valuable resources who can contribute to community development. This is a change from viewing youth as objects to be dealt with or recipients of programs provided. Treating youth as partners is easier said than done. It can be accomplished, though, and must begin by inviting youth to sit at the discussion table with adults.

PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH/ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

As described in the Assessing Your Interests unit of this handbook, the focus group technique was used to lay the foundation for developing youth/adult partnerships in the Building Teens for Better Communities projects. The focus group process allowed each BTBC youth group an opportunity to meet with their respective adult community representatives in an informal discussion setting. The purpose of the focus group meeting was to have youth and adults discuss the advantages and challenges of working as true youth/adult partners. A common response among adults in all three states was that a great number of adults work with youth every day but, in most cases, the youth were either treated as objects or recipients of programs and not viewed as resources to the entire program development process.

The exercise of conducting the community-based focus group meeting with youth and adults establishes a benchmark of information on how youth and adults view partnerships. The discussion was framed to generate thought on any type of partnership, not just ones that joined youth and adults as partners. Some ideas came from perceptions rather than actual experiences of being in a particular partnership. As a result of the various youth/adult focus groups held at the beginning of the project, critical characteristics of partnerships were identified. These characteristics included trust, mutual respect, listening to each other’s ideas, honesty, and cooperation. Another key element for youth/adult partnerships was being sure youth had an “equal say” in the project.

After the combined group of adults and youth listed these essential partnership characteristics, each group met separately. Using brainstorming, youth participants identified both advantages and challenges of working with adults. Simultaneously in a different group, adults listed the advantages and challenges of having youth as partners. A lively discussion ensued when the two groups joined to compare newsprint pads. Youth participants noted some thoughts on the benefits of involving teens in the program development process. They are illustrated in Example 1.

Example 1

“What are the benefits of having youth involved as equal partners with adults to develop and improve community programs?”

- Youth bring new perspectives and energy to the process or program.
- The experience could change the lives of teen participants and their peers.
- The influence of youth partners could facilitate community change.
- Youth meet new people/community leaders.
- Youth strengthen self-confidence by making a difference in their community.
- Teens know better than adults what they need.
- Adults can learn what teens are really thinking.

Another focus group question had the participants look at the downside of using the youth and adult partnership model as a means of having youth become engaged in the community development process. Comments from youth participants are listed in Example 2.
Example 2

- Youth are not mature enough.
- There is a lack of experience with youth and adults using this mode of operation.
- The more experienced adults will want to take over.
- Adults will not listen to youth.
- Youth will be discriminated against.
- Adults may not let youth help or only give you the “bad” jobs.
- Adults and youth may have conflicts and disagreements.

This information provided the project team with insight into what problems to expect and how best to plan the program. It also enabled teens in the group to see that others share some of their concerns and that they were not alone in their thinking.

TRAINING NEEDS

Through the focus group process, participants identify the type of training they would need to successfully use the Youth As Partners Approach. In the pilot projects, the youth perceived the adults as needing training and guidance with the following topics:

- Respecting teens and their different ideas.
- Learning to be patient with youth.
- Trusting youth and listening to their ideas without judgment.
- Understanding that teens are knowledgeable and skilled.
- Learning to use conflict resolution methods with teens.

When the youth described training that they would need to improve their ability to work effectively with adults they said they needed to learn the following:

- How to better understand adults, e.g., to know where they’re coming from.
- How to be respectful of adults and learn from them.
- Listening techniques.
- How groups make decisions.
- Teamwork and cooperation.
- Communication skills.

It is important to note that the teams involved in the BTBC project attended regional weekend training conferences in May of 1999 and April 2000. At these conferences, youth and adults had the opportunity to participate in training on many topics, as well as the opportunity to practice skills. Wherever possible, teens served as facilitators, panelists, and instructors during the conferences. Your group may not have the opportunity to participate in a weekend training conference but could conduct workshops in your community. Many resources are available to help you carry out this Youth As Partners Approach. Check out the youth adult partnership curriculum available from The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development http://www.theinnovationcenter.org. The curriculum provides detailed training agendas and identifies other resource materials that will help you carry out effective training. To help you get started planning your workshop, a sample agenda from the BTBC planning conference is included at the end of this unit.

CHALLENGES

Using this approach to bring youth and adults together in partnership to conduct a community development project is a valuable learning technique for both parties involved. The focus group meetings may seem to be nothing out of the ordinary for gathering information, but to the majority of adults and all the youth we worked with, it was a new experience. At the time of the meetings back in the individual localities, there was a true exchange of interest between youth and adults. There was a value in seeing a young person be given the opportunity to sit across the table from a prominent town leader and for the first time get to talk to him/her rather than only know his/her name from the local newspaper. At the conferences, we learned that having teens directly involved with the teaching and facilitation of the training helped to strengthen adult/youth relationships and build teamwork.

There are many challenges inherent in this process. Even to carry out a small-scale project, someone needs to be dedicated to facilitating the focus group process and each of the other steps.
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outlined in this handbook. A timeline must be established that will not extend the project so long that youth and adults lose interest. Our pilot project lasted 20 months and seemed to be at the high end of a reasonable project length. Probably a one-year cycle, with the possibility of extending for another year, would be better. One of the major problems, even after your youth and adult team is working well together, is keeping everyone on the same playing field. The same diversity that can give richness to the partnership can create a breakdown in working together. Youth and adults can easily become overextended because of demands from school and work obligations. Above all, the partnership must include an element of fun as the work is being done. Some time must be devoted to training activities that reinforce the mutual commitment of a true partnership as identified earlier. There must be a willingness to train together. Please consult the Breaking the Ice and Bonding section of this handbook for ideas to strengthen your team and just plain have fun together.

Incorporating the Youth As Partners Approach into your community development project may be very challenging. Adults may want to have more control and teens may only want to do the “fun” parts. However the effort is worth it. Finding a way to link our youth by partnering with adults who shape their communities may be one of the best ways to save a generation of “lost youth” and prepare community leaders for tomorrow.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

“Taking the Reins Together: Youth/Adult Partnerships” video, National 4-H Council. You can order the video by calling 301-961-2961 or e-mailing cyd@fourhcouncil.edu.

“At the Table: Youth Voices in Decision Making” video, National 4-H Council. You can order the video by calling 301-961-2800 or e-mailing cyd@fourhcouncil.edu.


