

Youth Collaboration 201 Roadmap

Welcome

Welcome to the Youth Collaboration 201 Roadmap. This outline is a continuation of [Youth Collaboration 102](#) and is designed for communities, agencies, or entities that have already developed an understanding of the core principles of Youth Collaboration. Throughout this road map, we will discuss **equity in youth collaboration, Youth Action Board (YAB) governance best practices, YAB sustainability, and power sharing.**

Lesson 1: Equity in Youth Collaboration

Objectives

- Participants will understand the relationship between intersectionality and power.
- Participants will learn how to reframe adultism and be a true collaborator with LGBTQ youth.
- Participants will be introduced to the youth collaboration methodology and framework
- Participants will understand how inequity and oppression negatively impact Youth Collaboration efforts.

Intro into Oppression

Oppression

Oppression is the combination of prejudice and power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups (often called “target groups”) and benefits other groups (often called “dominant groups”), based on social identity.

Examples of these systems are racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, adultism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, transphobia, etc – and.- — and are based in the social identities we have.

These systems enable “dominant groups” to exert control over “target groups” by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to basic resources such as health care, education, employment, and housing.

Cycles of Oppression

The Cycle of Oppression model includes stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, and internalized oppression. We use the Cycles of Oppression to demonstrate how oppression is socialized, reinforced, reproduced, and internalized unless interrupted.

In order to effectively interrupt the Cycle of Oppression, we must tackle it at every point. Before we tackle the cycle points, we must understand the covert and overt dynamics that keep the Cycle of Oppression going.

Facilitators of Oppression

Power involves our abilities to act, produce, mobilize, and transform. Power

can be generated, accessed, and activated by an individual, a community or a country. The Black Lives Movement is an example of individuals accessing and activating their collective power to disrupt systems of oppression.

In social science and politics, power is the capacity of an individual to influence the conduct (behaviour) of others. The term "authority" is often used for power that is perceived as legitimate by the social structure. Power can be used as 'power over' others which is often seen as evil or unjust. In contrast, power can be used positively in partnership with others, or 'power with', which is what we aim to see more of.

We know that older adults are given power in our society that exerts control over young people and values age over experience. We know that transforming our systems is not possible without the meaningful collaboration with youth and young adults.

Discussion Questions:

- What is needed in your community to facilitate conversations on restoring power where it may have been oppressed?
- Who needs to be in the room for these conversations?
- How do you reframe/redress “-isms” when they show up? (ie. Adulthood, Racism)

Privilege provides individuals in a dominant group with exclusive access to resources such that they might feel “better than” those in the oppressed group. Privilege still exists when people don't feel “better than” others.

When privilege is in action, members of a dominant group may be considered more valuable than members of the oppressed group. Dominant groups are often granted certain rights and immunities due to their privilege that the oppressed group does not have access to.

Dominance exists when our identity groups or classes can give us a false sense of power over others. Dominance can and does impact how we work with youth and young adults. It can show up in our meetings, in the drafting of a Coordinated Community Plan (CCP), compensation, and the roles that exist in your YHDP efforts. Dominance can be tricky because it often disguises itself in the form of help (paternalistic behavior).

Dominance can be enticing and hard to resist, but we must dismantle it if we want to be good partners to youth and young adults doing YHDP work.

Types of Oppression

Ideological Oppression refers to the intentional ideological creation of “-isms.” This type of oppression uses beliefs and values to validate falsehoods that one group of people (or their way of being) is inherently superior to another group of people. Some examples of ideological oppression include patriarchy (transphobia, homophobia, sexism) and white supremacy (racism).

Institutional Oppression is when the idea that one group is better than another group and has the right to control the other gets embedded in the institutions of the society – the laws, the legal system, the education system, hiring policies, public policies, housing development, media images, political power, etc.

For example, when a woman makes two-thirds of what a man makes in the same job, this is a form of institutionalized sexism; or

When one out of every four African-American young men is currently in jail, on parole, or on probation, it is institutionalized racism; and

When psychiatric institutions and associations “diagnose” transgender people as having a mental disorder, it is institutionalized gender oppression and transphobia. (Source: Chinook Fund, Winds of Change)

Interpersonal Oppression is harm inflicted at the person-to-person level. This type of oppression emboldens individual members of a dominant group to personally mistreat individuals in the oppressed group. Interpersonal Oppression can look like ableist jokes, misgendering (or using incorrect pronouns for someone), adultist behavior, physical violence, or murder.

Internalized Oppression is harm inflicted upon oneself as a result of the different forms of oppression. Internalized oppression can manifest itself in many forms and it is often the most painful form of oppression for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals. For example BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals believing that they deserve to be treated poorly because they are unworthy of joy because of who they are.

