

CREATING CHANGE



How organizations
connect with youth,
build communities,
and strengthen
themselves



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for community & youth development



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**Connecting
People
and Ideas
to Create Change**

Acknowledgments

The stories in this booklet come from the Innovation Center's many years of close and rewarding partnerships with dedicated individuals and innovative organizations in communities, in research, and at the policy-making level. Our work together helps us develop fresh ideas, forge new partnerships, and design strategies that engage young people and their communities. Because these individuals and organizations so generously share their time and wisdom, we are able to build on their experiences to advance the field of youth development and promote social change.

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A more complete list of Innovation Center partners and further information about Innovation Center initiatives can be found by visiting the Innovation Center website at www.theinnovationcenter.org.



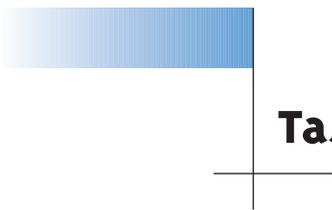


Table of Contents

Introduction2

PART ONE: Youth Development and Community Engagement

Strategy 1: Develop young people’s connections to4
their own identity, culture, and community

Strategy 2: Recognize that young people are assets to and experts6
about their communities

Strategy 3: Engage young people as community leaders8
on issues that matter to them

Strategy 4: Bring young people and adults together to10
work as equal partners

PART TWO: Community Organizations and Social Justice

Strategy 1: Inspire action and partnership among all members14
of a community

Strategy 2: Develop the capacity of the organization to plan,16
implement, and achieve its goal

Strategy 3: Create changes that can be sustained and18
supported over the long haul

Partnering with the Innovation Center20

Appendix



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Introduction

Sometimes it takes a child to raise a village. Yes, you read that correctly. Young people all over the world have become leaders in their communities. They bring big ideas for change, frank assessments of problems, and a willingness to work hard in order to get results.

For these young people, merely volunteering is not enough. A passion for social justice guides their efforts. It makes them want to build their community, not just serve it. They seek to create a more equitable and inclusive society. And they won't stop until they achieve their goals.

The very process of getting involved makes young people stronger and healthier. They work in partnership with adults, become leaders on issues that matter to them, and develop skills that will be useful for the rest of their lives.

This booklet explores the complex links between youth development, community engagement, and social justice. The Innovation Center has been studying and strengthening these links through partnerships with local and national organizations, universities, foundations, and businesses. We are learning what works in big cities, small towns, and rural communities. The stories in this book highlight the work of our partners to engage, empower, and strengthen young people and their communities.

The booklet is divided into two sections. The first, *Youth Development and Community Engagement*, explores ways that community organizations engage and support young people by involving them in community change. The second, *Community Organizations and Social Justice*, explores the conditions that organizations must create for young people to make their communities more just and equitable.

We have only begun to explore the links between youth development, community engagement, and social justice. Already, our findings have begun to reshape the field of youth development. We hope these stories will inspire you to engage young people as partners in social change. We hope the strategies will provide you with the tools to get started. And we look forward to hearing about your results.

Many of these stories were drawn from the Innovation Center's Youth Leadership for Development Initiative (YLDI). In partnership with community organizations, YLDI uncovered strategies and practices that youth development organizations can learn from the field of youth activism. YLDI was coordinated by the Innovation Center and funded by the Ford Foundation. Research and evaluation were conducted by Social Policy Research Associates.

Part One

Youth Development and Community Engagement

Plenty of young people won't ever be found in traditional youth development organizations. They tend to be older, more challenged, and less likely to participate in group activities. As a result, many organizations write them off as alienated, and impossible to reach.

We've found that these young people can find a place for themselves in civic activism organizations. They are ready and willing to get involved when it means they can act on their own values and bring about changes that will affect their daily lives and the lives of people they care about.

Some civic activism organizations have become successful youth development programs. Working outside the realm of the traditional youth development world, they have invented creative ways of engaging young people, challenging them, and spurring them to reach new heights. These civic activism organizations achieve great outcomes with youth.

These strategies made them successful:

- Build young people's connections to their own identity, culture, and community
- Recognize that young people are assets to and experts about their own communities
- Engage young people as community leaders on issues that matter to them
- Bring young people and adults together to work as equal partners

The stories in this section illustrate these four strategies in action.





1 Develop young people's connections to their own identity, culture, and community.

In communities across the country, organizations are working with young people to help them understand who they are, where they came from, and what their heritage offers them. Armed with this understanding, young people can appreciate their own identity, understand how historic injustices affect them, and use this knowledge to make positive changes.

Leadership Excellence

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE (LE) is a youth development group in Oakland, California. LE uses identity as a starting point to develop a critical consciousness and cohesion among young African Americans.