Creating Youth Adult Partnerships Curriculum. National 4-H Council. You can order the curriculum by e-mailing info@theinnovationcenter.org or by going to the Innovation Center website: http://www.theinnovationcenter.org.
Sample Program

**Friday, April 7**

7:30 p.m. Registration and Check-In (Algonquin Bldg.)
8:45 p.m. Welcome and Ice Breaker (Iroquois Bldg.)
9:30 p.m. Review Conference and Expectations (Iroquois Bldg.)
9:45 p.m. Team Building, Refreshments, and Informal Social Time (Algonquin Bldg.)
11:00 p.m. Return to Cabins; Conduct Safety Drill
11:30 p.m. Lights Out

**Saturday, April 8**

8:00 a.m. Breakfast (Algonquin Bldg.)
8:30 a.m. Getting Organized and Selecting Sessions to Attend. Sit with Your Local Team (Algonquin Bldg.)
8:45 a.m. Seminar Session One (choose one)
   - Ropes Initiative
   - Youth As Partners (Raptor Bldg.)
   - Team Building: Mars Surface Rover (Iroquois Bldg.)
   - Charting Community Connections (Pavilion or Algonquin in case of rain)
10:15 a.m. Break: Refreshments (Algonquin Bldg.)
10:30 a.m. Seminar Session Two (Repeat 8:45 Seminars)
11:45 a.m. Free Time/Lunch Set-Up
12 noon Lunch (Algonquin Bldg.)
Plenary Motivational Talk: “You Can Make a Difference”
1:00 p.m. Leadership Workshops (choose one)
   - Ropes Initiative
   - Youth for Youth Advocacy Skills (Raptor Bldg.)
   - Making Presentations (Algonquin Bldg.)
   - Leadership Styles (Iroquois Bldg.)
2:30 p.m. Break: Refreshments & Free Time (Algonquin Bldg.)
3:00 p.m. Building Your Community Workshops (choose one):
   - Newspaper Needs Assessment (Algonquin Bldg.)
   - Power Skills: Interviews and Surveys (Raptor Bldg.)
   - Appreciating Differences (Iroquois Bldg.)
   - Your Character Counts (Pavilion Bldg.)
4:15 p.m. Break: Free Time
4:45 p.m. Dinner (Algonquin Bldg.)
5:30 p.m. New Teams Create Team Banners (Iroquois Bldg.)
Returning Teams Prepare for Evening Presentation (Algonquin Bldg.)
6:30 p.m. Free Time
7:00 p.m. BTBC Panel Presentation (Algonquin Bldg.)
8:00 p.m. Free Time & Evening Set-Up
8:30 p.m. Evening Program: Team Building (Energizers, Music, Games, Refreshments, and More!) (Iroquois Bldg.)
10:00 p.m. Campfire Gathering (Ring 2)
11:00 p.m. Return to Cabins
11:30 p.m. Lights Out

**Sunday, April 9**

8:00 a.m. Breakfast (Algonquin Bldg.)
8:30 a.m. Cabin Clean-Up, Pack Luggage and Cars/Vans
9:15 a.m. Getting Involved in Your Community (choose three, 15 min. each, Algonquin Bldg.)
   - Finding Resources
   - Writing Your Proposal
   - Keeping Your Team Together
   - How to Design a Community Flyer
   - Making It Happen
10:15 a.m. Break: Refreshments (Algonquin Bldg.)
10:30 a.m. Team Time (Iroquois Bldg.)
   - Next Steps
   - Complete Conference Evaluation
11:00 a.m. Quick Reports on Next Steps (Iroquois Bldg.)
11:15 a.m. Conference Closing (Tech Team Presentation, Sharing, Reflections)
12 noon Lunch and Adjourn (Algonquin Bldg.)
12:30 p.m. Have a Safe Trip Home
Developing a sense of group is one of the keys to a successful community youth development experience. This is an important step when you bring a group together for a short period of time (for example to conduct a focus group) and when you work with a group in a weekend conference setting or over the span of time it takes to conduct the community project. We used ice breakers, trust and teambuilding activities, challenges, initiatives, and other adventure games throughout the Building Teams for Better Communities project. Our goal was to help the community groups develop a team spirit and to foster a sense of common purpose among the teams from each of the different communities at the weekend conferences.

In the Building Teens project, we found that the bonding activities were especially important when trying to build youth/adult partnerships. The ice breakers, warm-up activities and other initiatives help teens and adults break down barriers, strengthen communication, build trust, and develop respect for their similarities and differences. Most importantly adults need to participate actively with the teens in the games to build a true partnership. Too often adults stand on the sidelines watching the teens engage in an activity, which does not give them opportunity to learn more about each other. Nonparticipation by adult team members can send a message to the teens that the activities are just for fun and not an integral part of the community youth development project. Each time the group gets together, it is helpful to include one or more activities that help group members get to know each other and grow as a team.

Many resources for group activities build trust, foster cooperation, and give youth/adult teams a chance to get to know each other. Some examples of those we used in this project are included at the end of this unit. Your groups will no doubt serve as an excellent resource for new ideas!

ICE BREAKERS AND GET ACQUAINTED ACTIVITIES

There are many ways to break the ice when a new group comes together. The activities should be non-threatening. We suggest that you avoid using self-introductions as the first get acquainted activity. Many teens and adults are not comfortable introducing themselves to a larger group. You can use the data line-up exercise (see page 14) to create pairs or triads and then ask the small group to introduce one another to the larger group.

WARM UP ACTIVITIES

Warm Up Activities are a good follow-up to ice breakers and get acquainted games. They can be used at any time, however, to help people become more comfortable with one another or just to energize the group in preparation for a learning activity. These activities are fun and group-based.

TRUST BUILDING AND TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITIES

We found that using trust building activities really helped a new group become sensitive to and supportive of all the members of the group. Keep in mind that trust activities require some precautions and attention to the safety of all group members. The activity outlined in this guide (Pairs Walk on page 15) is relatively simple. As your group gains confidence, you might want to move to more challenging trust activities and should make sure that you have a skilled facilitator to work with your group.
Team building activities offer an opportunity for group members to work together and to learn to value all the members of the group. The activities focus on fun because having fun helps pull people together as a team.

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES**

Challenge activities help your group with decision making and problem solving skills, both of which are needed to plan and carry out a community project. Challenge activities also provide opportunities for group members to communicate and cooperate with each other. An important feature of the challenge activities is that they allow leadership to come from the group.

While most activities are intended to be noncompetitive and foster cooperation, we found that some of the teens in the project wanted opportunities for individual and group competition. Many were not used to the idea of playing together cooperatively. Building and flying paper airplanes was an individual competition that was well received and members of the Hagerstown team introduced the “Warp Speed” game to the rest of the group. Both activities are described on page 16.

**LOW ROPES INITIATIVES**

If you conduct a weekend retreat or conference to build skills for your community youth development project, an on-site initiatives ropes course is a wonderful resource. In both Building Teens weekend programs the teams participated in 1½ to 2-hour workshops conducted by staff at the site. Many of the teens had never experienced an initiative course and this activity ranked high in the weekend evaluations. Some of the participants suggested that it would be good to start the weekend with the initiatives as they provide an opportunity to break down barriers and build a sense of team. It is important to debrief the initiative experience and a skilled facilitator should be able to do that. If you do not have an initiatives course, we recommend that you plan a series of initiative challenges throughout the weekend program. Sources are available for portable initiatives that can be purchased.

**DEBRIEFING BONDING EXPERIENCES**

Whether you plan a series of activities to take place in one block of time or you plan for play throughout the day or weekend training program, take time for closure or debriefing activities that help the group reflect on the experience as it relates to the objectives of the Building Teens project. You can move any of the games from just recreation to learning by spending some time debriefing. You can debrief at the end of an activity or at the end of a series of activities. Debriefing gives you a chance to find out how people feel and how the group is functioning. You can also use a debrief session to see if the objectives of the activity have been met, get a sense of what was learned, and to talk about how to apply the knowledge or skill gained. Youth Leadership in Action and Quicksilver are two good references for conducting effective and creative debriefing sessions (see complete references on page 12).

