

A background photograph showing a group of young people in a workshop or classroom setting. They are sitting around a table, engaged in a collaborative activity. One person is using an orange marker to draw on a large sheet of paper. There are various supplies on the table, including a blue cup of markers, a green mug, and a rolled-up white tube. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a daytime indoor environment.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

MODELS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Why is engaging youth important?

Deeper Understanding – Learning from the experiences of youth in your community enable deeper understanding of the challenges they face, as well as what's working

Better Policies – When youth work with adults to create decisions and policies, the results are more likely to be reflective of what youth want

Youth Voice – Sharing their stories and participating in decisions allows youth an opportunity to develop and expand leadership and advocacy skills

Youth Mattering – When young people feel that they 'matter' to their communities, and are surrounded by a supportive network of adults, they are more likely to thrive. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey has classified "mattering" as a key indicator of well-being for youth.

What Can Youth Engagement Look Like?

Youth councils

Digital engagement platforms like TTE, Polis, or All Our Ideas

Video or In-Person dialogues

Surveys

Intergenerational advisory boards

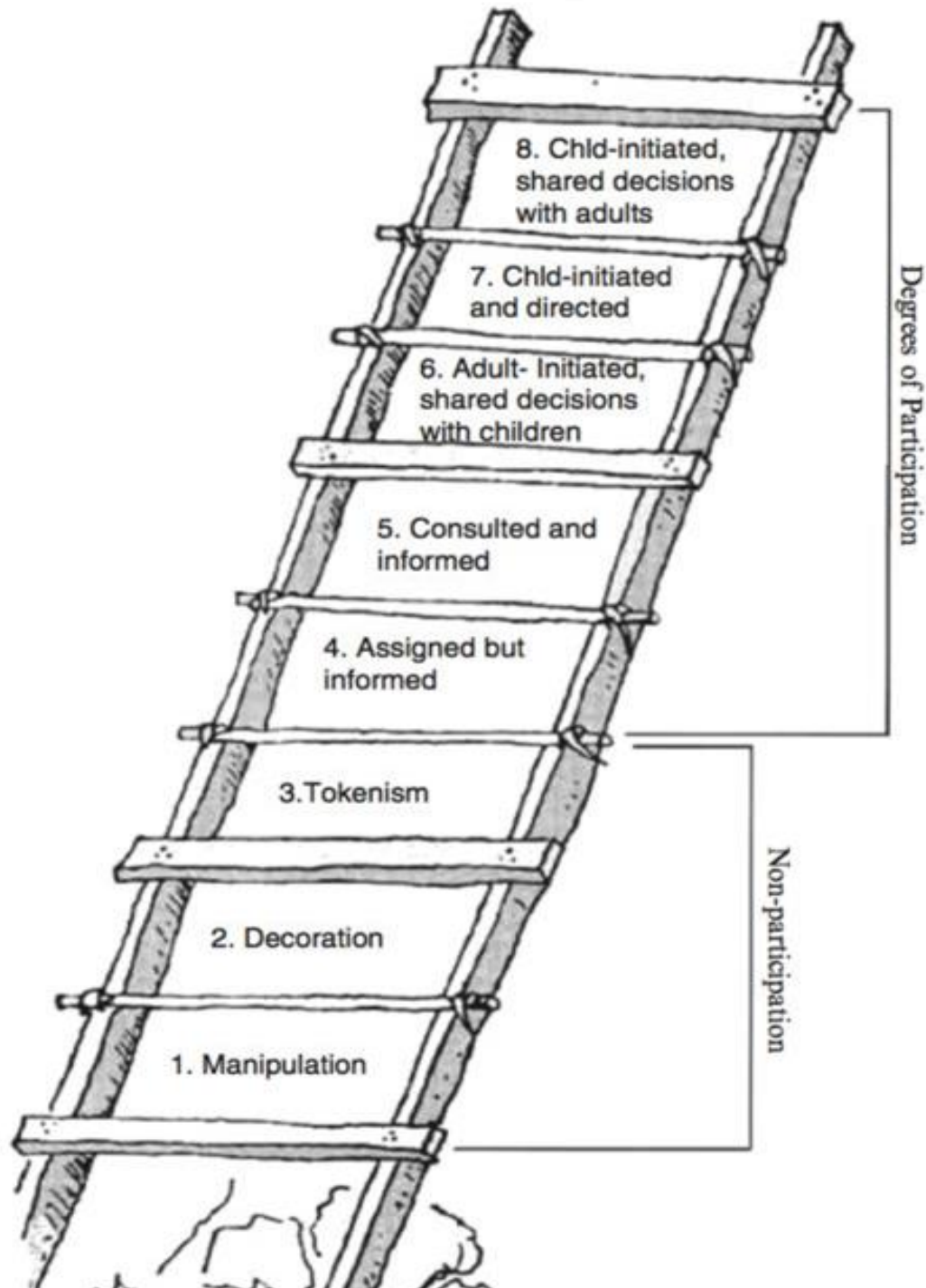
Participatory budgeting

Crowdsourcing