Young people are systematically mistreated and undervalued simply for being young. It is paramount for adults to both understand and acknowledge the impact of systemic oppression before we can dismantle it in our community efforts.

Examples of what oppression looks like at every level:

- Ideological Level - “Youth do not deserve rapid rehousing...”
- Institutional Level - “Rapid rehousing does not work for youth...”
- Interpersonal Level - “Before you can have housing, you must...”
- Internalized - “I am not mature enough for my own house...”

Examples of Equity at every level:

- Ideological Level - “I believe in full partnerships with youth...”
- Institutional Level - “Rapid rehousing is a viable housing option for youth...”
- Interpersonal Level - “Youth have what they need to be housed...”
- Internalized - “I deserve my own housing...”

Systems of Oppression: Adulthood and Other -Isms

When thinking about oppression, we must consider the systems in which it operates. Oppressive behaviors are more powerful when they operate in tandem with other forms of oppression. For example, racism is more oppressive when coupled with patriarchy and transphobia.

Understanding systems of oppression better equips us to address and dismantle systems of oppression in our work.

Systems of oppression include our housing systems, education system, the judicial system, medical institutions, religious institutions, and organizations. We can explore each of these systems and find evidence of oppression.

Cycles of Identity

When we think of identity, we must consider the primary umbrellas of identity:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- First Language
- Gender
- Mental Ability
- National Origin
- Sexual Orientation
- Sex
- Spirituality
- Race
- Religion
- Physical Ability

Each of us has multiple social identities that make up who we are. There is a power dynamic at play for each of us, across each of these identities, all of the time. Aspects of our identities impact how we move and engage others in our work. It is helpful to be aware of how your personal identities may influence how you do systems-change work with others, specifically with youth and young adult (YYA) partners.

We will use the Identity Wheel (adapted from “Voices of Discovery”) to explore our individual identities. To begin, each individual will be asked to view the Identity Wheel and answer the following questions:

Identity Wheel Discussion questions:

- What part of your identity do people first notice about you?
- What part of your identity are you most comfortable sharing w/others?
- What part of your identity are you least comfortable sharing w/others?
- What part of your identity are you most proud of?
- What part of your identity do you struggle with the most?
- What part of your identity is the most important to you?
- What part of your identity is least important to you?
- What part of your identity do you face oppression for most often?
- What part of your identity do you receive privilege for most often?
- What part of your identity do you feel least comfortable with?
- Which identities have the strongest effect on how you see yourself as a person?
- What part of your identity do you see having the most effect on your interactions with youth and young adults (e.g., YAB member)?

Intersectionality

The interconnected nature of social categorizations (such as race, class, and gender) as they apply to a given individual or group are regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Source: Dr. Kimberle' Crenshaw)

Intersectionality is born out of Black feminist thought and provides a great framework from which to explore the layers of identity.

Intersectionality encompasses all the things that give depth and texture to who we are. When working with others, it is essential that we take into account the intersectionality of people's identity. Intersectionality can exist on a larger-level (e.g, a community of Black, LGBTQ+ young people) or on a smaller-level such as individuals or among groups of friends.

Intersections of Race and Identity

When we think of the youth that we work with and serve, it is imperative that we consider the relationships between race and their other identities. There is power and/or privilege in intersections of our identities. Intersectionality helps us to better understand the nuance to identity and life outcomes.

If you reflect back to the Identity Wheel, you may notice your own overlapping identities and how they either create more access to institutional power or privilege for you. Some of our identities may limit us in our access.

In your efforts to transform homelessness systems, it is imperative that you build in mechanisms (e.g., accountability tools, guiding principles, YAB governance) that allow for and uphold the richness that intersectionality can bring to your work.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Oppression

Now that we have discussed intersectionality, it is important to understand the difference between sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

Sexual Orientation describes whom a person is sexually attracted to. Some people are attracted to people of a particular gender. Others are attracted to people of more than one gender. Some are not attracted to anyone.

Sex Assigned at Birth are gender makers such as Female/Male/Intersex/Other often found on a birth certificate.

Gender identity is an individual's internal, deeply felt sense of being a man, a woman, both, or non-binary.

Gender Expression one's gender expression (e.g., masculine, feminine, androgynous, etc.) is how one embodies gender attributes, presentations, roles, and more.

Pronouns - Why We Ask (Presentation vs. Identification with Pronoun)

Gender pronouns are the terms we use to refer to people as gendered. You may be familiar with gender-binary terms like he/him and she/her. These terms fit some people, but not everyone identifies with them.

When a person shares their personal pronouns with you, they are letting you know how they would like to be addressed in the singular (referring to self) and how they want to be addressed in the third person (referring to a person when talking about them – not using their name). You may come across a variety of unfamiliar pronouns like they/them and ze/zir.

It is important to understand the value of asking and using a person's pronouns, as it communicates that you respect the person that you are working with.