**CELEBRATIONS**

Celebrating the end of a planning meeting, weekend conference, or project completion is an important aspect of the Building Teens Project. We celebrated with certificates, t-shirts, and appreciations. This was a special way to recognize the learning that took place at the weekend conferences and the hard work that the teens had done. We also provided special recognition to the teams who returned as seminar leaders in year two of the project.
A memorable celebration experience is the paper plate activity conducted as an end of conference activity. Punch a hole in one edge of the paper plate and string a length of yarn through the hole. Knot it so that the paper plate can be hung around your neck. The participants have time to walk around the room and write something on each other’s paper plates. Each participant takes their plate home as a reminder of the time spent getting to know and work with people from their community and from other communities.

At the Building Teens conferences, members of the state 4-H Technology Leadership Team documented the weekend program with digital photographs. They created a slide show presentation of weekend highlights, which was presented as a part of the closing session. Both presentations were well received by the conference participants, and involving the tech team was a good way to link the Building Teens project to other 4-H youth development programs. It takes a lot of work to get the show ready for the closing and the teens who worked on the presentation didn’t get a lot of sleep the last night! We recommend that you budget for this resource if you plan a weekend conference to provide an honorarium to the teens who work on this project.

**ICE BREAKERS AND GET ACQUAINTED ACTIVITIES**

**HUMAN SCAVENGER HUNT**

This activity is a low-key exercise for groups just getting to know each other:

- Create a list of facts that are representative of the people in the group.
- You can include facts that probably apply to several people in the group, but it’s fun to mix in a few facts that may have only a few (or even no) responses.
- You need to prepare a printed list in advance for each participant and have plenty of extra pencils on hand.
- For example, “Find Someone Who...”

  ___ is born in the same month as you
  ___ has been in a parade
  ___ speaks another language
  ___ is in 4-H

  ___ has traveled outside the U.S.
  ___ likes the same music as you
  ___ can play a musical instrument
  ___ volunteers in their community


**CONCLUSION**

Do not underestimate the value of taking time to engage in a variety of fun experiences. Making time for team play even when there is work to be done will strengthen your project. Make bonding activities a part of each of your team meetings.

**REFERENCES**


Painter, Carol. (1993) Workshop Winners: Developing Creative and Dynamic Workshops, Educational Media Corporation, Minneapolis, MN.

WHERE IN THE CIRCLE AM I?
This is a good way for a group to start to learn each other’s names:

- The group stands or sits in a circle.
- Ask all the players to say their first names in sequence around the circle.
- When completed ask the circled players to alphabetically rearrange themselves by first name without using verbal communication.
- After the first attempt, ask the group to say their names again around the circle and then non-verbally rearrange themselves as before.
- You can do this as many times as necessary until the task is accomplished.
- You can build in an incentive for paying attention by challenging the group to accomplish the task in as few turns as possible.


NAME IMPULSE
This game helps people learn names and introduces some problem solving and goal setting:

- Gather the group in a circle.
- Ask for a volunteer to begin.
- Ask the player which way she would like the impulse to go, right or left.
- To begin, have the starter say her name.
- As soon as she says her name, the next person (in the impulse direction) says his name.
- Continue around the circle with players saying their own names as soon as the players beside them have said theirs.
- Time how long it takes the names to get around the circle.
- See if the players think they can do it faster. Give them one minute to figure out how to improve on the last time.
- Try again. You can change the direction of the impulse and see if the group can meet or beat their best time.

WARM UP ACTIVITIES

DATA LINE-UP
This activity works best with large groups: 20 to 200! It’s fun and action oriented. You can choose the data that the group will use to form a single file line from one end of the room to the other. A common line-up is the birthday line-up.

- Ask the group to line up by date of birth with January at one end and December at the other. The challenge is to see how quickly the group can form the line.
- A variation is to ask the group to form the line without talking.
- You can also create a line alphabetically by the first letter of the last name of everyone in the group.
- We had fun lining up by the number of holes in our bodies (no explanations needed!).
- Once the group has lined up, ask everyone to introduce themselves to the person on their right and on their left.
- This activity is also a great way to put people in pairs or other small groups for another introductory activity or another game.

Source: Unknown

CATEGORIES
This is another good activity for mixing people up and for forming smaller groups for later activities. It is especially good for large groups but can work for smaller groups depending on the categories you choose.

- Ask the group to quickly form smaller groups based on the categories you call out. Alternate small group separations with 50/50 split (only two groups).
- Selecting 10-12 groupings is enough for a large group; use fewer for a smaller group. Some examples of categories include:
  - What is your shoe size?
  - What month were you born in?
  - Which way do you rotate an ice cream cone when you eat ice cream?
  - When you ride a bike, do you wear a helmet?
  - Fold your hands. Is your right or left thumb on top?
  - What color are your eyes?


I LIKE MY FRIENDS WHO...
This is a great activity to get a group moving and meeting new people.

- The group sits on chairs in a circle or stands in a circle, each person on a spot marked with an X. Have one fewer spot than people.
- One person starts in the middle and says: "I like my friends who wear jeans."
- Everyone in the circle who is wearing jeans has to move and find an empty spot to sit or stand.
- The person in the middle tries to find a space so that someone new comes to the middle.
- Ask the group to introduce themselves to their new neighbors and the play continues. The new person in the middle calls out something else that people in the group have in common, either visible or not visible, each time beginning with the phrase "I like my friends who..."

Source: Unknown
TRUST BUILDING ACTIVITY

PAIRS WALK
This is a good activity for youth/adult pairs. Do not try with a group that you are not sure will protect each other.

tré
Before you begin this activity, set out a walking course that you feel comfortable with. There should be some obstacles (things to step over, ups and downs, things to walk on) but no obstacle should pose excessive risk to any participant. Outdoors is best but we had successful pairs walks in indoor settings.

tré
Tell the group they are embarking on a journey.

tré
Working in pairs, one person will be blindfolded and the other person sighted. If someone is not comfortable wearing a blindfold (usually a bandanna works best), they can close their eyes.

tré
It is the responsibility of the sighted people to keep their partners safe.

tré
Guides must have physical contact with their partners at all times. Guides should also be sensitive to their partners’ emotional and psychological safety as well.

tré
Although most groups can accomplish the activity in total silence, you may want to allow the guides to give some verbal cues to their partners, especially if there is a safety hazard.

tré
The blindfolded person can let the guide know if they are too uncomfortable to continue.

tré
Halfway through the time, ask the partners to switch places. Now the guide becomes the person with the blindfold. Remind the new guides of the safety precautions and continue the activity.

tré
At the end, bring the group together for a debriefing session. This is especially important with trust activities. You could ask the following questions:

tré
What did it feel like to be guided?

tré
What did it feel like to be the guide?

tré
What did your guide do to make you feel safe and comfortable?

tré
What, if any, communication took place between the guide and partner?