"I got involved in Leadership Excellence when I was eighteen," says Ronnell Clayton. Clayton had been arrested during a painful time in his family's life and was trying to get back on track by improving his grades and decisions. LE offered a way to connect the pain and disruption in his own life with the pain of oppression in the African American experience.

Clayton took part in LE's *Middle Passage Workshop*, which recreates the sights and sounds of capture in Africa and enslavement in the United States.

This guided visualization describes the injustice and spiritual erosion African Americans have endured in this country ever since. It demonstrates slavery's devastating impact on Black culture today.

Clayton remembers his reaction to the workshop. *"People in my family had passed, my good friend had passed away at school. Still I didn't cry,"* he says. *"After Middle Passage, I just cried and cried."*

There are about 150 youth in LE, ages 5 to 18. They are recruited by word of mouth and sometimes mandated to attend by probation officers or parents. LE offers visualization, role play, and workshops to encourage understanding of current social and economic issues, all of which have origins in the past.

Through programs like the *Middle Passage Workshop*, LE supports critical thinking skills and instills in youth the values and attitudes that help them cope with and take action against injustice. Their transformation is evident in the young man who rejects sexist terminology or the young woman who creates a child care program at her school so that young mothers like herself can continue to attend.

INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to Leadership Excellence in Oakland, CA, as it documented practices in a new curriculum and training handbook; began formal assessment of the organization's impact on youth participants and the broader community (including critical consciousness and spiritual development); evaluated community building efforts in Oakland; and launched a three-year strategic plan to increase organizational capacity.



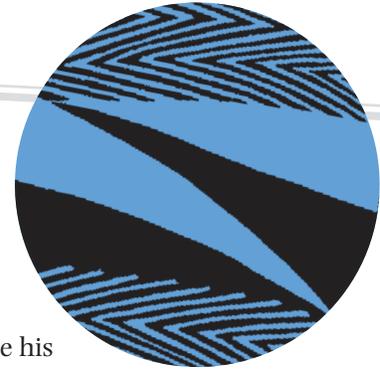
OUTRIGHT

Andrew Jones was 17 when he found an organization called **OUTRIGHT**. In Portland, Maine. OUTRIGHT provides social support, advocacy, and information to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth. Jones took a risk and showed up on drop-in night.

“I thought I was the only kid in Portland who felt like this,” recalls Jones. *“I was really nervous going in.”*

OUTRIGHT creates a safe space for GLBTQ youth and promotes a safer world on their behalf by running a hotline and hosting educational and social events. For example, youth members of OUTRIGHT have:

- counseled a local school official through the handling of an anti-gay harassment incident and advised specific changes to the climate of the school;
- organized a prom for GLBTQ young people in Portland, attended by 190 young people;
- brought three young people—a transgender man, a lesbian, and a straight ally—to the stage of a high school auditorium to tell their stories to 300 teachers and students. One student openly regretted his use of the word “faggot” and vowed to eliminate it from his vocabulary.



Three years since his first drop-in meeting, Jones serves on the youth-adult board of directors and witnesses changes in GLBTQ and straight youth who are affected by OUTRIGHT.

“With a better understanding of themselves, their personal identity, and their place in the community, young people realize who they can be or what they can be,” he explains. *“So, they are motivated to help others do the same.”*



INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to OUTRIGHT in Portland, ME, as it managed staff through transitions and flattening of hierarchy; recommitted to youth-adult partnership; expanded youth leadership; applied lessons and best practices observed through Innovation Center-facilitated learning events and site exchanges.



2 Recognize that young people are assets to and experts about their communities.

Ask a young person about their community and you will hear perceptive insights and clear ideas about ways to improve it. Ask a few more questions and you may find deep passion for equity and desire to make the world better.

Too frequently, adults forget to ask for involvement from young people when they are working on community change. When adults write off youth as apathetic and disengaged, they miss out on some of the richest resources in their community. Just as important, young people miss out on a chance to make a real difference, build their own skills, and gain the confidence that comes when others value your work.

Healthy Communities

*“Many times, youth were looked at as the problems, or thought of as ‘kids who didn’t care’,” says Carolyn Edelbeck, a 16-year-old from Waupaca, Wisconsin, who participates in the town’s **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES - HEALTHY YOUTH INITIATIVE**.*

“A lot of activities and groups were planned for youth, but there wasn’t anything that involved youth in the planning.”

Edelbeck’s group set a new standard when they developed and ran their own projects. Healthy Communities - Healthy Youth worked in partnership with adults, but it was clearly youth-led. Their accomplishments include:

- a new skateboard park for the town;
- volunteer opportunities at community organizations for sixth graders;
- a youth-led philanthropy committee (funded by the Kellogg Foundation) to offer local organizations grants in exchange for service projects that involve youth as partners;
- seats for young people as voting members of city council.

