

Making Space Making Change

Profiles of
Youth-Led
and
Youth-
Driven
Organizations

BY THE
Young Wisdom
Project of the
Movement
Strategy
Center

Compiled for
The Diana,
Princess of Wales
Memorial Fund,
U.S.



OUR ORGANIZATIONS

Youth Speak Out Coalition

The Youth Speak Out Coalition (YSOC) is a network of youth from around the country. Coalition members represent organizations and projects concerned with Native American youth; youth with disabilities and special health care needs; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ) youth issues; sexual and reproductive health; and helping young people to understand and resist oppression. Young activists and their adult allies come together to educate each other on our issues and how we define our communities, challenging each other to grow in tolerance and understanding. We share knowledge, resources, social support, challenges and successes with one another through annual retreats, an email listserv, conference calls, and peer exchanges. We hope to grow and work with more organizations in the future by sharing what we've learned as youth leaders and allies, as partners, and about the variety of perspectives and issues we each represent. Collaborating with the Young Wisdom Project, we will continue the work of becoming a national learning community through this landmark opportunity that was launched in 2001 with The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (U.S.).

Young Wisdom

Young Wisdom is a capacity building project of The Movement Strategy Center that strengthens young people's leadership in and governance of social justice organizations. We believe that young people, as constituents, are a critical part of movements for social change, and that youth and young adults are instrumental in developing and running innovative projects to strengthen their communities. With the right support, community organizations can be set up to engage and develop young people as leaders at all levels of decision making. For more information or to contact Young Wisdom, go to: www.movementstrategy.org or call 510-444-0640 x310.

The Movement Strategy Center

The Movement Strategy Center (MSC) is a movement building intermediary that engages youth and adults across issues and regions through a collective visioning and mapping process. This process encourages collaboration and joint strategizing in order to develop stronger, more effective movements for democracy, equity and social change. We support the civic participation of youth and young adults and link them to other community change efforts. Specifically, we provide organizational capacity building, mapping and research services, alliance building and network support to youth organizing efforts and youth organizers. For more information or to contact MSC, go to: www.movementstrategy.org or call 510-444-0640.

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (U.S.) (The Fund)

The Fund is a grantmaking and operating foundation that was founded in 1997 following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Since its inception, The Fund has supported youth-led and youth-driven organizations working on social change issues through a capacity building partnership and learning community approach. We believe that marginalized young people, if given training, leadership opportunities and support, can become powerful change agents in their own lives and in youth organizations, community institutions, foundations, and political bodies. While The Fund officially shut down its grantmaking and program activities in December 2003, information and tools on capacity building and youth leadership are still available at www.usdianafund.org.

Making Space, Making Change:

Profiles of Youth-led and Youth-driven Organizations

As a funder, I am always searching for clear ways to describe social change developments on the cutting edge. Making Space, Making Change takes us a giant step forward with its look at youth-governed, community based nonprofit organizations. It presents a nuanced, complex understanding of basic concepts, and illustrates them through carefully documented, highly useful case examples.

– Robert Sherman, Senior Program Officer, Surdna Foundation

This report reflects all the real work and lessons we learned. I'm still amazed to look back and see all we've done. My organization has youth with all different kinds of disabilities involved. We were able to make the process accessible for us and I know if we were able to do this, other youth organizations will be able to do it too.

– Naomi Ortiz, Board Member, KASA

By the Young Wisdom Project
of the Movement Strategy Center

Compiled for The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (U.S.)

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Prologue

In the early 1990's, I was living in San Francisco, struggling to start a new organization with two other young Generation-Xers. All around us, we saw how young people were shut out of most major decisions impacting their lives. From schools to prisons, curfews to police harassment, sex education to queer visibility, health care to environmental hazards, youth were at the center of many public debates. Ironically, they were rarely asked for their opinions on these issues, let alone their ideas for how to solve them. Our mission at Community LORE was to build an organization that would use youth-led community research, evaluation and planning as a tool to put youth back in the center of these decisions.

Starting Community LORE was hard. With no mentors, we relied on our peers for support. Through trial by fire we learned to create program plans, develop budgets, approach funders, and manage it all. We built community with others who ran organizations and programs and became mentors to those who were five or ten years younger than we were. Often the day-to-day challenges were both exhilarating and overwhelming.

Soon it became clear that we were in the middle of something historic. While the media, policymakers, and public at large were busy blaming young people for society's ills, thousands of us were courageously rising up to meet these very challenges.