CIRCLE THE CIRCLE
This is good activity to get a group moving, laughing, and warming up to each other. It also involves some challenges for the group. You need two hula hoops and a watch.

tré
Get the group into a circle and ask them to hold hands.

tré
Place one hula-hoop between two players so that their hands are through the center of the hula-hoop. The object is to move the hoop around the circle back to the starting point without breaking hands.

tré
Let the group try it once without timing them.

tré
After the practice run, ask the group to establish a time goal for themselves. (This is a good lesson in group goal setting.)

tré
As the group leader, you can find an average of the times suggested or let the group establish the goal on their own: a good decision-making challenge. Make sure the group understands and agrees with the goal. Try the game again and time it. If the goal is not met, you can encourage the group to try again and give them some time to suggest ways to improve.

tré
Time them again. If they meet their goal, you may want to ask them to set a new goal and try again.

A variation of the game is to use two hoops.
Choose a starting person and put one hula-hoop on that person’s left hand and one on his or her right. The group joins hands again.

The object is to move the hoops in opposite directions around the circle back to the starting point.

This activity might be frustrating but it always works when people work together.


**CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES**

**WARP SPEED**

This activity has many variations. You will need one soft object (tennis ball is good) and a stopwatch or watch with a second hand.

- Ask the group to form a circle.
- Elect a person to be the official timekeeper.
- The person with the ball starts by tossing it to someone else in the circle. That person tosses to someone else and so on until everyone in the group has touched the ball. This establishes the group pattern. Let the group practice a few times to be sure the pattern is well established.
- When the group is ready, establish the group’s World Record by timing how long it takes them to complete the pattern.
- Ask the group how much faster they think they can complete the pattern. Give them time to figure out how to do it. They should figure out that doing things the same way does not lower the time very much; something needs to change.
- Remind the group that the only rule of the game is that the object needs to pass through the same order of people. Off-the-wall ideas are welcome!

**THE GREAT AIRPLANE CHALLENGE**

This activity was suggested by one of the BTBC teams and seemed to fulfill the group’s need for a more competitive activity.

- Give each person a single sheet of 8 1/2” x 11” paper.
- The challenge is to create a paper airplane that will be able to travel the farthest distance.
- Divide the large group into smaller test groups.
- Each person in the test group stands behind a designated line and on the count of three releases his airplane.
- The person whose airplane travels the farthest is the winner for that group.
- Each test group flies its planes.
- The winners in each group have a fly off. They may not make a new airplane.
- You can do this activity at least one more time with the group, challenging each person to redesign her plane for greater distance in round two.

Have fun! Your group will probably have many other great ideas. Keep a collection of ideas on hand to use at any time during the project.
Unit 4 DECIDING ON THE PROBLEM

by Nan Booth

Coming up with an issue that excites team members and solves a community problem is one of the toughest tasks your team will face. If the issue is not of high interest, it will not be able to sustain long-term commitment from your team. If the issue is not community centered, it will not contribute to increasing awareness and involvement in one’s community. Taking the time to find the right problem is well worth the effort. Remember, you want to make decisions that support collaboration, team building, and the Youth as Partners Approach. The following process may help your team decide on a problem.

1. Generate a List of Potential Problems

As a first step, set up a time to meet and ask members to do some thinking on what they see as pressing problems in the community. Suggest they listen closely to the local news, talk to their neighbors and friends, and read the newspaper. Before the meeting, invite one or two team members (preferably an adult and a teen) to work on planning and conducting the meeting. Here’s an annotated outline for your meeting:

Goal: Identify a list of community problems

Estimated meeting time: 1.5 hours

Materials needed: Newsprint, markers, tape, and copies of local newspapers

Welcome and ice breaker. A good ice breaker may be the Human Scavenger Hunt described on page 12. You can use community topics as a way to start the juices flowing for the rest of the meeting. For example, you can ask your members to find someone on your team who 1) has lived in the community for at least 10 years, 2) has participated in a community development or improvement project, and 3) can name the mayor.

Review the purpose of the meeting; ask for a volunteer to record ideas on newsprint.

Set ground rules for brainstorming. (Everyone has an opportunity to give ideas, no one criticizes or evaluates ideas during the brainstorming session, all ideas are recorded.)

Brainstorm until all ideas are recorded. To get the brainstorming started, ask each member to write down two or three problems on an index card. Go around the room and have each person give one idea, until all ideas are listed.

Once all ideas are listed, everyone should look at the list to be sure they have not forgotten any major issue. You may want to identify some broad categories of concerns (e.g., education, violence, recreation, housing, environment) to see if there are any additional topics that members want to include. You may have some topics listed that can be grouped together. Try to group similar problems together. This exercise will give you a more manageable list.

Thank everyone for his or her hard work. Ask for two volunteers to work on planning the next meeting. Set a time and place for the next meeting.

2. Choose the Problem You Are Most Likely to Address

Between the first and second meeting, the planning team needs to identify a good ice breaker or team builder. Since the goal of the second meeting will be to develop consensus around addressing the problem, an icebreaker that focuses on communication may be a good choice. For example, the simple “telephone exercise” could help alert team members to listen to each other. The planning team also may want to put the “Analyze the Problem” worksheet on newsprint and fill in the first column with the list of problems already identified. This newsprint can be used as a visual for discussion. Here is a working outline for the meeting:

Goal: Select one problem that the team feels they have the best chance to address

Materials needed: Newsprint visual, copies of “Analyze the Problem” worksheet with the list of problems recorded in the first column, tape, markers, and any prop for team builder

Estimated Meeting Time: 1.5 hours

Welcome and Team Builder

Review the purpose of the meeting and any ground rules for discussion. For example, you may want to remind people to listen carefully, not to personalize any remarks, and to be respectful of each other’s opinions.

Post the newsprint visual on the wall and review the list of problems from last week. Pass out copies of the worksheet to everyone. Give the group a chance to add additional problems.
Review the worksheet. Ask everyone to take a minute to think about the questions and jot their responses down on their worksheet. For each problem listed, use the numerical rating system described on the worksheet to evaluate the probability of your team solving the problem, the interest of the team in the problem, the value of solving the problem to the community, and how much the team would learn from the experience.

Use the scores on the worksheet to help you prioritize the problems but do not rely on them exclusively to make your choice. Have members discuss their preferences and agree on the problem that the entire team feels they have the best chance to solve. If no consensus forms around one issue, you may want to give each member Post-it dots of three different colors. Team members can use the different colors to indicate their preferences. For example, a red dot may mean they do not want to work on the problem, a yellow dot may mean they are willing to work on the problem, and a green dot may mean they would most want to work on the problem. Using the dot method, you may not end up with a problem with all green dots, but you should end up with a problem with no red dots.

Write the problem down as clearly as possible. Try to limit your description to two sentences. Check to see if everyone agrees on the definition of the problem.

Pat yourselves on the back. You have just completed one of the most difficult tasks.

Identify two volunteers to plan and conduct the next meeting where the team will decide how to learn more about the problem. Ask everyone to come prepared with some ideas on how the team can learn more about the problem. Set a time for your next meeting.