Common pronouns that you may be familiar with are:

- She/Her/Hers (gendered pronouns)
- He/Him/His (gendered pronouns)
- They/Them/Theirs (gender neutral pronouns)
- Ze/Zir (gender neutral pronouns)

Small words, like pronouns, can have a big impact. They have the power to make someone feel like they're a part of something. They also have the power to isolate. Luckily, we have the power to choose the words we use.

Asking pronouns shows respect for each person's individual identity and avoids making assumptions about any person's gender. Using the wrong pronouns is harmful and violent, perpetuates stigma, and erases identities.

It is becoming more common to ask people about their pronouns, but not everyone is used to doing it. Putting pronouns into practice sometimes involves managing reactions and judgements.

Keep in mind, singling people out can make them feel uncomfortable, so if you're in a group setting, you'll want to ask everyone what pronouns they use – not just the people you're unsure about. And be sure to share your pronouns as well. Whether you realize it or not, by doing this on a regular basis, you're changing the culture around you.

Honoring pronouns also ensures that you are upholding state-based and policy-based protections for sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression rights of YYA that you work with.

Equity Discussion Questions:

- What are some ways in which you honor and acknowledge people's pronouns?
- How does your agency practice honoring and acknowledging individual identities and pronouns?
- What efforts need to be made at your agency to institutionalize honoring identities of youth and young adults (e.g., protocols, practices, etc.)?

Inequity and Oppression

Now we will explore how ableism, classism, homophobia, migration status, transphobia, sexism, anti-Blackness, and racism manifest in our decision-making spaces.

In order to better understand the impact of inequity and oppression, we must understand the different ways in which people are oppressed and the drivers of oppression.

For example, LGBTQ+ YYA may internalize their experiences with people within a harmful institution, which can then inform their personal opinion of themselves. We often witness internalized oppression among YYA that have engaged in adultist systems.

Young people are systematically mistreated and undervalued simply for being young. Understanding and acknowledging systemic oppression enables us to address inequalities.

Intersectionality Case Study:

Skye was kicked out of her home at the age of 15, when she started to identify as a Black transgender woman. At 16, Skye found herself in the foster care system and placed in a group home in a Midwestern state. Skye's child welfare placement was decided based on her assigned gender at birth, and she was sent to live in an all-male group home.

The other program participants constantly make jokes about Skye's non-binary gender expression, and she would also get into fights which often caused the staff to call the police as a disciplinary method. She ran away and started to couch surf with friends she met online. Skye now resides in a transitional living program, where there are no gender neutral restrooms.

Case Study Discussion Questions:

- What are Skye’s intersectional identities?
- Are there biases at play?
- How could systems provide concrete supports for Skye?

Recommendations to move closer to Equitable collaboration with YYA:

- Create space for identifying, processing, and releasing internalized adultism/racism.
- Embrace of discomfort or vulnerability.
- Create and Maintain a Racial Equity Team.
- Identify and Use Youth Collaboration Training/Resources.
- Investigate how White Dominant Culture is present in your work.
- Caucus when needed (BIPOC Caucus, white caucus, etc.).

Impacts of an Empty Table

If those who are most impacted are not making the decisions, the impact is going to be inequitable, ineffective, and potentially harmful. We then run the risk of replicating the systems of power that we want to challenge to end homelessness.

Hold Space for the Discussion and Set Equity Goals

It is helpful to establish equity goals early on in your efforts to create systems change at the local level. Creating equity goals can seem burdensome if it is your first attempt to establish an equity baseline, but it is essential to your work.

When YYA are at the table, make sure that they are actually at the table as a collaborative partner and not a token member.

YYA should be a part of your YHDP planning and implementation every step of the way. It is imperative to have YYA in those discussions in the beginning, middle, and end of your YHDP work.

It is also important to think about the language that you use and whether or not it is accessible to the YYA that you are collaborating with. It may be helpful to provide a list of common housing systems terminology and practices to help bring knowledge equity to the table.

To start, we recommend that you commit time to identifying equity goals and then prioritize those goals based on your local efforts with young people or even before the project starts.

Holding Space Discussion Questions:

- What do Racial Equity and Gender Equity currently look like for YYA accessing services at Youth-Serving Organizations? In policy? In practice?
- How do we ensure that equity is addressed in the Coordinated Community Plan?

- How do we ensure that all YHDP projects address equity?
- What tools or resources are needed to continue to have conversations that address Equity? Which stakeholders need to be present for these conversations?
- How do we equip YYA with the capacity to take leadership roles in addressing equity? Are there current opportunities for YYA to lead on equity work within the CoC?
- How will we measure implementation strategies? How will we identify and hold organizations accountable?

Collaborating on Services

In order to collaborate with youth that participate in your programs and services, it is important to honor their autonomy to make important decisions that impact their lives.