Healthy Youth Initiative

Edelbeck sees the voting membership on city council as a triumph and a turning point for Waupaca youth. *“This was a huge step. It shows that youth are valued and their input is important,”* she says.

Now that she has taken part in Innovation Center training around youth-adult partnership, team building, and strategic planning, Edelbeck is sharing her expertise nationally and internationally as a member of the Innovation Center Training Cadre.



INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to the **Healthy Communities - Healthy Youth Initiative** in Waupaca, WI, as they mapped local resources, collaborated with the city to designate land and resources for a skateboard park, and supported young leaders in establishing professional connections with local social change agencies on behalf of youth.



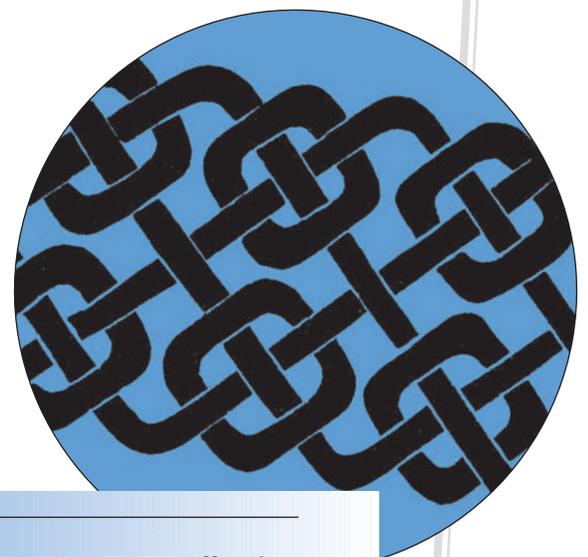
Young Women's Project

When adults receive their paychecks, they know that their work is appreciated. The **YOUNG WOMEN'S PROJECT** in Washington, DC, offers hourly wages to teen leaders—many of whom have been in foster care—to show them that their work is valued. As experts on the foster care system and students in D.C. public schools, the young women bring a critical insider perspective to the organization. They identify key challenges facing their peers, educate policymakers, and advocate for solutions. Thanks to their efforts, Washington, DC, now has:

- a sound sexual harassment policy in its public schools;
- systems and standards to ensure quality care in group foster homes.

While salaries have attracted more youth to the work and kept them involved, the rewards to young people go far beyond financial. With every project, these young women build vital job skills, increasing their confidence and earning potential.

"After our workshop we had some really good feedback," says 17-year-old Tdisho Doe, who addressed reproductive health issues with young women in group foster homes. "The kids at the group homes had some very positive things to say about us. And they invited us back. When people invite you back, you know you have done your job right."



INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to the **Young Women's Project** in Washington, DC, as it built capacity to do long-term evaluation on the impact of its programs; improved staff management and performance; expanded its teen-led projects and enhanced their social change focus; and produced a booklet for use by other community organizations.



Engage young people as community leaders on issues that matter to them.

Through civic activism, young people can channel their frustration with the status quo and devote their energy to social change. Driven by a desire to bring about change, they are ready and willing to take on leadership roles—and to develop the skills to do the job well. Organizations that capitalize on this interest can help young people develop new skills, confidence, and goals through the experience.

Youth Ministries for

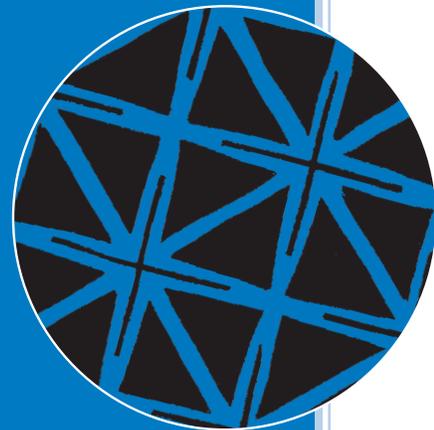
Peace and Justice

When young members of **YOUTH MINISTRIES FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE (YMPJ)** in the Bronx, New York, learned that an old cement plant in their neighborhood was slated to be torn down to create a parking lot, they refused to let it happen.

Hernan Melara was 12 when he first joined YMPJ. *“I grew up here. I feel safe here. I’ll stay here,”* says Melara. *“I see things in the future, how they can be. I don’t want a cement plant. I want a park for my children and their children.”*

He and YMPJ’s other 200 members, ages 6 to 21, organized to stop city planners’ bid for the parking lot and got the land transferred to the Parks Department. They achieved their goal but their work is not finished. The city still wants to run a road through the park. YMPJ members have taken action by performing street theater to inform their neighbors, collecting signatures for petitions, meeting with the Department of Transportation, and garnering press attention.