**3. Learn About the Problem**

Before the team can begin to think about finding a solution, they need to be sure they clearly understand the problem. They also need to begin to identify what is already being done to solve the problem so they do not inadvertently duplicate an existing effort. The purpose of the third meeting is to begin the community assessment: Find out what the team already knows about the problem, where they can find additional information, and how they will obtain that information. I say “begin” because this phase of the project will take several meetings. Since the community assessment phase of the project will require very good teamwork, the planning group may want to start the meeting with a team building ice breaker from Unit 3, which helps to strengthen the bonds between team members.

If the planning group knows the team has very little knowledge of the problem, they probably need to invite local experts to the meeting to present background on the problem before they are ready to plan their community needs assessment. If the team has considerable knowledge already, the planning team may want to organize the meeting around the following questions: Why is it a problem? What is already being done? Who is involved? Identify Learning Gaps (20 minutes) (What information is still needed?)

Set Time for Follow-Up Meeting to Develop Assessment Plan (10 minutes) (Identify volunteers to plan session)

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**SAMPLE AGENDA**

**LEARNING ABOUT THE PROBLEM**

Welcome and Ice Breaker (30 minutes)

Purpose of the Meeting and Review the Problem Definition (10 minutes)

Panel of Community Experts followed by Questions and Answers (60 minutes)

(Why is it a problem? What is already being done? Who is involved?)

Identify Learning Gaps (20 minutes)

(What information is still needed?)

Set Time for Follow-Up Meeting to Develop Assessment Plan (10 minutes)

(Identify volunteers to plan session)
ANALYZE THE PROBLEM WORKSHEET

List the problems you have already identified in your brainstorming session in the first column. If you need more space, use a second worksheet. For each problem, answer the questions at the top of the column by ranking them 1, 2, or 3. “1” means very, “2” means somewhat, and “3” would mean not very likely to solve. Record your answers and add them up for each problem. The lower scores indicate problems that may be good issues to work on for your small-scale community development project.

<table>
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<th>Problems (List problems already identified)</th>
<th>How likely are we to solve this problem? (e.g., time, ability, money)</th>
<th>How interested are we in this topic?</th>
<th>Would solving this problem help the community?</th>
<th>How much would we learn from working on this problem?</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
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Many times, teams need to conduct assessments to learn more about the problem. Assessments can take many forms. Going to the library and reviewing newspaper clippings can provide good historical perspective on an issue as well as help identify knowledgeable people. Searching the web to learn how other communities handle similar situations is also a good approach. The panel of experts described in the sample agenda on page 18 is another relatively easy way to gain information. Sometimes it is necessary to conduct your own research on a topic. In our pilot BTBC projects, we acquainted teams with three approaches they could use to learn more about a topic. This unit briefly describes the approaches and identifies additional resources. Another approach, focus groups, is described in Unit 1. Remember in using these approaches to involve both youth and adults as partners. Also, whenever you meet, be sure you include team building as part of the agenda.

INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

Many teens have some limited experience with surveys and interviews. They may be familiar with the Gallup Poll or Top Ten survey. In teaching how to conduct surveys and interviews, build on your team’s knowledge and experience. If they have never done an interview before, start with a short questionnaire and small sample. Remember you are trying to develop the teens’ confidence and life skills, as well as help the community. The following steps and examples outline the basic process. The resources at the conclusion of this section provide more information on this process.

1. Identify the Information You Need to Know

Using a brainstorm approach, list the type of information you need to collect. If you are unsure of how to do a brainstorm, see page 17. To illustrate by example, let’s say the problem your team selected is teen representation on community boards. During the brainstorm, team members identify the types of information needed to learn more about that issue. Example 1 lists responses you may receive in a brainstorm.

Example 1: Needed Information

Topic: Teen Representation on Boards

- List of community boards addressing youth issues.
- List of board members.
- Number of teens on boards.

- Reasons why teens were included/were not included.
- Benefits of teens serving on boards/problems of teens serving on boards.
- Training resources about youth on boards
- Research about youth on boards

2. List Where You Can Find the Information

Once you know the types of information needed, you can identify where you can find the information and the types of people you need to contact. Example 2 describes the sources of information needed to learn more about teen representation on community boards. Make every attempt to develop a list that represents all views, even the views that you do not agree with or accept. This representative list is sometimes difficult for teens to accept as teens may want to push for one viewpoint, but it is a critical step in assessment. It may be important to discuss the role of objectivity in research and why sampling is so important to the validity of the research. If you need more information on sampling, consult the Building a Foundation for Community Leadership reference described at the end of this unit.

Example 2: Sources of Information

Topic: Teen Representation on Boards

- Available community resources (telephone books, directories, Chamber of Commerce, city hall, bylaws of boards, National Foundation Center).
Types of people to contact (Board directors, representative groups of teens, community leaders).

3. Draft Questions for Answers That Will Provide You the Needed Information

Practice writing clear and concise questions or statements that can be easily answered; avoid biased words, and don’t get too personal. If you can, ask questions that have concrete answers since they will be easier for beginners to record and interpret. For example, ask questions that could be answered with a “yes” or “no,” or “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” “strongly disagree,” and “undecided.” If you are looking for more descriptive information, try to limit the response to a word or phrase. Keep your list of questions as short as possible.

Example 3: Types of Questions

Topic: Teen Representation on Boards

How long have you been on this board (number of years)?

Teens have an interest in the future of this community (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, undecided).

What is the main reason why teens are not represented on this board?

4. Decide How You Will Collect the Information and Pilot Test Your Questions

Before pilot testing your questions, you need to decide how you will gather your information. You may decide to conduct personal or telephone interviews, which provide accurate information but can be time consuming. Mail surveys can reach many people but can be costly. Another approach could be to use focus groups, which have the benefit of individuals hearing everyone’s ideas. (See Unit 1.) Whatever approach you decide to use, you need to test your questions by having several people who will not be involved in the study respond to your questions. The people you select to test your questions should be similar to the types of people you intend to survey or interview. For example, if you intend to survey teenagers, it would not make sense to test your questions with parents. Time how long it takes the average person to answer the test questions. When you are ready to actually do the survey or interviews, you can inform participants ahead of time about the approximate time it will take to complete the questions. Once the pilot test is complete, clean up any confusion in the wording.

5. Set Up a Response Form to Record Your Answers

Before you begin your interview or survey, decide how you will record your responses and develop a worksheet. Be sure all responses are recorded in the same fashion and all response sheets are saved.

6. Tabulate Responses and Draw Conclusions from the Data

After you have conducted your assessment, you need to review your response sheets and tabulate your data. Ask yourself the following questions: What does the data tell me? How does it fit in with what I’ve already read and observed? How confident am I in what it tells me? Remember, your findings are only as good as your assessment. Only draw conclusions supported by the data. Decide how you will present and distribute your information.

CREATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development created a process and set of tools called Creating Community Connections (CCC). CCC assists teams of youth and adults to investigate the assets of their community, create a vision, and then take action to achieve that vision. CCC builds on positive youth development, asset-based community development, and community youth development. The tools and processes that comprise CCC can be used in total or in part. In our pilot BTBC project, we focused on three tools. These pieces as described in Charting Community Connections: A Description of an Adaptive Model are as follows:

The History Wall

The History Wall is a visual portrayal of the history of the community, which CCC calls the Wall of Wonder. In this exercise, the past is highlighted and the whole community has the opportunity to share stories and traditions. Large sheets of paper are posted in a public place and individuals contribute to the wall by adding their stories.