Collaboration Example:

A service provider could use an intake form to educate young people about different available housing options rather than making the choice for them. This allows young people to make informed decisions for themselves.

Create safety by differentiating between a young person's role as a participant and as a collaborator. For example, provide a clearly written policy to assure youth that their experience and access to services will not be adversely affected if they offer negative feedback about the program.

Youth participants sometimes require support from adult partners to become equipped with the tools they need to make informed decisions. In order to have meaningful collaboration:

- Reduce power imbalances and their impacts on young people.
- Create spaces where young people feel safe to make important decisions.
- Create systems that honor the decision making power of youth and young adults and show youth that their decisions create results.

Leadership and Professional Development

As you work with YYA as collaborative partners, you should consider providing professional and leadership development opportunities for the YAB members. Professional and leadership development will look different for each community. We recommend that you consider the following:

- Create a pipeline from lived expertise to full-time employment.
- Provide cover letter/resume writing learning opportunities.
- Host virtual or in-person networking events.
- Mentor YAB members.
- Create positions that are open to YAB members as candidates.
- Partner with organizations that are willing to hire young people post YAB membership.

Youth Collaboration Guiding Principles

Why Guiding Principles?

It is important that youth collaboration principles be at the center of your service provision or creation of youth leadership bodies. These Guiding Principles are:

- **Set leaders up for success.** Before asking young people for their expertise, ensure they have the necessary tools to support them throughout the process. For instance, if you're having a conversation about policy, create a list of local, state, and federal agencies, including their acronyms and the work they do. You might also create a list of system terms and definitions in addition to organizational programs.
- **Reduce barriers to participation.** Provide various channels for young adult leaders to offer their input and feedback. Options could include organizing discussion groups and listening sessions, distributing printed materials to gather written responses, and collaborating on a shared drive or online document.
- **Set clear and realistic deadlines.** Be mindful that youth and young adults have personal lives outside of this work. Keep each other accountable by scheduling milestone dates together.
- **Highlight the impact of the work.** Give clear examples of how youth input was influential in the final decision or product. Consider both local and national impact.

Youth Collaboration and COVID

It may be difficult to have meaningful engagement during these uncertain times. Below are a few pointers from the Massachusetts Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission on best practices for virtual meetings in the time of COVID-19.

1. YAB leaders (coordinators) should try to include a phone/audio access to meetings in addition to the video conferencing.
2. Check in with YAB members before setting up the first virtual meeting to see who has access to phones or laptops, internet, etc. and how to best support them in connecting.
3. Identify funds to support YYA's ability to stay connected.
4. Service providers should consider ways they can help connect YYA to their wifi in the building. If wifi access is currently staff-only, consider finding ways to also offer separate public or "guest" access.
5. Housed YYA may qualify for some low-budget internet packages, there are some especially good deals right now to help people get connected
6. YYA enrolled in schools may be able to request to borrow Chromebooks or laptops from their school.
7. HUD has approved wifi and some technology to be covered under a COC's planning dollars if other free resources do not exist. For more guidance, please see [HUD's Office of Special Needs COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions Resources](#).

Lesson 2: YAB Governance

Objectives

- Participants will understand the importance of establishing collective agreements.
- Participants will be able to identify the models of decision making.
- Participants will learn how to support YYA in accessing their personal power and autonomy.

Collective Values

The Importance of Stating Group Values

Establishing group values will be the foundation of what the YAB will choose to work on and how they can collaboratively do it together.

Collective values may include:

- Advocacy
- Accountability
- Awareness
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Compassion
- Courage
- Creativity
- Dignity
- Education
- Guidance
- Honor
- Honesty
- Humility
- Integrity
- Innovation
- Power
- Respect
- Service
- Support
- Trust

Decision Making and Governance Models

Models of Decision Making

YABs are encouraged to identify and decide on a decision making model that works best for the collective. Making decisions can be challenging. Decision making models can support the YAB in moving forward proposals, policies, practices, and other YAB related business such as voting on bylaws, work, pay structure. One of the most familiar decision making models is the Majority Rule model, where decisions are made based on a majority vote. Additional decision making models include consensus, or yay/nay voting practices.

Consensus Voting is a decision making process that is most likely to ensure that each person's input is valued, heard and considered. It allows for decisions to be made although all parties may not agree. With consensus voting all parties agree that they can live with the decision.

Majority Rule Voting involves decisions being made when more than half the group votes in favor of the choice(s). With majority rule decisions there may be the risk of not having the full support of all voting participants.

Unanimous Voting requires that all group members must agree that the decision is the best choice for the group. Unanimous voting is frequently used for easier/smaller decisions. Unanimous voting can be challenging because it might be impossible to reach a decision that all YAB members agree to. Be careful not to confuse unanimity with consensus voting.

