

Bringing Youth and Young Adult Voice to Substance Use Prevention and Early Intervention



Strategies and Tools to Advance Engagement

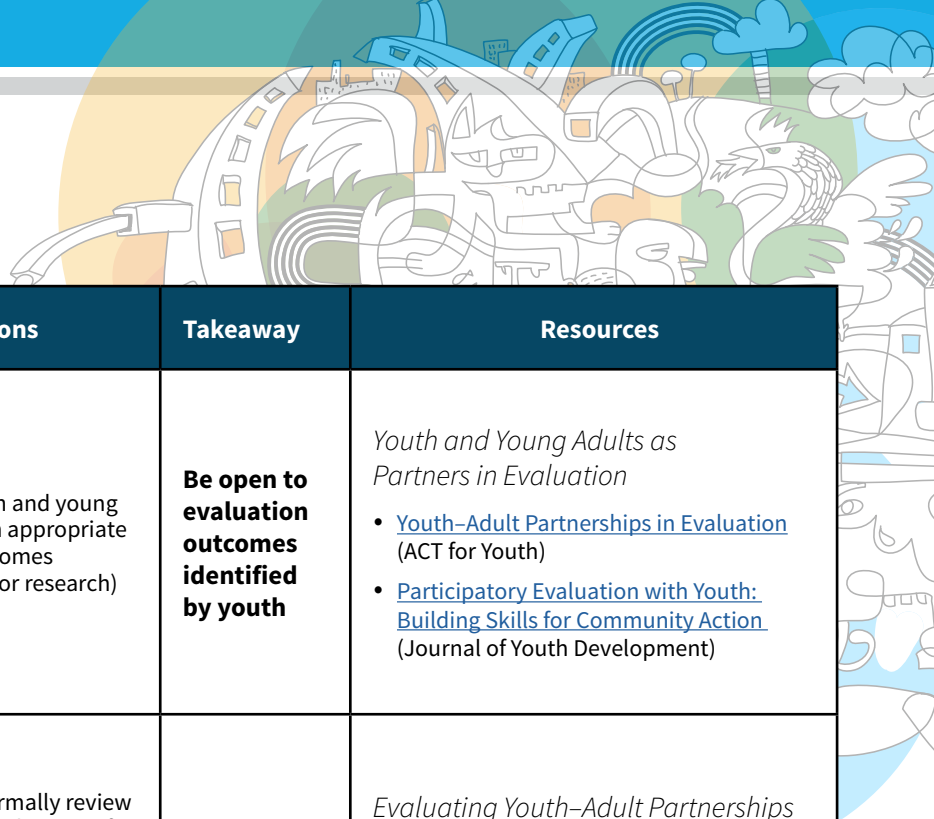
Communities and organizations are increasingly acknowledging the need to collaborate with youth or young adults to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, authenticity, and reciprocity. Any clinic, school, or national and community program can engage young people in respectful, mutually beneficial ways. All programs that already engage with young people or plan to do so should continually assess and improve their efforts.

The following recommendations, which are organized by phase of project, address common challenges, key takeaways, and tools and resources to advance your efforts to engage youth and young adults. Find where your organization stands—whether initiating youth and young adult engagement activities, evaluating impact, or somewhere in between—and explore how, in partnering with young people, you can enhance your strategies.

Project Phase	Challenge	Recommendations	Takeaway	Resources
Initiation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating the value of engaging with youth and young adults Establishing leadership buy-in 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Use evidence of positive outcomes in similar fields or projects, including concrete outcome/performance data where possible Create multimedia resources that demonstrate benefits for young people and adults Anticipate resistance and have ready responses/solutions 	Emphasize the mutual benefits	<p><i>Guides</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth-Adult Partnerships in Community Decision Making (4-H) Being Y-AP Savvy: A Primer on Creating and Sustaining Youth-Adult Partnerships (University of Wisconsin-Madison and 4-H) Youth-Adult Partnerships in Public Action (Forum for Youth Investment) Washington Youth Voice Handbook (Common Action)
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the appropriate level of engagement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Allow young people to set parameters for participation from the outset Remain flexible to variations in time commitment, experience, and interest Agree on reasonable expectations regarding timelines, contributions, and communication Establish a ladder of participation (particularly for longer projects) 	Balance structure and flexibility	<p><i>Readiness Assessments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Adult Engagement Readiness Assessment (Youth Infusion) Youth Development Readiness Assessment (Cornell University) Youth Involvement Assessment (University of Kentucky)