Gridding

Gridding is also a visual portrayal but highlights the more prominent spaces and shapes within the community (e.g., landmarks, boundaries, neighborhoods, schools). The grid can be used to help organize groups to address issues in segments of the community.

Resource Mapping

Resource Mapping results in an inventory of the skills, interests, experiences, and needs of groups and individuals in the community. The information is usually gathered through interviews or surveys.
Recently, the Innovation Center published a Charting Community Connections Tool Kit. The tool kit describes tools, ideas, and processes that “help you create a structure for your community work, improve your group process and facilitation, facilitate the development of individuals and teams,” and “helps you create a shared vision and move it into action” (2000). The tools described in the kit have all been tried by youth in high school. For more information on the tool kit and CCC, contact the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**


Unit 6 THINKING THROUGH FUND-RAISING

by Nan Booth

All projects, even small-scale community projects, require resources to carry them out. Resources come in many forms, including time, facilities, expertise, equipment, information, and money. With the exception of money, most resources can be found within your team, either directly or through contacts your team made during the community assessment. Many teams feel they cannot do a project if it requires money. Don’t let the lack of financial resources be a barrier to getting your project done. This unit will help you think through your fund-raising strategy, including how to write a simple proposal.

A FUND-RAISING STRATEGY*

Before choosing a suitable fund-raising strategy, you need to think through the following questions:

1. How much money do we need to raise? Your answer will determine the types of approaches or grants you need to pursue.

2. What are the human resources available? The team must know how much time they are willing to spend on the project and the talents and abilities of team members and volunteers. For example, within our BTBC project team we identified the following types of talents: survey/questionnaire design, community event planning, conducting focus groups, interviewing techniques, helping teens and adults work as partners, team building, and leadership skills.

3. Can you afford to spend money to make money? Often fund-raising requires a certain amount of up-front money. For example, a bake sale requires the purchase of ingredients.

4. What, if anything, worked before? If you had a successful fund-raiser before, you should at least consider using the same approach again. But even with an effective approach, you may still want to diversify so you are not dependent on one source of income.

5. What is the competition for money? It is important to identify any competition or potential competition for money. If another community organization is planning a supper dance, it would probably be smart not to schedule a similar event around the same time. Sometimes groups may be able to join other groups in cosponsoring an event or submitting a joint proposal.

After thinking through these questions, you need to select a strategy to raise funds. The single best approach is asking the individual in a brief, honest, enthusiastic manner. Some people refer to this method as the eyeball-to-eyeball approach. Some other methods include the following:

- Art shows
- Dinners/suppers
- Raffles
- Auction
- Door-to-door solicitations
- Sale of services
- Babysitting
- Flea markets
- Telethons
- Bake or book sales
- Grant applications
- Workshops
- Concerts
- Phone solicitations
- Wills and bequests


Whatever method you choose, you need to investigate what revenue you could expect to generate from the activity, what costs will be incurred by your team, and the amount of time and effort required to do the fund-raising. You can find publications at your local library that will help you review the pros and cons of each of these methods. For example, most foundations only award grants to nonprofit organizations with IRS tax designations of 501(c)3. If your team is not affiliated with such an organization, you may want to establish a partnership and submit the grant under the name of the organization with the nonprofit status. For example, you may want to affiliate with a local church, your local Extension Office, or a Boys and Girls Club.

POTENTIAL GRANT SOURCES

If you are looking for more than $1,000, you may want to consider submitting a grant application. The actual writing of a grant
Building Teens for Better Communities Handbook

is not very difficult; the hard part is knowing where the money is and how to access it. Most states have directories of local foundations, which are good places to start looking for likely prospects. You can usually find these directories in your local library. Possibly the best single source of information is the Foundation Center, which is funded by foundations around the country to provide assistance to grantseekers like yourself. You can access most of the Foundation Resources on the web (http://fdncenter.org). Included on the website is a guide to writing proposals that is very helpful.

When you review potential funders, you need to look for a good match between what they want to do and what you need money to do. A good match is one where your topic is related to the funder’s mission, goals, and priorities; your location is within their geographic limitations; your budget items are within the funder’s constraints; and the past record of the foundation shows they fund programs similar to your proposed program.

PROPOSAL WRITING

Most large foundations have their own application form for grant proposals. It is critical that you follow any directives given and submit the proposal by the deadline. Failure to comply with these two requirements will most likely mean you will not get funded. If there is no application, you will need to create your own proposal. One misconception is that the longer the proposal is, the more likely it will be funded. If anything, the opposite is true. Keep your proposal as brief as possible. If page limits are given, be sure to honor them.

The Foundation Center recommends that proposals include the following components:

- The director or person in charge of the organization should sign a cover letter.
- The executive summary presents a snapshot of the proposal and is usually limited to a few paragraphs. It is very important because often the summary is used as a basis to reject or consider the proposal.
- The statement of need explains why the proposal is necessary. You can base your statement of need on your community assessment. See Deciding on the Problem, page 17.
- The project description outlines how you plan to solve the problem and gives the nuts and bolts from your action plan. See Doing the Project, page 30.
- The budget presents the financial request by line item, as well as a short narrative justifying why the money is needed.
- The organization and its expertise should be described. You need to make the case why your organization is qualified to carry out the proposal.
- Most proposals also include attachments. Typical attachments are a directory of Board of Directors, an annual report from your organization, a copy of the IRS determination, and perhaps a few excellent newspaper clippings that help to tell your story.

As part of our BTBC pilot project, our teams submitted mini-proposals to the project team. The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development grant provided the funds for the projects. A copy of the BTBC Request for Proposals is included as a guide to help your team develop a mini-proposal. Also included is the review form we used to critique proposals.

EXAMPLE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

SMALL SCALE COMMUNITY PROJECT

You are invited to submit a proposal to the Building Teens for Better Communities (BTBC) Project. Only proposals for small-scale community projects completed by April 1, 2000 will be considered. All proposals must be submitted on this application form, though you may attach up to two pages if additional space is needed. Funding is limited to $250 per team. Only proposals submitted by BTBC teams will be considered. A panel of teens and the project co-directors will review proposals. In their evaluation, reviewers will consider the problem statement, the action plan, the budget, and success indicators. Proposals must be neatly handwritten or typed. If you wish to reply electronically, you can download a copy of the RFP from your Extension Educator’s computer. The deadline for all proposals is September 30. The reviewers’ decision on each proposal will be sent to applicants by November 1. If you have any questions, contact your Extension educator or the Maryland 4-H Center (301-314-9070).
TEAM CONTACT FOR THE PROPOSAL:

Name ____________________________

Mailing Address ____________________________

Telephone Number ____________________________

Names of Team Members Submitting Proposal

__________________________________________  _______________________________________

__________________________________________  _______________________________________

__________________________________________  _______________________________________

__________________________________________  _______________________________________
Please complete this worksheet by filling in the tasks needed to be done, who will do each task, and when the task will be completed. Be as specific as possible. Remember all projects must be completed by April 1.