Governance Models

It is imperative to decide on and to develop a governing structure for the YAB when implementing YHDP in your community. There are several models for effective governance structures and we suggest the following roles for consideration as you begin to establish your YHDP YAB.

- Chair/Co-Chairs; Delegates as “Coordinators” or “Leads”
- Flat Leadership; Executive Committee/General Forum
- President/VP; Delegates as “Secretaries”
- Core Group; Contributing Members (Official or Unofficial Status)

These roles will support the YAB as it advises the CoC on policies and procedures that affect youth experiencing homelessness and as they participate in ongoing professional development and training.

Membership Requirements

HUD requires the creation of a Youth Action Board consisting of youth and young adults with lived experiences of housing instability and homelessness. It is important to establish membership requirements before you begin YAB recruitment so they are clear and transparent from the beginning. Requirements should align with your YHDP project work plan/activities. Membership requirements may include:

- YYA with Lived Experience
- YYA with a desire to change the local housing system
- YYA with organizing experience
- LGBTQ+ Individuals
- BIPOC Individuals

Other considerations for YAB membership may include details on your membership processes.

Membership Process Questions:

- How long does it take for a YYA to become a member of the YAB?
- What is the membership process?
- What are the membership terms?

Membership Activities: SMARTIE Goals

We recommend that the YAB develop SMARTIE Goals. The Management Center has recently started advocating for SMARTIE goals which are more inclusive to our work. SMARTIE Goals have inclusion and equity built into the planning process.

YAB member activities should follow the SMARTIE Goals model for planning YHDP governance and implementation activities. Once the YAB members are selected and convened, they should start working on identifying SMARTIE goals for their functionality as a unit and for the collaborative efforts of your YHDP team.

SMARTIE goals are:

- Specific - is simple, sensible, significant
- Measureable - can be measured, meaningful, motivating
- Assignable/Attainable - can be done, agreed upon, attainable
- Realistic - are reasonable, relevant, results-based
- Time Bound - is time-specific, timely, time-sensitive
- **Inclusive - is comprehensive, broad in approach**
- **Equitable - is ethical, fair, and just**

SMART Goal Example 1: Build a YAB of 10 active members by November 2020.

SMARTIE Goal Example 1: Recruit and train at least 10 LGBTQ youth of color as YAB members, so that they can effectively work to end homelessness for LGBTQ youth of color.

SMART Goal Example 2: Develop a YAB Budget by January 2021.

SMARTIE Goal Example 2: Identify supplemental funding for a YAB-Managed project budget to cover the cost of childcare for YAB members with children.

Recruitment Strategy

Spread the word at multiple youth-serving organizations (YSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), public and online spaces that YYA frequent (e.g., drop in centers, social media sites). *Do not rely on one organization to recruit from.*

The recruitment strategy should intentionally focus on demographics served as well as marginalized populations within the community.

Remember to prioritize persons with current or past experience of homelessness or housing instability. Be sure to include space (membership seats) for those without lived experience as contributors (if allowed by governance/membership requirements).

YYA should be responsible for creating and informing your YHDP strategies.

Retention Strategy

- Create space for YYA experiencing homelessness, specifically those regaining stability or in crisis.
- Develop a work plan for YYA members to meet and work remotely (i.e. Google Hangouts).
- Allow space for YAB members to discuss needs, with an action plan for follow up (i.e. resource referral, immediate access).
- Include language in membership requirements for off boarding, replacement of responsibilities.
- YYA should be responsible for creating and informing strategy. Adult partners are welcomed to guide.

Autonomy & Power

Autonomy - Young adults should have the freedom and agency to be the leaders of their own lives. Their autonomy should be promoted as they make decisions about the issues that impact their lives.

Building Trust - Establishing and building trust is essential in any effective working relationship. Once positive rapport is established, genuine collaboration can begin.

Meaningful Engagement - Meaningful engagement allows us to share power. In practice, meaningful engagement acknowledges the value that YYA bring to the movement. Meaningful engagement is done in a way that makes the movement work accessible for the YYA that you may work with. YYA should be invited to participate in efforts that value inclusion and diversity. We recommend that you take special care not to tokenize YYA or engage them in a way that has no real value or impact on local efforts.

Sharing Power: Equitable Collaboration

Youth and Young Adults need to know that they have power. The power that exists within YYA should be reinforced by our systems or structures that guide our work. We must ensure that youth-serving systems are informed by YYA and reserve the space for YYA to have voting, hiring, and decision making power.

Best Practices for YAB in CoCs

When engaging YYA leaders in YHDP activities, it is paramount that we:

- Set youth and young adult leaders up for success.
- Create a collaborative environment for input and feedback.
- Set clear and realistic deadlines.
- Uplift the impact of their work.