“This is my community,” explains Melara. *“Nothing gets done here without my permission.”*



INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to **Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice** in the Bronx, NY, as it expanded its scope of work, renovated its meeting space by adding computers, a library, and private meeting rooms, and dedicated additional resources to providing stipends for youth workers and paid positions in areas of environmental justice and education.



Respect Team

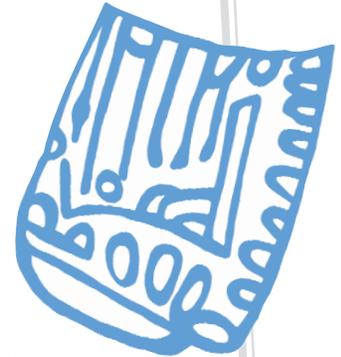
Young people arrive at civic activism organizations because they want to improve their lives and the lives of their family and friends. They stay because they gain opportunities, skills, and the satisfaction of a job well done. In fact, sometimes they stay in the field for the rest of their lives.

Katie Sanborn, now age 19, spent four years in the youth-led **RESPECT TEAM** at her high school in Oxford Hills, Maine. The experience paved her path into public service. *“You can’t be on Respect Team without seeing the realities of all there is that needs to be done,”* says Sanborn.

Respect Team brings together high school students and adults to encourage tolerance, acceptance, compassion, respect, and responsibility—not just among young people, but everyone. This youth-adult partnership has inspired changes to its community and culture. Specifically, Respect Team members:

- painted murals, wrote newspaper articles, and hosted culturally diverse events, such as a community summit of 150 young people and adults;
- led round-table discussions and participated on community boards to define and promote respect;
- expanded across the state and completed a video and guide to youth-adult partnership, for distribution in schools throughout Maine.

Susan Jennings, an adult member of the team who works at the University of Maine, Oxford County Extension, observed changes in young people who took part.



“They explain their work as their passion,” she says. *“They see themselves as valuable in this community and know they have the power to make change happen. Many are studying service-learning and community development. These are kids who were struggling with what school was all about.”*

Sanborn keeps up her commitment to social justice as an Americorps member, and shows no signs of stopping. *“I definitely see myself participating in service for the rest of my life,”* says Sanborn. *“The same cycle keeps popping up on every project—it all goes back to family and education and being responsible.”*

INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to **Respect Team in Oxford Hills, ME**, as it fostered a climate of respect within Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School and community-wide. Respect Team offered service-learning and youth-led educational and cultural events. They maintained a core leadership of youth, and engaged business and civic leaders in projects and events.



4 Bring young people and adults together to work as equal partners.

True youth-adult partnership requires more than bringing an intergenerational mix of people into a room. Adults must give up the control and leadership that they often view as their right. Young people must give up any distrust of their parents' peers. The process is slow and difficult, but the results are phenomenal.

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates

Adults and youth in Oakland, California, joined forces to improve garment workers' health and working conditions. Together, they changed the lives of women in the garment industry. *"Youth had a stake in making sure their moms could come home from work and not feel pain,"* says Stacy Kono, Project Director of the Youth Build Immigrant Power (YBIP) program at **ASIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN ADVOCATES (AIWA)**.

For years, AIWA had mobilized immigrant women on behalf of Asian immigrant families and garment workers. They launched YBIP to engage youth and adults as partners in this effort.

AIWA had offered free medical check-ups to women garment workers and found that ninety-nine percent of women had injuries related to their work; all experienced regular pain in their back, neck, or arms.

"A lot of youth joined YBIP because their moms are garment workers," says Kono, *who hosted drop-in events that attracted mostly young women, ages 14 to 20. In these informal settings, young people discovered their similar family experiences. One young woman says she began to understand "why it was the humming of sewing machines that put me to sleep as a kid, and not the humming of my mother."*

That was enough to spark a movement of YBIP members, adults at AIWA, and the garment workers themselves to negotiate

healthier conditions in factories. In collaboration, the young people and adults:

- offered important health and safety training to factory owners;
- researched options for funding work station changes and raised \$33,000 from the county's community grants fund and the city's economic development fund;
- successfully installed ergonomically correct chairs in the factory workers' stations.

Teresa Ruan, who joined YBIP when she was 13, says she continues her involvement with AIWA so that youth *"can become leaders like me."* Ruan experienced first hand the inspiring impact of youth-adult partnership in her community, and now knows that—in her words: *"People together is power."*

INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to the **Asian Immigrant Women Advocates** and its project **Youth Build Immigrant Power** as it surveyed youth and other organizations to define priority issues; developed a training manual; built youth-adult partnerships; and carved out a clear niche in the organization for their youth development work.