**PLAN OF ACTION WORKSHEET**

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<tr>
<th>Tasks to be Done</th>
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Do you expect to need assistance from members of the Building Teens for Better Communities Project Team?

   Yes___  No___

If “Yes,” what type of assistance and when would the assistance be needed? Please be as specific as possible.

3. WHAT IS YOUR BUDGET REQUEST?

Grants may be submitted for up to $250. Using the following sample as a model, please identify your budget requests and how you will use these funds in your project.

Sample Budget Request for $238

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Items</th>
<th>Why Needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. $60</td>
<td>Printing questionnaires, results of survey, and program</td>
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<td>2. $23</td>
<td>Postage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. $35</td>
<td>Invitations to meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. $95</td>
<td>Meeting materials (folders, pencils, paper, poster board)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. $25</td>
<td>Develop overheads for presentations</td>
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Budget Request for $_____

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<th>Budget Items</th>
<th>Why Needed</th>
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4. HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF YOUR PROJECT IS SUCCESSFUL?

In a paragraph, discuss how you will evaluate your project. How will you know the project was successful?

5. PLEASE SHARE ANY OTHER INFORMATION YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT FOR THE REVIEWERS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PROJECT.
PROPOSAL REVIEW FORM

Please write or print your comments clearly, as they will be sent back to the team along with the final funding decision.

Name of Proposal______________________________

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Is the problem clearly stated? Do you know how the team learned about the problem? Does the team have the time, ability, and resources needed to solve the problem?

Problem statement is:

   Unclear ____  Clear ____  Very Clear ____

Suggestions:

2. PURPOSE AND ACTION PLAN

Is the purpose of the project identified? Is the work plan complete? Do you have any suggestions to add to the work plan?

Purpose is:

   Not Identified ____  Identified ____

Action plan:

   Needs a Lot of Work ____  Is Somewhat Complete ____  Is Very Complete ____

Suggestions:
3. BUDGET REQUEST
Is the budget clearly presented? Do the budget items make sense in terms of the project?

Budget is:

Not Clear ____  Clear ____  Excellent ____

Suggestions:

4. INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
Are the indicators of success clear? Were they well chosen? Will the team be able to use these indicators to evaluate the project?

Evaluation is:

Not Appropriate ____  Somewhat Appropriate ____  Very Appropriate ____

Suggestions:

5. OVERALL COMMENTS
What are your overall feelings about this proposal? Do you feel it is worthwhile and well thought out? Do you think it will make a difference in the community?

Recommendation:

Do Not Fund ____  Fund With Changes ____  Fund As Written ____

Comments:
Unit 7 DOING THE PROJECT

by Nan Booth

You are ready to start planning your project when you have a clear understanding of the problem and have agreement among team members as to how you are going to address the problem. Often teams want to solve large problems in a short time and then become overwhelmed with what needs to be done. For example, one of our BTBC teams wanted to address the problem of lack of appreciation of different cultures by sponsoring a four-week summer day camp in their community. The idea was very good but not realistic because some of the team members had to work during the summer and others were committed to family vacations. After taking the time to think through the issues, the BTBC team decided to conduct a series of four after-school workshops on multiculturalism at two schools. Their project was realistic and successful. This unit provides a guide to help you think through issues and plan similarly successful projects. We suggest you have one of your teen members lead your team through the checklist at the end of the unit to assess your readiness to begin the project. Be sure to complete the Action Plan Worksheet. Good luck.

Is everyone on the same page?
Assuming you have all worked on deciding the problem and studying the issue, you are probably in agreement as to what generally needs to be done. However, it is good not to make that assumption without first checking it out. You may ask everyone to write down on a Post-it note what they think needs to be done, place the notes on a piece of newsprint, and read them aloud. If you don’t have general agreement on what you are about to do, you need more time to reach consensus.

What exactly do you want to do?
What do you want to accomplish? Try to be as specific as possible. It is important to write down objectives so you are able at the end of the project to assess what was actually accomplished. In writing your objectives, consider the strengths and assets of your team and community. When you think of assets, think in terms of abilities, experiences, time, equipment/facilities, and money.

How will you know if you are successful?
Even before you do the project, it is a good idea to decide how you will evaluate its success. Think through who you hope will benefit from your project, what you want to learn from doing the project, and how you will know if the community is better because of your project. By answering these questions before doing the project, you will be better able to plan for success. For example, in the multiculturalism project, the team decided to conduct a pre-test questionnaire to assess students’ understanding of cultures and a post-test to see if the workshops made any difference. They also decided to interview parents and students to evaluate the quality of the presentations. By doing the project, the team members hoped they themselves would learn more about cultures and appreciate their differences.

Who does what when?
Completing a simple action plan is one of the best ways to be sure all bases are covered. You can duplicate the worksheet at the end...
of this unit and have your team complete it together. By doing it as a group, you are more apt to involve everyone and come up with a better plan. Try to be as specific as possible with tasks to be done, names, times, and resources needed. In thinking through your action plan, it may be helpful to think of your project in three stages: 1) what needs to be done to get ready for the project, 2) tasks to be completed during the project, and 3) any follow-up actions. Encourage team members to try new skills and take on leadership roles. It is also a good time to remind members that the success of the project is dependent on everyone doing their share. As much as you can, try to involve other community groups in your plan.

Who will coordinate the efforts?

Although you are embarking on a team project, one or two individuals need to be given the authority to oversee the whole process. Your team may want to elect someone for this honor. Sometimes it is good to select co-leaders; if you decide to use two coordinators, be sure at least one of them is a youth member.

Have you planned for the unexpected?

Even the best plans are never perfect. When your plan is complete, ask yourselves “What if” questions. Your “What if” questions will vary with the type of project, but here are some common ones: “What if it rains?,” “What if the speaker does not show up?,” “What if we run out of space in the room?,” “What if we do not get the grant?,” “What if someone asks a hard question?” By thinking through these questions ahead of time, you will be able to build up your confidence to cope with the unexpected when it really does happen.

What happens when the project is over?

Whether your project is completely successful or just marginally okay, it is important to take time to reflect on what worked well, what could be improved, and what was learned. Consider how well your members functioned as a team, their use of the Youth as Partners Approach, and your evaluation indicators. Take time to celebrate even little successes and to recognize the efforts of everyone who contributed to the project. Don’t underestimate the importance of celebration and recognition. It is as critical to a team’s growth as water is to flowers. For ideas on how to celebrate and debrief, see pages 11 and 12.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Israel, Glenn, & Thomas Ilvento. (1996) Building a Foundation for Community Leadership: Involving Youth in Community Development Projects, (SRDC No. 19), Southern Rural Development Center. (Part III. School Based Community Development Project provides tips on organizing, gathering information, evaluating and celebrating, as well as ideas for community projects and a list of informational resources.)

National Youth Service Day Tool Kit (2000). Washington, DC: Youth Service America, Inc. (Chapters 4 through 7 cover the topics of planning, volunteer recruitment, fund-raising, and public relations.)


Readiness Checklist For

Name of Project ___________________________________________ Date ____________

Read through these statements and circle the most appropriate response. When all questions are answered with a yes, you are ready to start your project.