The YAB should be encouraged and supported as they generate ideas and strategies for YHDP. The YAB should agree on YHDP planning and implementation activities such as informing the contents of the Coordinated Community Plan (CPP).

Questions to consider for CoC integration and Authentic Youth Collaboration in practice:

- How are YYA incorporated into CoC? Mission, Vision, Responsibilities? Are these relevant to YHDP efforts?
- How are YAB members included in CoC Governance?
- Who is doing a good job at youth collaboration in the community? How can those efforts be replicated?

Lesson 3: YAB Sustainability

Objectives

- Participants will understand the value of lived experience and how to uphold the voices of those with lived experience.
- Participants will understand best practices for creating an equitable relationship with the YAB.
- Participants will learn techniques for leveraging the power and expertise of the YAB.

Retention

Keeping Lived Experience in the YAB

It is important to keep the voices of those with lived experience at the forefront to your work. Be mindful of power balances (or imbalances) among the YAB. Support relationship building and expansion among the YAB.

Work with the YAB to create communication pathways, celebrations opportunities, and other ways to connect and build community among themselves. Provide functional space for the YAB

to meet. Mentor and/or create mentoring opportunities for YAB members. Creating networking and other professional development opportunities for YAB members.

Discussion Question:

- What are we doing to ensure that YYA stay on the YAB?

Equity within the YAB

Building Equity and Equal Partnerships

The YAB should have the power and agency to lead itself with the support of older adult partners. In your work to build equity you should first ensure that the YAB members have the appropriate tools and professional development opportunities to be impactful.

Create an inclusive environment for the YAB to move from a sub-committee role to an equal partnered committee member.

Be intentional about the decision-making power that youth have in your work. Youth are the experts of their own truth.

When asking young people to be involved in your work, hear them out and build a reciprocal relationship where you honor their experiences, allowing their experiences and ideas to inform the process.

Equity questions to consider:

- In what ways do youth directly impact decisions in my organization?
- In what ways are youth a part of generating solutions?
- How are youth in my organization benefiting from the value of their lived experience?

Remember, not to speak for a young person, but rather to elevate their voice in a way that is empowering.

Community Support of the YAB

Leveraging the power and expertise of the YAB

YAB members will need to be equitably compensated for their time, expertise and contributions. Without quick and dependable payments, YAB members cannot be expected to stay or to be present in full capacity.

Common issues for YAB compensation include CoCs lack of funding for YABs; lack of multiple funding sources; inability to pay living/sustainable wages to YAB members; and the CoC or one entity solely funding the YAB.

The CoC is oftentimes seen as “THE” community leadership body but should not be solely responsible for taking on funding of and supporting the YAB.

Efforts should be made from multiple community stakeholders (local school districts, social service organizations, and LGBTQ+ organizations, etc.) to fund and support YAB salaries, projects, recruitment and retention, mentorship and other YAB related developments.

Funding

Alternative Funding

Examples of alternative funding opportunities may include innovative fundraising events, in-kind donations from partners, unrestricted funds, divested funds, and private donations. These types of funding opportunities can be utilized to create a funding stream to sustain the YAB. Alternative funds are resources that exist outside of YHDP funds, or other dollars that are already earmarked for a specific purpose.

Alternative funding is recommended even if the YAB already has funding for certain projects and needs.

Unrestricted Funding

YAB budgets can be small, so getting external funding can make or break YAB participation, retention, and impact. Unrestricted funds that are not tied to a specific deliverable or outcome are important for YAB needs.

While YHDP specifically allows for flexibility around grant dollars to support the YAB; there can be limitations. Technological needs are the biggest need communities have found they struggle with being able to cover.

YAB members access to tech devices that allow for participation remotely; chromebooks, laptops, tablets, smartphones, MiFi (portable WiFi devices) are several needs that often go unmet for YAB members that otherwise don't have access to these devices.

Private funds in the form of fundraised dollars or in-kind donations can serve as unrestricted funding for the YAB. Resources from unrestricted funding can be used to purchase electronic devices and other necessities for YAB members. These devices can be either gifted to or leased by YAB members.

Many employers provide work phones to alleviate employees having to use their personal devices and data to complete work tasks. While YAB members aren't often considered “employees,” they are contributing to YHDP and their efforts spent using personal devices should be considered.

A comprehensive fundraising plan should be developed (in collaboration with YYA of course) that details exactly what YAB members have identified as a need, what they have (or anticipate having), and how these resources will be obtained.

Equitable Funding

Equitable funding requires a comprehensive budget that details all funding streams that will be used to fund the YAB. A comprehensive budget should include paying YAB members living wages, funding programming and team building activities, funding technology needs, and professional development opportunities. This budget should be created and approved by the YAB.

TCU Tip: Identify the geographic locations and their living wage using the living wage calculator [here](#).