In spite of our bad rap, we were proof that our generation was caring, creative and active. We had built an intergenerational, multi-racial community. Youth-led organizations were our tool for healing ourselves and rebuilding a social justice movement. Ultimately, we knew our work was just as powerful as any vulnerable community taking action to heal wounds of the past and push forward social change to benefit all people. It was about self-determination.

One of the most exciting elements of this movement was how we used our common experiences as young people to analyze and con-

nect the many issues impacting our communities. Together we connected the dots between education and juvenile justice issues, gender, race, class and sexual orientation, economic survival and environmental justice. This is the side of our movement that many of our elders did not see or understand. Through empowering ourselves as young people we were not rejecting our elders. We were taking on the struggle of our communities and learning to be allies to each other across identity. In this process, we realized we needed our elders as allies and guides. In the best situations, this became a process that healed and transformed intergenerational relationships. As a result, this movement gave us tremendous hope.

I worked at Community LORE, which became Youth In Focus, for ten years. In this time, I learned so much and met amazing people. When I started preparing to transition out of the organization, I sat down to figure out my next steps. I realized that the stories and work of youth-led organizations and the young people behind them needed to get out into the world. Slowly, the idea for the Young Wisdom Project emerged and found a home in the Movement Strategy Center.

The mission of the Young Wisdom Project is to tell the stories and share the wisdom of youth-led social justice organizations. When I started it, I knew I wanted to work with groups from a broad range of communities – urban, rural, and indigenous reservations – working on a wide range of issues. In the Spring of 2003, I met up with The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (U.S.) and realized that this was the group I had been waiting for. The Fund's five grantee organizations were all youth led or youth driven. They represented indigenous, multiracial, disability, and queer youth communities. They all had a social justice mission and they had been working hard to reflect on and develop their practice as youth-led organizations. They wanted to share their stories with others as much as I wanted to tell them.

The result is this book – an opportunity for both youth and adults to learn from the wisdom of youth leaders.

Kristen Zimmerman
Young Wisdom Project Director
Movement Strategy Center

Introduction



Now we're simmering, but when (the movement) gets bigger, it will boil!

- About Face Youth Theatre
Leader

In every corner of the country, young people are rising up as leaders armed with visions of justice, love for their communities and real world experience. In rural communities, urban neighborhoods, Native reservations, even on the Internet, youth are organizing themselves to create youth-led and youth-driven organizations. Why? Tired of watching their own future gambled away, they are looking for new ways to participate in decisions that impact their lives.

Often under the radar of most national media and policy-makers, these organizations tackle the most pressing social issues - from AIDS to disability rights, educational justice to queer youth pride, indigenous rights to intercultural understanding and racial justice. They put young people at the center of leadership and decision making. They help to heal intergenerational relationships, and they give young people a tangible place to rework and build the culture they want to see as artists, activists, and educators.

This report tells stories of the risks young people take every day to make their dreams of justice and sustainability a reality. Inside, we highlight five of the nation's most vibrant youth-led efforts, the lessons they have learned, and the tools they have developed. It is for all youth and their allies.

To begin telling their stories, we need to go back a few years and set the context for the emergence of youth-led organizations...

The Forces of Youth Marginalization

It's the early 1990's, more than two decades after major civil rights movements swept the country. Open up any daily paper and scan the headlines and top stories. Images of young people start to crystallize. First, it's an apathetic, apolitical crowd named Generation X – self-centered slackers who like grunge music and have no interest in civic engagement. Compared to the baby boomer generation of the 1960's, they are a disappointment. Keep reading and another image emerges – the dangerous flip side of Generation X. Teenage super predators are out on the streets and out of control. Born to be criminals, they are black and brown and listen to gangster rap. They are jaded and antisocial – teenage crack babies. Together, these images spell fear in adult minds – fear for the future of democratic institutions and fear of chaos in the streets. Young people who were once the hope for the future are now its greatest enemy.

What was missing from this front-page picture? Hidden by media headlines was the widespread abandonment of youth and their families by adults in power. As youth were blamed for social problems, national and state level policymakers legislated widespread divestments in public education and social welfare, massive increases in prison and juvenile detention spending, and laws that criminalized youth of color and blocked access to education for poor and immigrant youth. The war on drugs and other policies funneled resources away from poor communities and seriously undermined many young people's families. At the same time, community leaders and elders of the 1960's and 1970's were not present. Still reeling from the trauma of crushed social movements and focused on efforts to build their own power and influence, many community leaders disconnected from the younger generation. Without mentors, young people were left on their own to deal with these attacks.