1. Everyone has the same understanding of the problem. 
   Yes   No   Don’t know
   If yes, how do you know? ___________________________________________

2. We have written down our objectives for the project. 
   Yes   No   Don’t know
   If yes, list your objectives: ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

3. Our goals are realistic and achievable. 
   Yes   No   Don’t know
   If yes, how do you know? ___________________________________________

4. We have decided to evaluate the project.  
   Yes   No   Don’t know
   If yes, describe how you will evaluate: ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

5. We have agreed upon and completed the action plan worksheet. 
   Yes   No   Don’t know

6. We have selected one or two individuals as our leaders. 
   Yes   No   Don’t know
   Our leader is ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

7. We have backup plans for the unexpected. 
   Yes   No   Don’t know
   Describe your contingency plans: ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

8. We know how we will celebrate the completion of the project. 
   Yes   No   Don’t know
   Describe your plans for recognition and celebration: _________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
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<th>Tasks to be done</th>
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YOUTH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Despite reported high rates of participation in community service, youth today seem less optimistic about their own futures and their ability to positively influence change in their communities. Assessments in Maryland, West Virginia, and New Jersey confirm this situation. Moving youth from skeptic observers to active participants to community leaders is a serious challenge facing our society.

The concept of positive youth development and community service is not new. Most of the major youth organizations in the United States build their programs on the belief that children benefit from involvement in their neighborhood and community. The recent emphasis on service-learning as one of the objectives of the National Education Goals is based, in part, on the premise that community service is an essential experience in the formation of contributing members of society. A survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics (1997) reported that 49 percent of students in 6th through 12th grades said they participated in community service at some time during the 1995-1996 school year. This high percentage may in part reflect the requirement in many schools to perform community service to graduate. AmeriCorps and the 1997 National Summit on America’s Future both build on a long tradition of volunteering in America.

Research supports the positive relationship between youth development and community service. Young people who engage in community service experience increased psychological, social, and intellectual growth (Conrad and Hedin, 1982); their involvement in the community also has a positive effect on the students’ grades and attendance (Shumer, 1994). Many experts feel that community service may help young people develop community-oriented attitudes, may encourage youth to engage in democratic processes when they become adults, and may reduce the alienation from society that adolescents often experience (Calabrese and Schumer, 1986; Conrad and Hedin, 1991; Kraft, 1996).

Despite the research findings and reported high student participation in community service, many youth appear disenchanted (U.S. Department of Education, National Educational Statistics, 1997). A 1996 Gallup Poll reported that 70 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds believed the world was a better place when their parents were young; 56 percent of the youth surveyed felt that the world would be worse for their own children. While organizing youth across the country, Cowan (1997) said the most common responses from teens to his invitation to participate were, “Why try?,” “There’s nothing we can do,” “There’s nothing that will really make a difference anyway.” Cowan concluded that pessimism was our youth’s worst enemy (1997).

In Maryland, Favero (1995) conducted a series of five focus groups of 9th grade students to obtain insights about why youth do or do not participate in their communities. He concluded, “Many youth are not motivated to participate in their communities. Among young people, ‘community service’ is a term with negative, even legal and punitive connotations. The vision of young people as change agents in their communities is not well developed, even among youth who are relatively active participants in their communities.” To successfully involve youth in community development activities, Favero advocated one of two approaches. First, he felt you can appeal to the personal benefits from participation. According to Favero, these benefits for youth include having fun with the group, exploring careers/building resumes, and feeling as if they were making a difference. The second approach is to appeal to the values of the individual child and the experience of helping others, though Favero cautions that this approach would not work for everyone.

In 1994, West Virginia University Extension requested that the Search Institute of Minneapolis profile attitudes and behaviors of students in grades 7 through 12 in four high schools in West Virginia. Among their findings, the researchers found that the majority of students (81 percent) reported they worried “a lot” about their future. 40 percent of students in grades 11 and 12 reported being anxious, worried, or upset in the past month either most or all of the time. Among the 10th and 11th graders, 28 percent reported being depressed or sad during the past month, either most or all of the time. While these statistics certainly cause concern, other findings presented are cause for optimism. Over half the children surveyed (56 percent) said they had “been involved in a project to help make life better for other people” during the previous twelve months. Nearly two-thirds of the students (63 percent) said they were interested in “learning values that will help guide them (me) through life.”

To counter the negative connotation of community service and the feeling of hopelessness experienced by many youth, community and youth developers are rethinking how best to involve youth in the community. For many years, the approach to successful outreach programs has used the expert or diffusion model. In a simple description of this approach, the new ideas spread from those who have them (i.e., experts) to those who do not (i.e., adopters or learners). Success is measured by the number...
of individuals or groups who adopt the ideas or technology of the expert. In the second approach, the collaborative model, the expert and local citizen “create local knowledge together.” Clearly the expert is still important, but through the collaborative process the end product reflects the mutual learning of all involved (Riley, 1997).

Bass (1997) suggests that the successful involvement of youth in the community should be collaborative where young people not only work with peers to address a common problem but also work with adults as partners. Bass believes that young people should have the power to make decisions, not necessarily absolute power, but a genuine influence over how the problem they wish to solve is defined and how the action plan is developed. Lastly, she believes that young people must be held accountable for the performance of work they agreed to undertake.

Bass’s ideas are mirrored in the 1994 National 4-H Strategic Plan, which states, “Youth will actively be involved as equal partners and recognized as resources in defining, developing, implementing, and continually diversifying and improving 4-H and youth development education programs.” In 1996, the National 4-H Council designed and tested a curriculum to train adults and youth to create successful youth/adult partnerships. This curriculum material, “Creating youth/adult partnerships: A training curriculum for youth, adults and youth/adult teams,” is now available for use through the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (see references beginning on this page).

PURPOSE AND FRAMEWORK

Building Teens for Better Communities provides youth with a community development experience that increases their understanding of and involvement in the community while improving their sense of self-empowerment. A secondary purpose is to train youth educators and adult volunteers to view youth as partners. The objectives of the project are the following:

1. Youth and adults engage in collaborative partnerships;
2. Youth complete a small-scale community development project that increases their understanding of community, improves their sense of self as leaders, and encourages participation in community affairs.

Building Teens for Better Communities operates within the framework of a collaboration model. Curricula from Creating Youth—Adult Partnerships (National 4-H Council, 1997), Kids’ Guide to Social Action: How to Solve Social Problems (Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 1991), and Youth as Trustees (Community Partnerships with Youth, Inc., 1994) will be used to guide this model. Building Foundations for Community Leadership—Involving Youth in Community Development Projects (Southern Rural Development Center, 1996) and the Teen Assessment Project (TAP, Northeast Rural Development Center, 1997) form the basis for the community development content.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Books


Community Partnerships with Youth, Inc. (1994) Indiana: Youth as Trustees.


**Articles**


**Other Sources**


Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development. (1997) “Teen Assessment Project (TAP) in Waldo County, Carrol County, and Concord/Lunenburg.” Contact: Steve Nelson. (TAP was originally developed at the University of Wisconsin by Stephen Small).