Time Warner

TIME WARNER is dedicated to developing the next generation of leaders from among diverse and underserved youth. The company's philanthropy is focused primarily in three areas: creative and media arts for youth, preparing teens for college, and public school leadership. In 2003, as part of its philanthropic programs, Time Warner's Office of Corporate Responsibility created a youth advisory board to provide input on its new youth-focused grant-making strategies. The advisory group includes eight teens who consult with staff on grant-making, planning, and program development. Their story highlights a successful youth-adult partnership embedded within a corporation.

Time Warner youth advisors are a diverse group, with a wide range of interests, backgrounds, and education levels. Some of the youth were skeptical at first — wondering if they could really have an opportunity to have an impact on the company's philanthropic giving. Staff members also had questions — would the young people understand the company's approach to philanthropy? But both youth and adults stuck to their commitment to make it work. Time Warner staff engaged the Innovation Center to gather advice from company employees, conduct a series of training sessions for adult staff and youth advisors to prepare them for the work, and provide sustained support to the advisors as the process began. Then they asked the young people to start working.

"I was surprised at how easily the youth and adults came together," said Pam Stevens, Vice President for Programs. *"The young people are truly interested in the work and open about sharing their advice and expertise. We developed a real team."*



One of the first things the Youth Advisors did was take a critical look at the web site being developed for the company's philanthropic programs. They suggested changes to make it more usable for community-based groups and for youth. They also made suggestions for how the company could better implement its summer grant program for 2004, and then participated in the proposal review process, along with others from Time Warner, to help decide which groups would receive financial support. They brought fresh perspectives and high standards to the task. Staff listened to the young people's thoughtful recommendations and suggestions for future improvements. The experience won over even the toughest skeptics. Time Warner's philanthropic programs are setting the pace for youth involvement in corporate philanthropy.



INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to Time Warner Foundation as it designed a youth advisory board to improve relations and accountability among grantees that serve youth; appointed youth board members who would not typically self-select into leadership roles; and assessed impact of youth leadership among young people and adults working as partners within a corporate environment.



Part Two

Community Organizations and Social Justice

Social change does not come easy, and involving young people doesn't make it easier. But it does make it better. It adds new depth and perception to the challenges and opportunities that face the community. It can result in a campaign that engages broad sectors of the community itself.

The preceding section featured stories that showed how community organizations are changing young people's lives. This section looks at the other part of the equation: how young people are making their communities more equitable through their work with local organizations.

Organizations that lead successful social change initiatives share three essential strategies. They:

- Inspire action and partnership among all members of a community
- Develop the capacity of their organization to plan, implement, and achieve its goal
- Create changes that can be sustained and supported over the long haul

Being able to implement these strategies requires a sophisticated approach to organizational development and an in-depth understanding of community needs and desires. As the stories that follow illustrate, the process requires time, energy, and committed leadership. The results are well worth the effort.





Inspire action and partnership among all members of a community.

True leadership means feeding and inspiring the group, not just lifting up leaders. By involving all parts of their community, organizations can build momentum for social change. They can also begin to reverse patterns of harm and neglect that span generations.

Pu'tavi

With the whole community behind it, a local organization can change the way people of all ages share power and authority. People living on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona, for example, had been working to increase community involvement in social justice endeavors for a year and a half when things took a surprising turn.

Tribal authorities shut down a Village Center due to a shortage of funds. The Village Center had been both a meeting place and the site of all community activities. Everyone's efforts to mobilize community members became much more urgent.

"Often there is this belief that you can't get volunteers in native communities," explains Beth Tucker, an adult partner with Hopi and Coconino County Cooperative Extension Director/Educator at the University of Arizona. *"We found that not to be the case."*

Tucker met with the former employees of the Village Center in her office. *"We used a dream cloud activity from the Innovation Center Building Community Tool Kit to discover what they wanted to see happen,"* says Tucker.

This activity and subsequent meetings got to the heart of what people wanted: economic development, community outreach involving youth and youth enrichment, and community engagement. They built on strengths, such as their commitment to family and clan. They dreamed up ways that all people, from all of the villages on Hopi, would benefit from the creation of a brand new organization, and then they asked the community to help bring it to life.

What they forged in those meetings is now a thriving, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, called **PU'TAVI**, that serves not just one village, but everyone on the Hopi Reservation.

"Forming a 501(c)(3) is almost unheard of in Native communities," says Tucker.

Pu'tavi has lived up to its promise to contribute to the economic and cultural well-being of Hopi and the empowerment of its young people. Since its creation, Pu'tavi has offered:

- training on youth safety and protection for youth development workers on the reservation;
- a widely-attended and acclaimed annual art show, where youth and adult Hopi artists sell their work;
- free computer classes attended by whole families and every age group to market Hopi goods;
- leadership training for young men and women.

