



Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide: Community Building

Workshop Description: This workshop includes interactive activities exploring opportunities that help connect youth to other role models and organizations in the community. As youth develop, a number of different people and communities promote positive relationships and serve as role models. Youth program staff should be able to recognize the importance of engaging youth within their community and how that engagement can support positive youth development. The development of these skills will ultimately allow staff to provide priceless opportunities for youth as well as strengthening the program's structure.

Preparation Time: The designated preparation time for this workshop is approximately 30 to 40 minutes. This time allocation takes into account the background reading on the Youth Inclusion Training website, the background information in this workshop guide, collecting materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

Instruction Time: It will take approximately 45 to 50 minutes to complete all activities within this guide.

Materials:

- Four large blank sheets of white paper (or whiteboard space).
- Printed examples of community engagement, about two to three copies of each example.

Preparation Instructions: You should read the content related to this topic on the Youth Inclusion Training website, specifically the content related to Engaging Community. In addition, you should review the background information in this module and any others related to the topic (e.g., Building Relationships and Gathering Youth Input). Instructors should spend some time researching enough examples of youth and community engagement so that they have one example for every two to three participants. Finally, gather the materials listed above and familiarize yourself with the workshop guide.

Knowledge: Understanding Strategies for Community Building

The time between childhood and adulthood where youth development occurs is the pivotal time where youth acquire the attitudes, values, and skills that allow them to be successful in adulthood. A number of influences including parents, families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities help youth develop (Eccles and Gootman, 2002). More recently, public and private organizations have become involved in creating a framework that promotes positive outcomes for youth. Among these organizations are programs that include mentoring, school-based community service programs, and arts and recreation activities (Eccles and Gootman, 2002), with a goal of placing an emphasis on the role of neighborhood and community in youth's life. Through this involvement, youth have more opportunities to engage with adults, develop their personal identity, and learn the expectations, values, morals, and skills that help them to become successful adults (Eccles and Gootman, 2002).

Objectives:

- Emphasize the importance of community building for youth development.
- Develop an understanding of the obstacles that face youth when attempting to make connections in the community.



Introduction (10 minutes):

- Describe the topic of community engagement and youth development.
 - Facilitators can introduce this topic by saying “Today we are going to talk about the importance of community engagement for youth development and how to overcome certain obstacles to getting youth involved in their communities.”
- Transition into the Prior Knowledge activity.

Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):

- Ask the staff to share why they think building connections with the community is important for youth development. Ask staff to give examples of what they think a good example of youth programs collaborating with a community organization would be. *Instructor Note:* examples might be in after-school settings, faith-based, business organization, etc. Record responses on a large sheet of blank white paper.
 - Questions for this section can be phrased as follows:
 - “Do you think that building connections with the community is important for youth development? Why or why not?”
 - “Can you think of any examples of community and youth program partnership or collaboration?”
 - Ask the staff what they still want to know about this topic or if there is anything that they need clarification on. Again, write responses on a sheet of paper.

Activities:

Activity: *Examples of Community Building* (20 minutes)

- Describe the *Examples of Community Building* activity:
 - What to say: “First, we are going to do an activity that will allow you to familiarize yourselves with what community engagement looks like and entails.”
- Lead the *Examples of Community Building* activity
 - For this activity, split the staff into smaller groups of two to three people. Provide each group with a printed copy of a Community Engagement Example (see Instructional Aid: *Finding Community Engagement Examples* for help identifying articles. Each group should have a different example.
 - Write the following question prompts on a large sheet of paper or a white board.
 - *How are youth exposed to new attitudes, values, or skills that help them to be successful adults?*
 - *How is the program or activity integrated with larger community organizations such as schools, neighborhoods, civic, business, and community organizations?*
 - *What is the goal of the program or activity?*
 - *What is the larger purpose beyond the program or activity goal?*
 - Instruct the groups to read over their example and to be prepared to answer the four questions based on the article you provided.
 - Allow groups 7 to 10 minutes to read and discuss their example within their groups.
 - Bring the large group back together and ask them to provide a short summary and their responses to the questions.



- After all groups have shared, ask the groups to think about and share examples of how they might build relationships within the community and how that connection would benefit the youth in the program.

Activity: Addressing Obstacles in Community Engagement (30 minutes)

- Describe the *Addressing Obstacles in Community Engagement* activity:
 - Preface this activity with the following information: “There are many obstacles that youth face that inhibit or discourage community involvement among youth. These obstacles include, but are not limited to: not being taken seriously, not being asked, not being assigned or having an identifiable role, lack of communication and awareness of opportunities, youth fears of speaking out, lack of diversity, and lack of transportation” (Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh, 2007).
- Lead the *Addressing Obstacles in Community Engagement* activity
 - In groups of two to three, have staff brainstorm an example of a time when one of the obstacles (not being taken seriously, not being asked, not being assigned or having an identifiable role, lack of communication and awareness of opportunities, youth fears of speaking out, lack of diversity, and lack of transportation) prevented youth from being active in the community. Next, have the group brainstorm realistic solutions to the problem allowing staff around 10 minutes to come up with a solution.
 - Share solutions as a large group so staff can become familiar with different strategies they can implement when engaging youth with the community.

Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the staff’s responses from earlier. Ask staff what they learned during the course of the workshop and record the information on the same paper or a new blank page if there is no room. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.
- Ask follow-up questions, such as “What part of the activity made you realize that?”

Resources:

Instructional Aid: *Finding Community Engagement Examples*

Sources:

Footnotes in this document can be found as references within the Youth Inclusion Implementation Guide at http://reach.umn.edu/inclusion/pdf/Youth_Inclusion_Implementation_Manual.pdf

Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (2002). Executive summary. In *Community programs to promote youth development* (pp. 18). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Brennan, M. A., Barnett, R. V., & Baugh, E. (2007). Youth involvement in community development: Implications and possibilities for extension. *Journal of Extension*, 45(4). Retrieved from <https://joe.org/joe/2007august/a3.php>



Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Finding Community Engagement Examples

Examples of youth engaging with their community are available via many organizational and news websites. Instructors should identify enough examples so that each group has one article to use.

In the articles you should look for examples of programming and activities where youth are exposed to new attitudes, values, or skills that help them to be successful adults. The programs and activities should be integrated with larger community organizations such as schools, neighborhoods, civic, business, and community organizations and should have a larger purpose beyond a single topic or skill. *The activity should emphasize neighborhood and community in a youth's life and provide opportunities for the youth to engage with adults and develop their own identity for adulthood.*

For example, the youth may be engaged in a Boys State or Girls State, an event sponsored by the American Legion. The goal of the program is to foster and develop leadership and citizenship in youth. However, the program is set up to provide public speaking, debate, negotiation, civic engagement, physical fitness, and a variety of other skills as part of the activities toward that goal. The youth interact with adult advisors during the conference and the content helps youth to understand the American democratic system.

Consider your own community. How are youth involved? What organizations actively work with youth? Search for examples that are relevant to your community, youth, and program staff. Possible examples might include:

- Groups volunteering to build homes after a natural disaster.
- Youth or groups of youth acting as program ambassadors.
- Groups engaging in community service.
- Civic, business, or community sponsored youth events or conferences.
- Youth or groups of youth advocating for programs, services, or social justice.