MODELS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- ❖ Hart's Ladder of Participation
- ❖ Youth Engagement Continuum
- ❖ Positive Youth Development





Hart's Ladder of Participation



**YOUTH SERVICES
APPROACH**

- Defines young people as clients
- Provides services to address individual problems and pathologies of young people
- Programming defined around treatment and prevention

**YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT**

- Provides services and support, access to caring adults and safe spaces
- Provides opportunities for the growth and development of young people
- Meets young people where they are
- Builds young people's individual competencies
- Provides age appropriate support
- Emphasizes positive self identity
- Supports youth-adult partnerships

**YOUTH
LEADERSHIP**

Includes components of youth development approach plus:

- Builds in authentic youth leadership opportunities within programming and organization
- Helps young people deepen historical and cultural understanding of their experiences and community issues
- Builds skills and capacities of young people to be decision makers and problem solvers
- Youth participate in community projects

**CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT**

Includes components of youth development & youth leadership plus:

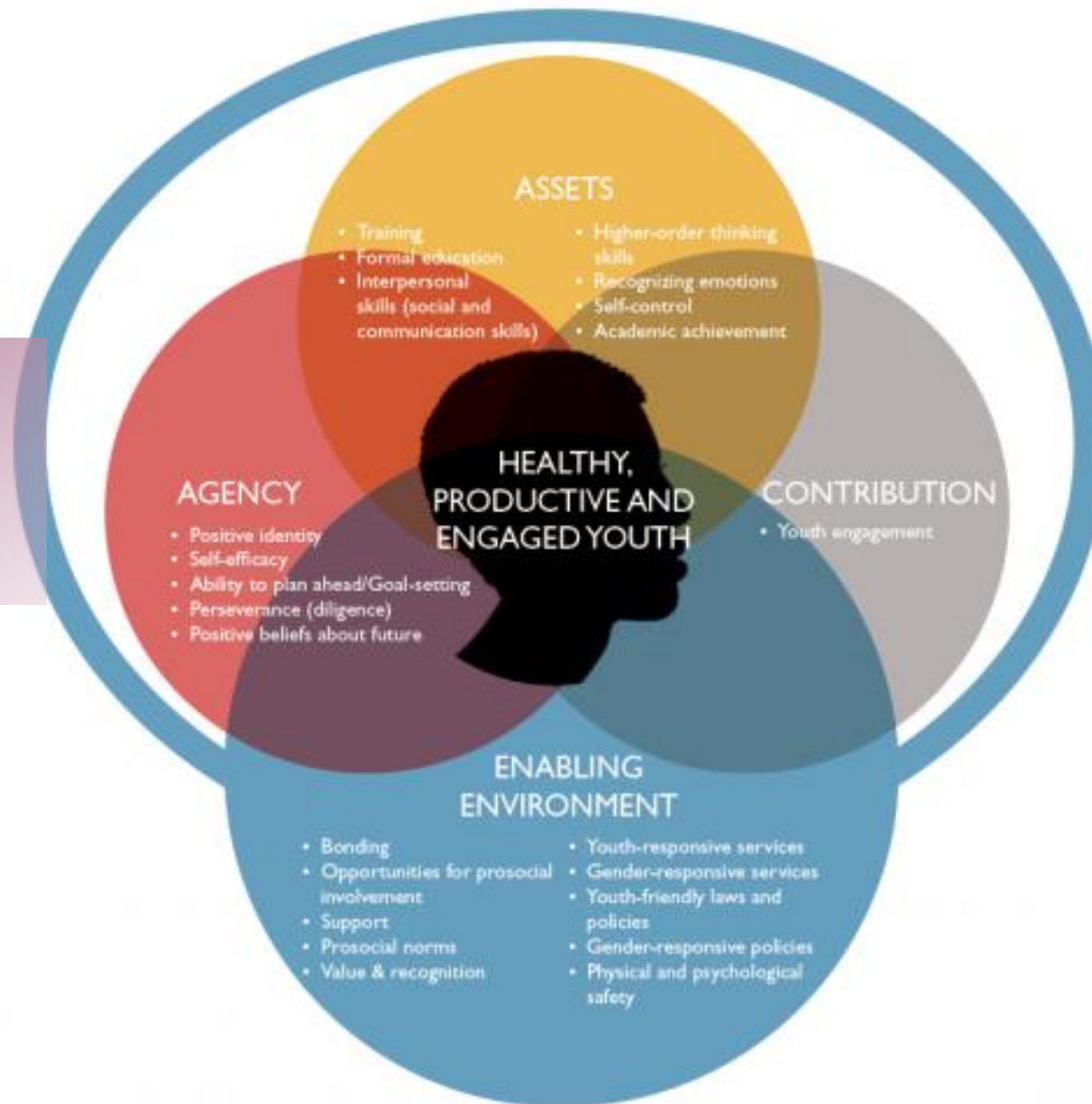
- Engages young people in political education and awareness
- Builds skills and capacity for power analysis and action around issues young people identify
- Begins to help young people build collective identity of young people as social change agents
- Engages young people in advocacy and negotiation