Pu'tavi's achievements go back to their willingness to meet unaddressed needs of the community through both traditional and new methods of operating. With the sudden shutdown of the Village Center, the community needed every member involved in keeping programs and services alive. For the first time in Hopi history, every member was empowered and invited to take part.

INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to the **Hopi Reservation Village Community Center/Pu'tavi** as it engaged community members of all ages in the planning and creation of a 501(c)(3) organization, serving multiple villages on Hopi; fostered youth involvement in cultural activities; and negotiated a place and voice for youth on tribal voting councils.



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Tohono O'odham Community Action

TOHONO O'ODHAM COMMUNITY ACTION (TOCA),

a community organization on the Tohono O'odham Reservation in Arizona, initiated a dramatic turnaround when it tackled a major health issue affecting its community. On top of poverty, drug abuse, trouble with gangs, and high dropout rates, the Tohono O'odham community suffered high rates of diabetes. TOCA zeroed in on a way to improve the health of the community through spiritual, cultural, economic, and physical revitalization. A truly intergenerational organization, TOCA brought community members of all ages together to make it happen.

Leaders traced the rise in diabetes among its people to a loss of the traditional diet, including the absence of tepary beans, once a major staple of the Tohono O'odham diet. Through the Tohono O'odham Food System Program, TOCA involved the entire community in a plan to reintroduce tepary beans by growing, harvesting, packaging, and selling the beans themselves.

TOCA rallied community members of all ages to:

- resurrect traditional farming methods and tools;
- involve elders, who possessed vital knowledge for how to grow and harvest the crop;

- involve adults, youth, and children, who welcomed the chance to contribute meaningfully—in various aspects and stages of the project—to the health of their families and friends;
- host cultural events and celebrations throughout the year to mark seasonal changes and projects, such as planting time and harvesting time.

The beans are once again a part of this community's diet, but the benefits of the project go beyond physical health. The Tohono O'odham Food System Program represents just one facet of this organization's talent for community engagement and impact. The people share goals and priorities in a way they never had before. Much more is possible now.

INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to Tohono O'odham Community Action in Arizona, as it developed a culturally appropriate model for youth leadership; designed staff and intern positions to support youth/elder outreach; and strengthened links between youth development, community development, and cultural revitalization.



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2 Develop the capacity of the organization to plan, implement, and achieve its goal.

Social change organizations tend to have big goals. To achieve them, organizations need to marshal all available resources—human, geographical, technical, spiritual, financial, and others. A key ingredient for boosting organizational capacity is to link it with concrete social justice goals.

Youth United for Community Action

YOUTH UNITED FOR COMMUNITY ACTION (YUCA)—an environmental justice organization with sites in East Palo Alto, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, California—had grown fast since its founding in 1993. As it grew, informal systems of documentation and communication were no longer effective. YUCA needed clear lines of communication and responsibility.

YUCA Executive Director Oscar Flores notes that with all the staff transitions and growth, information was living “*in people’s heads, not on paper.*” His group brought in a consulting team to do an historical assessment of YUCA and get this information documented. Since the capacity-building effort began, YUCA has instituted a number of changes.

Staff retreats revealed people’s frustrations with weekly staff meetings. This came as no surprise, since the meetings were poorly attended and those who did show up often arrived late. “*It was pretty simple, actually,*” notes Flores. “*We revamped the process.*”

Now, meeting agendas are structured with advance input from all staff and each meeting begins with an option to “red flag” issues raised during the last meeting. Attendance is up and people are hardly ever late.

Staff also recognized their need for team development. Staff retreats are now held quarterly, with the director responsible for making sure that, in Flores’ words: “*we grow as a whole every time we meet.*”

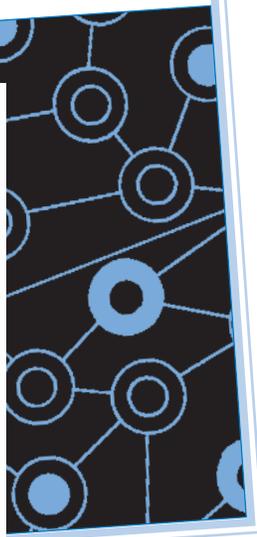
YUCA now budgets for outside consultants to help staff function smoothly as the organization develops.

With support from consultants and buy-in within the organization, YUCA has successfully:

- evaluated and documented its work promoting leadership among young people of color;
- strengthened its board of directors, which is made up of youth and young adults;
- built systems of communication and accountability between and within the YUCA sites;
- provided a vehicle for young leaders of color to work together and resist barriers that have divided social justice movements in the past and continue to divide communities today.