The result was an increasingly harsh anti-youth environment. By 2000, over one third of all children were living in low-income families and sixteen percent lived in poverty, a rate two to three times higher than other Western industrialized nations. Poverty rates were double for youth of color – on par with developing nations. Poor youth were much more likely than their counterparts to drop out of school, enter the juvenile justice system, and be trapped in poverty as adults. They were also less likely to be engaged in political and civic processes, arenas for social and community change. For many, these interlinking conditions put them at risk, creating negative cycles of development and engagement that reinforced social and economic inequality.

The youth movement, in its boldest and most prominent expressions, is defined not primarily by age but by values. It is a movement for airness: the right of all people to self-representation and self-determination. These values are often talked about in our culture but rarely realized in our institutions and daily lives. That hypocrisy—the discrepancy between the rhetoric of America and the brutal reality—is what young people, like the generations before them, are standing up to confront.

– Kim Mcgillcuddy and Taj James from “Building Youth Movements for Community Change,” *The Nonprofit Quarterly* (2001) (Vol. 8, Issue 4).



...more of an activist than I used to be. I've always had a desire to talk about issues of systemic oppression, but I never had the resources to articulate it. But now having the organization to back me up, it allows me to be more of an activist.

– Raquel Bernaldo, National Conference for Community & Justice

A Youth-led Movement for Social Change

However, this too was only part of the story. At the same time media and legislation criminalized most of the youth population, a youth movement was beginning to emerge. At the heart of this movement was an analysis of adultism and how it interlinks with other social justice issues. Across the nation, a significant number of young people realized they needed to form their own organizations to support their generation's development and activism. Tellingly, these young people were often the most marginalized by educational policies and social and economic conditions. These organizations made youth and constituent leadership a core principle of their mission, focusing not only on external change, but also on how their organizations operate internally.

By engaging youth in leadership and governance, young people took on roles normally reserved for adults in community organizations. With this responsibility came new opportunities for learning, analysis, and action. By supporting self-determination inside the organization, they also supported community activism. Young people became agents of change in addressing real world issues such as the toxicity of their environments, the educational system, and hate crimes. When accompanied by effective, culturally relevant organizational structures, rich environments for individual and community development were created. This often helped to heal and redefine intergenerational relationships.

One of the main criticisms of the youth movement has been its focus on organizing youth as an identity group. Critics have argued that "youth" is a transitional identity - not a real community. On top of that, "identity politics" has major limits. Youth organizing, they said, risked having a narrow analysis, splitting youth from their communities and broader social justice goals. What these critics failed to see is how the youth movement actually used its understanding of adultism as a starting point for understanding and addressing other forms of oppression.

The success of the youth movement has depended on its ability to connect the dots between issues. Young people understand better than anyone else that if their families are suffering, they will suffer. By exploring the intersections of age with race, gender, class, disability and sexuality, many organizations have developed a sophisticated analysis for how issues interact to impact their communities. As a result, many youth groups not only work to create power for youth in their communities, they also have the broader goal of community empowerment. Their campaigns address "youth issues" such as education and broader social justice issues such as housing, environmental justice, and welfare rights.

What is Adultism?

Adultism can be defined as all behaviors and attitudes that flow from the assumption that adults are better than young people. In a very real sense, adultism hurts young people by making policies that harm youth.

Youth Organizers
United

What is this Document?

Fast forward to the present. Today there are a growing number of youth-led and youth-driven organizations across the country. They represent different types of communities and geographic regions. Most are multiracial and multi-issue, all are working for social justice in their communities, and most are isolated from each other. Over the past five years, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (U.S.) (The Fund) was at the forefront of supporting emerging youth-led and youth-driven organizations. Through its capacity building partnership, The Fund provided intensive support to five youth-led and youth-driven organizations over three years. As a result, The Fund helped to strengthen each organization as well as establish a powerful learning community among the five grantee partners.

Following the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and the economic recession, The Fund decided to spend down its assets in order to provide more direct, intensive support to its grantee partners. Consequently, The Fund shut down its program and grantmaking activities at the end of 2003. As The Fund prepared to close its doors, it wanted to share the unique legacy of this work and its grantee partners. The Fund teamed up with the Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center, on a project dedicated to documenting and building the capacity of youth-led and youth-driven organizations. This report is a result of that partnership.

In this report, you will be introduced to five different youth organizations. Their models span the range from fully youth led and youth governed to a youth leadership project in an adult-led organization. Each model represents a unique solution to the question of how to empower young people in the roles of community and organizational leadership. The report is organized into seven chapters.