**YOUTH
ORGANIZING**

Includes components of youth development, youth leadership and civic engagement plus:

- Builds a membership base
- Involves youth as part of core staff and governing body
- Engages in direct action and political mobilizing
- Engages in alliances and coalitions

Youth Engagement Continuum



Positive Youth Development

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ Positive Youth Development method allows youth to develop assets that not only enrich their lives on a personal level (academic, social, interpersonal), but also provides the framework to be civically engaged
- ❖ PYD recognizes four different components of life for youth to discover during critical years of development:
 - Assets: Providing youth with the skills needed to achieve desired outcomes
 - Agency: Youth have identity and have developed skills that allow them to make decisions and achieve desired outcomes
 - Enabling environment: Youth are in an environment that allows them to access their assets and agency in order to thrive
 - Contribution: Youth are consistently encouraged to be involved in their communities and create a positive impact

STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- ❖ Youth Leadership Development
- ❖ Youth Oriented Communication
- ❖ Access and Equity
- ❖ Making Engagement Fun
- ❖ Actively Involving Youth in Decision Making
- ❖ Listening to Youth Voices
- ❖ Training up Youth Service Providers

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ Youth leadership trainings for underrepresented youth with “people like them”
- ❖ Supports for underrepresented parents as well as youth
- ❖ Civic education series to help youth and parents understand systems and how to use them
- ❖ Opportunities for youth to talk about and lead civic processes in their community

YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Annenberg's Youth
Leadership Institute

- ❖ Leadership skill building such as
 - ❖ Public speaking
 - ❖ Confidence and self-advocacy
 - ❖ Understanding of equity
 - ❖ Community engagement
- ❖ Created opportunities for youth across New England to interact and train with each other, with a focus on underrepresented youth

YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Pittsfield Listens, New
Hampshire

- ❖ Programming focused on rural marginalized youth and their families
- ❖ Pittsfield Youth Voice in it Together (PYViiT) – group for underrepresented students, focuses on leadership development including leading meetings, self confidence and advocacy training.
- ❖ Family and Community Engagement group (FACE) – leadership development group for underrepresented parents
- ❖ Meet the Candidates Night – youth facilitate community dialogues with candidates running for office
- ❖ Roundtables, Not Podiums – civic education series – how school boards, etc work

APPLICATION:

YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Create local or state civic education opportunities so youth better understand how to approach policymaking

Provide youth with opportunities to engage in leadership development experiences with “people like them” – lots of potential for this online right now

Are there existing adult groups you could partner with to support youth and parents at the same time?