YUCA’s commitment to self-assessment, reflection, and change stabilized the organization through remarkable growth. It also prepared youth board members, staff members, and interns to steer the organization through changes and challenges in the future.

INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to Youth United for Community Action in East Palo Alto, CA, to help it create a clear organizational structure; document organizational knowledge through staff transitions; strengthen the youth and young adult board of directors; and work with consultants to facilitate staff retreats and group learning as the organization grew.





Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY)

Like many grassroots organizations, **COALITION FOR ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN YOUTH (CAPAY)**, a youth-led organization in Boston, struggled financially. In order to sustain its work, CAPAY set out to create systems of documenting and evaluating its impact and effectiveness.

CAPAY youth take on projects to promote justice in Asian communities. They have:

- created a mural on the lives of Vietnamese youth in Dorchester, a city bordering Boston;
- founded an Asian/Pacific-Islander American youth resource library, housed in CAPAY's office and used by university and high school teachers, students, and community organizations;
- partnered with Viet-AID, an adult group, to ensure that the Boston police had resources for communicating clearly with the local Vietnamese-speaking community.

"Evaluation was something we had always thought about but hadn't known how to do for ourselves," says Kim. "The Innovation Center showed us how to conduct an evaluation that would guide our approach." CAPAY examined how its work affects individual learning as well as the community.

Innovation Center-sponsored research, conducted by Social Policy Research Associates, revealed that most CAPAY members were Chinese or Vietnamese Americans, motivating the group to be more intentional about outreach among all Asian/Pacific-Islander American youth. Forums where young people could talk about issues both in and outside of CAPAY revealed sexism as a problem. The organization began addressing sexism within the organization, a conversation that extended to sexism youth face in their communities.



INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to the **Coalition of Asian Pacific American Youth** as it fully utilized its human and financial resources; engaged adult advisors and alumni to assist youth in leading the organization; learned to communicate the value of its work to external audiences; evaluated outcomes; and delivered results to funders.



Create changes that can be sustained and supported over the long haul.

The toughest part of creating change is making sure it lasts long after you are done. Organizations seeking to institutionalize their fragile victories can look to their young leaders to make it happen. In order for these youth to be successful, they need the organization's support in the form of consistent, structured activities that deepen knowledge and commitment throughout the entire process.

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

YOUTH MINISTRIES FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE (YMPJ), the organization that's fighting to save its park in the Bronx, New York, mentors youth through four phases of acquiring leadership and organizing skills. Each phase builds on the last to deepen youth's understanding of their community and themselves. It also advances young people's organizing skills and commitment to social change.

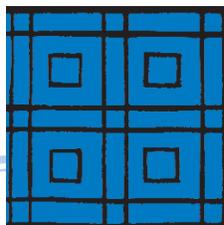
Young people progress through four phases:

- **Arts and Activism** raises young people's consciousness around social justice issues, planting the seeds for young people to understand oppression.
- **Education for Liberation** uses literature, drama, and discussions to explore the history and experiences of oppressed people in the United States.
- **Compassionate Service** brings youth into direct contact with people in need, empowering youth to serve, not save, others.
- **Community Organizing** offers young people a stipend to work on social justice campaigns as they advance from members of YMPJ to organizers for their community.

Hernan Melara explains how the phases come together on a project. He had done the math and knew that it was possible to get 250 people to come out on behalf of the park. The problem he faced was that few people had heard about the city's plans to turn the cement factory into a parking lot. Even fewer know about plans to turn it into a park instead.

"Some people don't even know we have a river," says Melara. So he and other YMPJ organizers handed out fliers and put together a canoe ride for community members. *"It starts out recreational, but then we start to show them things like the cement factory, and where the park would be. Then they start to care about the river."* After that, explains Melara, *"You'd be surprised how many of them come out!"*

INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to **Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice** in the Bronx, NY, as it expanded its scope of work, renovated its meeting space (by adding computers, a library, and private meeting rooms), and dedicated additional resources to providing stipends for youth workers and paid positions in areas of environmental justice and education.





Young Women's Project

The **YOUNG WOMEN'S PROJECT (YWP)** puts girls and young women in the Washington, DC area in charge of lobbying on their own behalf. Rather than doing high profile presentations and meetings with politicians themselves, adults at YWP involved young people in every step of their campaign to change foster care policy.

YWP launched its Foster Care Campaign in 2000 to improve the quality of life for teen women and men in the foster care system. YWP integrates teen women and men in foster care into decision making roles on their own behalf.