Take time to ensure YAB members understand funding streams, fiscal periods, and projections. Partner with them to build their understanding of the limitations and reach of funding sources.

Dedicate time to work with the YAB to collaborate on creating a YAB-specific budget. This can be done in tandem with YAB CoC Board members participating in budgeting and auditing of the CoCs budget.

YAB members should have agency over decisions and funding that supports YAB activities. Have YAB members identify team building activities. Some ideas might include a recreation or theme park. Although this may seem like young people just wanting fun financed, remember that team building for young people may look drastically different than what a team of older adults would have in mind for team building.

Consider providing YAB members with iPads and MiFi devices that can be used to stay connected. If provided, consider diversifying funding sources as to allow for YAB members to keep these devices while serving their YAB term and once they've termed out.

Partner with the YAB to fundraise or seek out sources to sustain the YAB beyond the current cohort. This promotes YAB autonomy, teaches budgeting, and financial literacy skills, and provides prioritization and project management skills in an equitable manner which can then influence future tasks and operations.

Alternatively, this will also allow for YAB members to understand limitations due to funding a real issue that many communities face, and will challenge YAB members to be resource conscious and resourceful in identifying opportunities for sustainable development.

Lesson 4: Power Sharing

Objectives:

- Participants will be introduced to the different types of power and strategies for utilizing them.
- Participants will understand how equitable partnerships restore power to young people.
- Participants will learn strategies for providing supportive coaching and professional development to young people.

Defining Power

What is power?

Socially, power is defined as access to resources and institutions; the ability to exercise control, influence others and gain access to decision-makers to get what you want done.

Historically, power has been hoarded often by one or a few groups in order to achieve complete control. We define this as oppression.

Oppression is defined as the systematic subjugation of a social group by another social group with access to institutional or systemic power. Individuals belonging to the dominant group have access to privilege and benefit at the expense of individuals in the subordinate group.

$$\text{Oppression} = \text{Power} + \text{Prejudice}$$

Different models/Types of power

Legitimate Power – comes from an elected, selected, or appointed position of authority and may be underpinned by social norms. There's a range of this type, which can come in the form of legitimate position power, such as Congress' legitimacy to make war, or a police officer to pull over someone speeding. Reciprocity exists when one feels obligated to return an action to one that has leveraged their power in a beneficial way for another.

Equitable Power – follows the social norms of equity, which makes people feel committed to compensate someone who has been exploited, oppressed, or unseen. This power is based on the premise that there is a wrong that can be made right.

Dependence power - is based on social responsibility. Social responsibility norm states how people feel obligated to help someone who is in need of aid. Often this power is only recognized by someone based on their role or title and not necessarily the person themselves.

Referent Power – is rooted in the affiliations we make and/or the groups and organizations we belong to. Think of the power that a leader has from their base (i.e. Feel The Bern, MAGA) or a union leader from those in their union and others that support unions (i.e. Labor Unions).

Expert Power – is based on what one knows, their experiences (i.e. lived experience), and special skills or talents. Expertise can be demonstrated by reputation, credentials certifying expertise, and actions. Expert power can then be divided into positive and negative types.

Positive Type of Expert Power - is when Expert Power is used to influence one around instruction provided via the expert. For example, being able to successfully carry out a meticulous task based on expert instruction. This type of power is highly functional when instruction provided from individuals with lived expertise.

Negative Type of Expert Power results from a person acting in opposition to the expert's instructions if the person(s) feels that the expert has personal gain motives. In a negative way, some experts may focus too much on the specifics of expertise and not allow for additions or other perspectives. Expert power is not everlasting as absolute and all expertise isn't coupled with common sense or an ethical/moral approach. Negative expert power often doesn't factor in a common sense approach or may even be arbitrary to the average person due to its ethical approach.

Reward Power – is based on the right of someone to offer or deny tangible, social, emotional, or spiritual rewards to others based on what is wanted or expected of them.

Coercive Power – uses the threat of force to gain compliance. Force may include physical, social, emotional, political or economic means. This type of power can further be divided into two subtypes: Impersonal and Personal.

Impersonal coercion relates a person's belief that the influencing person has the real power to physically threaten, impose a monetary fine or dismiss another. For example, an employee's belief of a supervisor's power because a supervisor constantly reiterates that everyone's employment is AT-WILL and no one's job is guaranteed.

Personal coercion relates to a threat of rejection or the possibility of disapproval from a person who is highly valued. For example, a threat from a supervisor to an employee for not working on a project.

Information Power – is held by a person or entity that possesses knowledge or information that is not easily/freely accessible to others. Information Power provides the power to people/entities to control or manipulate others who may not have access to credibly sourced information. For example, confidential/sensitive information is only granted to government officials with security clearance; at colleges/universities knowledge is required for advanced degree/diploma/certification.