Chapter one gives an overview of youth-led organizations: what they are, their main challenges, and their impact on youth and communities.

Chapters two through six profile each of The Fund's grantee partners' organizational models.

Chapter seven summarizes key lessons and lays out action steps for increasing youth leadership in organizations.

We hope this report will be useful to both youth organizers and the adult allies and funders supporting them. Ultimately, we hope that it contributes to the movement for social justice, young people's empowerment, and intergenerational healing.



We're inspiring other people to join with us and walk together with us on the path to positive community change.

– Sharlaine LaClair,
Lummi CEDAR Project
Program Director

**THE DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES MEMORIAL FUND (U.S.)
GRANTEE PARTNERS**

Each of the five organizations that participated in The Fund's intensive capacity building initiative has a unique mission and model.

For more information on The Fund's unique approach to partnership grantmaking, check out the companion report, *Sharing Our Lessons: Building Effective Partnerships for Youth-led Social Change*, available at www.usdianafund.org.

**Kids As Self Advocates
National**

Kids As Self Advocates (KASA) is a national, grassroots network of youth with special health care needs and disabilities and their friends. As leaders in their communities, they empower youth to learn how to advocate for themselves and others through better knowledge of school, health care, technology, and other current issues related to youth. They also educate families, health providers, policymakers, media, and the general public about their issues by presenting at conferences and through their Web site. KASA believes in supporting self-determination, creating support networks, and proactive advocacy for all youth with disabilities in our society.

**The National Conference for Community and
Justice/LA
Los Angeles, California**

The youth department of the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) combats racism and prejudice in Los Angeles communities. The primary purpose of the Youth and Education Programs Department is to inspire and support adolescents to become actively engaged in working for a more just and inclusive society. NCCJ/LA's program strategies include: education and awareness-building; developing young people's leadership, organizing and imaginative skills; promoting intergenerational partnerships for social change; and effecting change in institutions that have an impact on the lives of youth.

**About Face Youth Theatre
Chicago, Illinois and Statewide**

About Face Youth Theatre (AFYT) provides an innovative and rigorous arts-based series of programs that increases the safety, empowerment and leadership capacity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth and their allies in order to catalyze youth-led civic dialogue and action within schools and communities. AFYT thrives in a synergistic relationship with About Face Theatre and shares a commitment to high quality production values and innovation in form and content.

**Lummi CEDAR Project
Bellingham, Washington**

The Lummi CEDAR Project engages youth in a traditionally based, culturally relevant leadership program and provides Native youth with training and opportunities to become effective leaders, peacemakers, and grassroots activists in their community. Native youth trainers then train and empower their peers. Focusing on conflict resolution, team building, and community organizing, the organization collaborates closely with Lummi Elders, teachers, and other community mentors.

**Youth Organizers United
New York, New York**

Youth Organizers United (YOU) is a youth-led advocacy organization with a mission to educate, train, and support young New Yorkers in youth-led community education, organizing, and advocacy responses to HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health concerns. YOU fosters resiliency in young people by offering them opportunities to think and act collectively for the betterment of themselves and their communities. YOU works actively to include youth voices in local and state policy decisions that affect their lives.