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH ORIENTED COMMUNICATION

- ❖ Communicating with youth using the right channels is essential in recruiting and sustaining participation
- ❖ Social media platforms, text messaging, and online communication are advantageous methods of capturing youth's attention
- ❖ Youth oriented communication also entails communicating with youth about the issues that matter to them

YOUTH-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION

Text, Talk, Act
TEXT “START” to
89800

- ❖ Text, Talk, Act was used in a national discourse about mental health in 2013 that heavily engaged youth – it was part of President Obama’s National Dialogue for Mental Health
- ❖ SMS platform that you can customize
- ❖ Youth are likely to have cell phones and frequently use texting to communicate
- ❖ Can embed video, web links, and phone numbers in app to help youth connect to resources
- ❖ Uses polling to see how youth feel about certain issues
- ❖ Similar text platforms have been used to engage youth around the world, including in Uganda

YOUTH-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION

Canadian Youth Policy
Website

- ❖ In 2018 Canada launched a website, youthaction.ca, for Canadian youth to digitally contribute to the development of the country's youth policy.
- ❖ The website asks Canadians to answer an online survey and identify the issues that are most important to them, and what they think should be done to resolve them.
 - The questions are open-ended and allow for detailed feedback.
- ❖ There is an initial outreach step in a larger process to get feedback from as many young people as possible and showcase upcoming events hosted by youth associations that aim to contribute to this youth policy.

YOUTH-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION

Oakland Ubuntu Hack

- ❖ In February 2017, UbuntuHack brought together youth, members of the police community, and tech professionals and local activists in Oakland for a hackathon event to build trust and create web/app solutions to tensions between the two groups.

- *A Hackathon is a collective problem solving event using technology.)

APPLICATION:

YOUTH-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION

Text Talk Engage on healthcare, mental health and/or housing distress

Nevada Hackathon

State or city policy statement

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

ACCESS AND EQUITY

- ❖ Using online engagement may appeal in particular to youth of color or from other underserved backgrounds.
- ❖ Youth service providers may be the best conduit to reaching particular youth populations you seek to engage, like LGBTQ+ youth or youth experiencing homelessness.
- ❖ Ask youth from the demographic groups you seek to engage to help you with recruitment, outreach, messaging, and constructing activities.

ACCESS & EQUITY

Local Cross Systems
Collaboratives of the
National Network for
Youth

- ❖ Across different communities in the United States, the National Network for Youth facilitates local collaboratives that bring together a coalition of community stakeholders - including young people who have experienced homelessness, government agencies, service providers, philanthropies, etc.
- ❖ Each local collaborative addresses issues such as:
 - community shortcomings in addressing homelessness
 - creating a shared vision to fight youth homelessness together
- ❖ National Network for Youth provides trainings and technical assistance in areas of policy advocacy, as well as strategies for partnering with young people experiencing homelessness

ACCESS & EQUITY

Office of LGBTQ+
Affairs, Washington DC

- ❖ The Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs develops strategies and programs in order to stop instances of violence and bias against those who identify with the LGBTQ+ community
 - Strategies include the #RespectMeDC social media campaign, creating events that celebrate LGBTQ+ community, and meetings with LGBTQ+ leaders about relevant issues and topics
- ❖ The Office advocates on behalf of policies that benefit LGBTQ+ residents and seek grants that enrich the LGBTQ+ community

APPLICATION:

ACCESS & EQUITY

- Create diversified communications strategies to reach different groups
- Seek out organizations working with LGBTQ+ youth, homeless youth, and other relevant groups and work in collaboration with these partners to achieve the project goals.

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

MAKING ENGAGEMENT FUN!

- ❖ People want to engage in things they enjoy and feel connected to. Creating engagement activities that are fun and light-hearted can go a long way in attracting participation!

MAKING ENGAGEMENT FUN

Fictive Families

- ❖ Jonathan Garcia from Oregon State University does work engaging LGBTQ+ and youth experiencing homelessness
- ❖ Fictive families – create fictional “homes” with drag mothers and fathers
- ❖ Suggested “fictive families” drag balls by “house”
- ❖ Can hold these on Zoom, create Wi-Fi “hot spots” and frame it more as a party than a formal event
- ❖ ENLACE project
- ❖ Recommended partnership with
 - ❖ GLSEN
 - ❖ Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA)
 - ❖ PFLAG
 - ❖ Trevor Project
 - ❖ 4-H

APPLICATION:

MAKING ENGAGEMENT FUN!

Create fun, open, “party” atmospheres for engagement

You can organize online events with the help of shelters and other community partners to create Wi-Fi access

Partner with organizations that support marginalized youth groups

Use video to lift up youth stories

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT INVOLVING YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

- ❖ The creation of youth groups prioritizes youth voices and youth involvement in your organization. When youth feel they are a part of the process, they are more inclined to participate in additional civic opportunities.
- ❖ For youth committees to be effective, organizations should provide training and mentorship needed for youth to have a voice.
- ❖ Including youth in decision making requires:
 - Youth have distinct roles and responsibilities
 - Adults provide support and mentorship
 - Youth and adults should have expectations of each other's roles
 - Youth have the resources they need to be present and vocal

Youth Governance Structures

- ❖ Youth Councils/Boards: Structures in which youth can support and advise adult decision making process.
- ❖ Youth Legislatures: Organizations that give young people a chance to learn about the political process and in some cases take an active role by speaking to policymakers or even proposing legislation.
- ❖ Youth Led Organizations: Organizations led by youth themselves (in some cases with support from adult advocates) that place youth at the center of the decision making process.

YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

Canadian Youth Council

- ❖ Canada's Prime Minister's Youth Council (PMYC) was established in 2016 – represent youth voice
- ❖ Advice is given directly to the head of state, who also serves as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Youth
- ❖ The PMYC meet with the Prime Minister three times to four time a year for face-to-face meetings
 - By providing this platform, young people give advice directly to the Prime Minister, parliament, and senior decision makers

YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

Nevada Youth
Legislature

- ❖ State program that allows high school students to learn about and take part in government
- ❖ Youth collaborate and present a bill to the Nevada Legislature each term on an issue of importance to them
- ❖ This gives youth the opportunity to take an active role in decision-making

APPLICATION:

YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

- Create meaningful opportunities for youth to actually participate in or lead decision-making
- Partner with the Nevada Youth Legislature

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

LISTENING TO YOUTH VOICES

- ❖ Young people can create their own civic initiatives with limited participation from adults; youth have understanding of the challenges, issues, and opportunities facing their demographic
- ❖ For youth groups to be created, focus on:
 - The organization's mission and goals
 - The resources needed for the organization to operate
 - Training needed for new members and adult facilitators that will be on boarded
 - Partnerships and opportunities available for the organization to reach its goals

YOUTH VOICES

Kenyan Youth Manifesto

- ❖ In 2017, the Coalition for Kenyan Youth Manifesto created the Kenyan Youth Manifesto - a collaborative document that brought youth voices and issues to attention during the 2017 election.
- ❖ Youth and adults collaborated to make the document
- ❖ 3,000 print editions, over 10,000 online downloads
- ❖ Initiatives from the manifesto adopted by presidential candidates

YOUTH VOICES

Youth-Led
Organizations

- ❖ For youth, by youth
- ❖ Youth people lead all aspects of youth advocacy organizations
- ❖ Examples include:
 - ❖ Integrate NYC
 - ❖ Young Invincibles
 - ❖ Youth Activism Project

YOUTH VOICES

MH:2K

- ❖ Hosted by charity Involve and social enterprise Leaders Unlocked, MH:2K consists of young people connected with other youth to discuss mental health.
- ❖ They conduct roadshows that travel to council groups, schools, colleges and universities, service users' groups, voluntary and community groups, and youth centers.
- ❖ Data from these roadshows contribute to the Big Showcase, where researchers and decision makers then create engagement practices that address the issues discussed.

APPLICATION:

COLLABORATIVE DRAFTING

- Using digital technologies such as Google documents, hypothes.is etc. youth can form an equal part of the drafting process for key documents such as strategies, mission statements etc.
- Collaborative drafting can help ensure youth have a voice in creating content for various aspects of the Nevada project
- Support groups or organizations completely led by youth

APPLICATION:

COLLABORATIVE DRAFTING WITH HYPOTHES.IS - HOW TO GUIDE

- Hypothes.is is a free online annotation tool that can be installed as an extension on Google Chrome.
- Users can open a draft document and simply turn on hypothes.is and start annotating.
- Hypothes.is is unique in that it allows users to annotate a document simultaneously on multiple channels. For example, youth can use one channel to annotate together, and other professionals can use another. This feature allows for a collaborative drafting process and makes it easy to separate out different kinds of feedback.

TRAINING UP YOUTH WORKERS



INTRODUCING YOUTH PARTNERS, YOUTH, AND THEIR WORK

- ❖ What are examples from each of our organizations about how we engage, empower, and learn from youth?
- ❖ What are examples from youth of work they have participated in that has been meaningful to them?
- ❖ What collective resources are we seeing, or what themes are coming up across our work?

MOVING FORWARD

- ❖ Brainstorm: What do we need to move forward youth engagement in the Building Blocks initiative?
- ❖ What resources/foundations do we already have?
- ❖ What work is in progress?
- ❖ What work needs to be done?
- ❖ What do we want to know more about?