Agency and Returning Power

Agency

Agency can be defined as the capacity of an individual to act independently and make their own decisions. How one achieves agency and navigates their agency to self-determine their lives is essential to achieving the tenants of equity (this is especially true for young people).

Roles

What existing roles are there?

- YAB-OAP (Older Adult Partner) Roles
 - YAB Specialist/Liaison
 - YAB Chair
 - YAB Members
- CoC Roles
 - CoC Director
 - CoC Operations Director
- Stakeholders Roles

Utilize the Power

Power can be yielded on multiple levels depending on who possesses which type. For example, YYA with lived experience might offer expertise on equitable policies and procedures being implemented by CoCs – which are then copied by other community stakeholders.

Identify what powers you possess in your current role (Service Provider, YAB Member, Management, Funder etc.) Think about the specific privileges and authorities that come along with that power and begin to outline how best to power-share, as well as how to leverage your power in the most equitable ways.

Equity in Collaborative Relationships

Program Planning

In order for efforts to be truly equitable, YYA must be involved in all aspects of planning. This includes the following:

- YAB Creation
- Coordinated Community Plan
- Request for Proposals

Opportunities for collaborating with organizations to equitably plan their proposals should be considered (e.g., wrap around programs and stabilization programs). Enrichment Programs are also programs that can allow for development through collaboration.

YYA in Funding Decisions, Assessments, and Evaluations

YAB members should be given literacy resources and training on funding sources; be invited to participate in budgeting (proposing and managing); and actively participate in Project Plans and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) efforts.

YYA on CoC Boards

YYA should have decision making power within CoC Boards and other CoC committees with decision making authority. Having YYA on the CoC Board allows for power sharing, shared learning, accountability, and mentorship. When collaborating with young people, consider having at least two YYA seats should be added to the board with voting rights.

Board charters should also be amended to include YYA voting seats as well as YYA inclusion in all aspects of CoC work. Ideally, the beginning of YHDP or after a community has been notified of their acceptance are good times to start auditing current board charters and making necessary adjustments to allow for YAB/YYA voting seats.

YYA on Youth-Serving Organization Boards

YYA should have decision making power within and outside of the YHDP project. YYA should be supported in serving on boards of Youth Serving Organizations (some of which may not be YHDP grant recipients) and other decision-making bodies. Decision making opportunities should include YYA serving on boards of youth-serving organizations and other decision making bodies that have decisions directly impacting YYA experiencing homelessness.

In addition to serving on boards, it is important to increase YYA access to employment, specifically for those transitioning from YAB or from other supportive roles.

Holistic Training

Do not shy away from preparing YYA for success in their roles working in homeless systems, multi-specialty teams, and board appointments. First, start with assessing YYA desires for learning. Ask them what they are most interested in learning about during their time as YAB members working on YHDP for instance.

Assess YYA knowledge around homelessness systems, policies, and foundational language. This will give you a good baseline for the learnings that will be needed for the duration of your work.

Identify training opportunities to allow for YYA to be able to participate with adequate background knowledge and literacy. Some examples might include racial equity, gender equity, or professional skills such as networking.

In partnership with the YYA, identify training opportunities that give them hard skills such as resume writing, grants reviewing, or project planning.

Supportive Coaching and Professional Development

Providing multiple outlets of professional development for YYA to grow into professional roles. Allow space for YYA to identify what skills they are interested in developing or honing. This may include resume workshops, interview preparation, financial literacy, soft skills, skill share workshops just to name a few. This can also look like demonstrating equitable hire practices such as auditing job descriptions to include lived experience in lieu of formal/college education or degree(s). For example, removing degree requirements from entry level positions that don't carry a legal/ethical requirement for a degree or certification. Removing barriers to these positions allow for YYA with lived experience to apply and secure employment in a profession vs. gig/temporary/non-sustainable employment.

Many YYA with housing instability or homelessness may not have had access to college or to complete a degree program or steady gainful employment, but may have significant experience navigating housing systems and/or contributing to teams in a volunteer or entry level capacity. These transferable skills should be sought after when looking to hire YYA with lived experience.

Create positions that YYA would excel best in. Provide person-to-person training or peer coaching for positions.

Leadership Development

Investing in collaboration with Young Leaders looks like moving to equip young people with the tools offered in holistic and professional development. Leadership development should focus on pairing and mentoring of YYA by career staff that will allow for transference of knowledge and skills.

This also allows for the opportunity for young people to develop leadership skills in a systemically diverse environment (Youth & Young Adults, Single Adults, Families & Veterans).

[True Colors United's Project Management Toolkit](#) offers access for a collaborative effort to manage projects in an equitable manner for YYA of diverse experiences. Adding YYA to a board is a great start, but having YYA with lived experience on management teams allows for inclusion and reflection of the collaborative ideals.