Youth-led Organizations 101



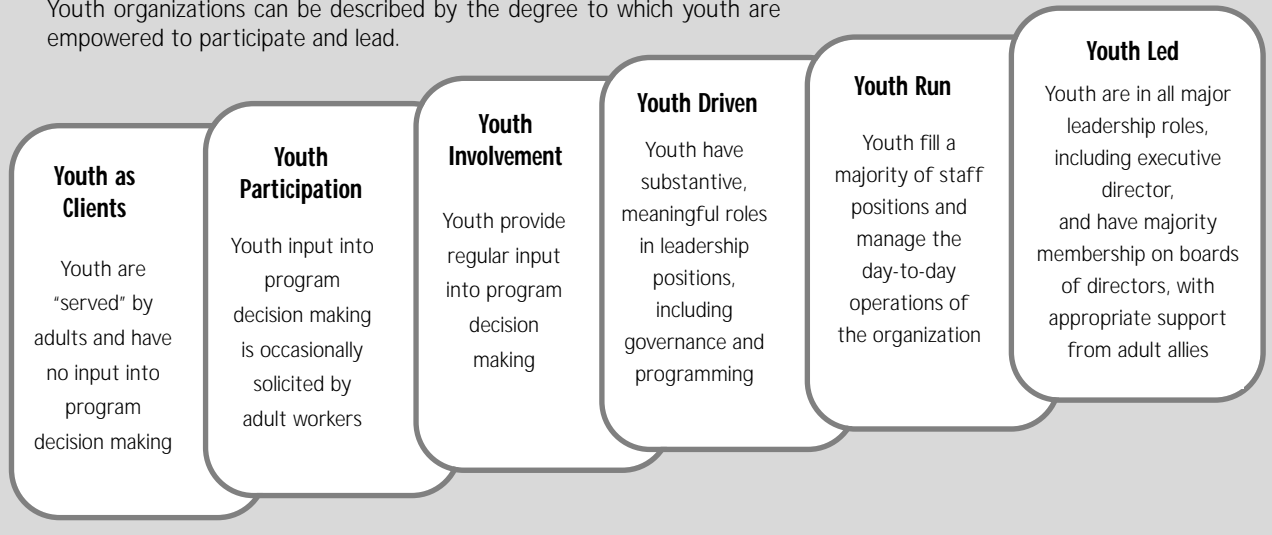
Over the last fifteen years, a growing youth movement has generated a new wave of youth-led and youth-driven organizations. While there are no solid numbers on how many exist in the United States, a good estimate is between fifty and a few hundred - depending on when and how they are counted. This chapter provides an overview of youth-led organizations: what they are, their main challenges, and their impact on youth and communities.

What are Youth-led Organizations?

What makes an organization youth-led? Self-defined youth-led groups use a range of definitions and structures. As people who are engaged in developing and working with youth-led organizations, it is important for us to be clear in terms of what we mean when we say “youth led.” However, being clear doesn’t need to mean being rigid. Instead of approaching the question of youth-led organizations as an either/or situation, it’s helpful to think about youth leadership and governance as a continuum with a spectrum of possibilities - something that can develop and change over time. The spectrum can range from organizations where youth are served by adults as clients to those where youth have some decision making roles to those where youth occupy all major leadership positions.

A Spectrum of Youth Leadership

Youth organizations can be described by the degree to which youth are empowered to participate and lead.



Defining "Youth led"

A youth-led organization or project is one in which the youth constituents decide what gets done and how it gets done. Youth led does not necessarily mean "no adult involvement or role." "Youth led" is a specific relationship between youth and adults where adults are supporting youth to gain the skills, information and capacity to make decisions about the organizations in which they find themselves. Adults play the roles of coaches, trainers, and advisors to young people who are the decision makers. Youth leadership promotes the notion that adult allies should not do for youth what young people can do for themselves.

Movement Strategy Center & the Young Wisdom Project

What are Some Key Issues for Youth-led Organizations?

Most organizations are in a continual process of development with regard to youth leadership and governance. Rather than being fixed at one spot on the spectrum, they decide where they want to be and develop goals for how to get there over time.

Below are some key issue areas related to youth leadership of organizations. In any given organization, these elements can come together in different ways.

Definitions of youth: Definitions of "youth" vary. Some groups define "youth" as young people under age eighteen, others under twenty-one, and others under twenty-five. Some organizations have shifted from being led by youth to being constituent led. These groups have decided it is more important their young adult leadership have similar life experiences to the youth in the program than the staff being under a certain age.

Mission: For most sustainable youth-led organizations, youth leadership is part of their mission, a core reason why they exist and a core challenge in which they choose to engage over time. Some organizations are youth led by default: either their founders are young people, or young people happen to

come into leadership positions in the organization. These organizations often do not stay youth led over time unless they go through an explicit process of deciding to be a youth-led organization.

Governing Body/Leadership: An organization's governing body can be structured as a board of directors, a collective, a membership organization or, if fiscally sponsored, a decision making advisory board. How do they operate in youth-led organizations? Solutions range from the governing body's membership being made up of all young people, to having a majority of young people with only youth voting, to having a majority of youth with both adults and youth voting.

Staff: Youth-led organizations also have a range of staff structures. Many youth-led organizations have all-youth staff. Some have adult staff who serve as coaches and/or fundraising and administrative staff. In any case, adult roles as capacity building coaches, resource developers, or administrative supports are set up to support youth. Some youth-led organizations have one or two adults among a predominantly youth staff.

Decision making authority: Youth-led structures prioritize young people's decision making in the organization. A youth-led organization may be fiscally sponsored or even housed in an adult organization, but it must have fiscal, strategic, and programmatic autonomy from the adult-led organization.