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Planning	4. Seeking diversity and inclusion 5. Recruiting young people	a. Invest in advertising or outreach in varied formats and channels b. Involve young people in recruitment planning and materials development c. Employ targeted recruitment strategies d. Evaluate current practices; assess diversity and inclusion among adult staff e. Be cognizant of language and implicit biases	Actively seek out and include historically excluded youth	<i>Recruitment Guides</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say Y.E.S. to Youth: Youth Engagement Strategies (Penn State University) <i>Diversity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging Youth from Diverse Backgrounds (Pg. 37. Government of Canada)
	6. Laying the groundwork for collaboration 7. Training adults and young people	a. Incorporate youth and young adult voice into planning from the outset b. Build and capitalize on local connections and existing organizations c. Clearly outline goals for the partnership in collaboration with youth and young adults d. Participate in joint training and team building activities e. Establish a “youth liaison” role for younger adult staff	Start locally and share decision making	<i>Training</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Engagement Matters (University of Minnesota Extension) • YouthPower Action Training (USAID) • Youth Engagement Webinars (Youth Move National)
Implementation and Monitoring	8. Avoiding tokenism	a. Emphasize democracy and transparency b. Grant autonomy and provide leadership opportunities	Allow youth to define their involvement	<i>Specific Engagement Guides</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth in Policymaking and Advocacy (Centers for Disease Control) • Better Together: A Practical Guide to Effective Engagement with Young People (Government of South Australia) • Leading the Way: Engaging Youth in Health Care (School-Based Health Alliance)
	9. Fostering meaningful engagement	a. Begin with understanding the interests, goals, and skills of individual young people b. Ensure youth and young adults feel they are in a “safe space” to share openly	Individualize the experience	
	10. Sustaining meaningful engagement	a. Incorporate creative roles such as peer trainers, consultants, providers, and advocates b. Encourage skill-development, professional development, and personal growth via cross-learning	Facilitate growth	



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Evaluation	11. Defining program success	a. Work with youth and young adults to design appropriate evaluation outcomes (programmatic or research)	Be open to evaluation outcomes identified by youth	<p><i>Youth and Young Adults as Partners in Evaluation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth-Adult Partnerships in Evaluation (ACT for Youth) • Participatory Evaluation with Youth: Building Skills for Community Action (Journal of Youth Development)
	12. Assessing the partnership	<p>a. As a group, informally review the successes and issues of each activity or meeting</p> <p>b. Formally assess experiences of youth and adults with surveys, interviews, or focus groups</p> <p>c. Gather individual experiential feedback to improve future activities for that individual or for the program</p>	Prioritize routine feedback and positive experiences	<p><i>Evaluating Youth-Adult Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Engagement Tool (YET) and Organizational-Youth Engagement Tool (Community Youth Connection) • Youth-Adult Partnership Assessment Tool (Zeldin et al, 2004) • Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric (Michigan State University) • Youth Involvement and Engagement Assessment Tool (University of Kentucky)

Substance use prevention and early intervention strategies for adolescents have historically been developed, implemented, and informed by adult perspectives. In an effort to bring youth and young adult voices together to transform how youth substance use prevention and early intervention stakeholders think about these services and supports, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation is partnering with the Center for Social Innovation (C4) to explore the current status of and potential opportunities for engagement with young people. Youth Engagement Strategies and Support (YESS) leverages the learning of pioneers in youth engagement and explores how these lessons can be applied to adolescent substance use prevention and early intervention.