Many YWP youth leaders are in foster care themselves. They had both experienced and investigated group homes in DC that violate regulations outlined in a Residential Care Regulations Act. YWP youth leaders tracked rampant problems and violations: harsh punishments of youth, poor record keeping, and unresponsive and overworked social workers.

Regulations were not being enforced, and often, group home staff was not aware of the regulations in the first place. Youth had no one to whom they could report these violations and frequently suffered retaliation and punishment in the group homes when they did speak up.

Over a period of three years, YWP partnered with the deputy mayor, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and other allies. Together they:

- helped draft and pass regulations for the licensing of youth group homes;
- documented youth needs and experiences in 13 group homes;

- increased leadership among youth in group homes through life skills workshops and the creation of a Youth Leadership Network;
- developed and distributed educational materials so that youth can advocate on their own behalf.

At a city government hearing, YWP leaders demanded that the DC government address problems and ensure effective monitoring. YWP agreed to be a partner in enforcing recommendations. They offered to help convene and run a Teen Monitoring Board with real responsibility to report on regulation enforcement. YWP would also continue to educate teens on regulation enforcement, and advise local officials on the issues.

YWP's power lays partly in its members' extensive knowledge of the foster care group homes and its ability to organize and ally with the right individuals and agencies—those who have the power and legal obligation to affect changes on behalf of youth in DC.

INNOVATION CENTER offered training and technical assistance to the **Young Women's Project** in Washington, DC, as it built capacity to do long term evaluation on the impact of its programs; improved staff management and performance; expanded its teen-led projects and enhanced their social change focus; and produced a booklet for use by other community organizations.

Partnering with the Innovation Center

The Innovation Center has distilled the lessons we've learned through our partnerships into reports and hands-on tool kits for strengthening youth and social justice initiatives, building communities, evaluation, and making vital connections between youth development and civic engagement.

Visit www.theinnovationcenter.org to find research reports, tool kits, manuals, and additional materials on engaging youth in efforts to create stronger and more equitable communities.

We also offer customized consulting and training programs to help foundations, national organizations, and community groups to work effectively with young people to make their communities just and equitable.

Please contact us for more information or to be part of our continuing exploration of this field.



Connecting people and ideas to create change

The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development connects thinkers and leaders of all ages to develop fresh ideas, forge new partnerships, and design strategies that engage young people and their communities.

- We help innovative programs become strong, sustainable ventures.
- We use what we learn from community organizations to inform research, funding, and policy.
- We turn theoretical knowledge into practical know-how that advances the field of youth development and promotes social change.



Appendix

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates

310 8th Avenue, Suite 301
Oakland, CA 94607
(510)268-0192
www.aiwa.org

Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth

c/o Asian American Studies Program
UMass Boston
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393
(617) 287-5658
www.capayus.org

Coconino County Cooperative Extension

University of Arizona
2304 North 3rd Street
Flagstaff, AZ 86004-3605
(928) 774-1868
<http://cals.arizona.edu/coconino/>

Ford Foundation

320 East 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017
(212) 573-5000
www.fordfound.org

Healthy Communities - Healthy Youth

c/o University of Wisconsin Cooperative
Extension, Waupaca County
811 Harding Street
Waupaca, WI 54981
(715) 258-6230

Hopi Pu'tavi, Inc

P.O. Box 644
Second Mesa, AZ 86043
(928) 734-3551

Leadership Excellence

1629 Telegraph Avenue, 5th floor
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 267-9770 x 14
www.leadershipexcellence.org

OUTRIGHT

P.O. Box 5077
Portland, ME 04101
(207) 828-6560
www.outright.org

Social Policy Research Associates

1330 Broadway, Suite 1426
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 763-1499
www.spra.com

Time Warner Foundation

One Time Warner Center
New York, NY 10019
(212) 275-2893
www.timewarner.com

Tohono O'odham Community Action

P.O. Box 1790
Sells, AZ 85634
(520) 383-4966
www.tocaonline.org

The Young Women's Project

1328 Florida Avenue, NW, Suite 2000
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 332-3399
www.youngwomensproject.org

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

1384 Stratford Avenue
Bronx, NY 10472
(718) 328-5622

Youth United for Community Action

1848 Bay Road
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
(650) 322-9165
www.youthunited.net

Respect Team

c/o University of Maine Cooperative
Extension, Oxford County
9 Olson Road
South Paris, ME 04281
(207) 743-6329
www.umext.maine.edu/counties/oxford.htm



INNOVATION CENTER
for community & youth development

Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development

6930 Carroll Avenue

Suite 502

Takoma Park, MD 20912-4423

Phone: 301-270-1700

Fax: 301-270-5900

www.theinnovationcenter.org

info@theinnovationcenter.org

Wendy Wheeler, President



C R E A T I N G C H A N G E