Leadership development structures: These are very important in youth-led organizations that tend to have both high staff turnover and capacity building needs. This can include coaching of new youth leaders, hiring from within the organization, and professional development plans for staff, among others.

Fiscal status: Most youth-led organizations are either projects within adult-led fiscal sponsorships or volunteer projects. A few are freestanding 501(c)3 organizations. The benefits to being an independent organization are having complete decision making autonomy from adult-led organizations. The benefits to being a fiscally sponsored project can be more stability and the ability to avoid some administrative responsibilities that tend to drain the energy of all nonprofit organizations and are less important to the group's mission.

PRINCIPLES

for youth-led organizations

Most youth-led and youth-driven organizations grew out of a power analysis of adultism and the ways in which young people are systematically excluded from decisions that impact their lives. By establishing structures that empower youth as leaders both inside and outside the organization, youth-led and youth-driven organizations help to create a unique environment where youth are valued and nurtured as decision makers and leaders. Some common principles for youth-led and youth-driven organizations include:

Address power dynamics that shut down young people's development and voice.

Maintain high expectations for all young people.

Prioritize youth voices and develop young people's capacity to be effective decision makers and leaders.

Build organizational cultures and structures that support young people.

Invest in leadership development, where older youth support emerging generations of leaders.

Support personal development, community building, and healing.

Organize for community and political change.

Integrate anti-oppression analysis on race, gender, LGBTQ and disability issues.

Redefine and heal intergenerational relationships.

Change adult perceptions of youth and support adult allies.



What are Some of the Main Challenges for Youth-led Organizations?

Youth-led organizations face challenges that are both similar and different from adult-led nonprofit or community organizations. Often, these challenges are exacerbated because available resources are designed for adults with advanced degrees and are not culturally accessible.

Youth-led and youth-driven organizations recognize that all young people are naturally passionate about their own futures.

Young Wisdom Project

Staff development and management: Staff development and management is a challenge for youth-led organizations, in part because young people may be supervising their friends and peers. Developing appropriate structures and guidelines for staff development and management is critical.

Leadership transitions: Like other nonprofits, there is often pressure on leaders of youth-led organizations to be in the public limelight, especially with funders. If the organization's reputation becomes too connected with a single charismatic young adult leader, it can undermine the leadership development of others in the group. Setting up clear structures to develop and transition leadership within the organization is essential.

Appropriate, youth friendly support and capacity building: Youth-led organizations need to pay special attention to capacity building because the people running the organization have had less professional and life experience than their older counterparts. This does not mean that young people can't run organizations. It does mean they need support and mentorship to do it well. There are few organizational development consultants that "get" youth-led organizations or that speak to young leaders.

Burnout: Running an organization is extremely difficult. Many adults face burnout when they run nonprofit organizations. It can be even worse for young people. Finding ways to take care of members and prevent burnout is very important.

Self-care and individual development: Many young people face multiple life issues and are making big decisions about their lives. Some youth-led organizations choose to integrate self-care packages into their benefits for employees, including counseling, life planning support, alternative health care and massage, among others.

Youth leadership has to do with

A few key questions:

- Who decides how **RESOURCES** will be allocated?
- Who decides **WHAT** gets done?
- Who decides **HOW** it gets done?
- Who **DOES** it?

Intergenerational relationships: It is challenging for both youth and adults to unlearn adultism. Intergenerational learning and relationships are important factors in the development of youth-led organizations. Young people and adults need to work hard for them to happen.

Fundraising: Fundraising can be particularly difficult in youth-led organizations because youth often don't have a lot of fundraising experience. Donors are often skeptical and mistrustful of young people managing money. Key issues in fundraising include understanding fundraising cycles, relationship development with funders, developing a fundraising plan, and employing different fundraising strategies.

Legal contracts: Nowhere is adultism more present than in negotiating legal documents such as leases, payroll contracts, and grant agreements. Youth-led organizations consistently find roadblocks in their work when it comes to negotiating these agreements. Often, organizations have to work with an adult ally to sign or cosign these documents.

Strategic planning and organizational development: Many youth have not led or been through a strategic planning process, and organizational development terminology can be confusing and intimidating. This can be an area where a coach provides help.

Independence vs. fiscal sponsorship: Many youth-led projects have had a very difficult time with fiscal sponsors who, because of adultism, interfere with the integrity, decision making, and self-determination of the organization. Interference can range from not giving youth-led organizations the same access to resources as adult projects and double standards in accountability measures to blatantly trying to take over the youth-led project.

Isolation & network development: Many youth-led organizations face intense isolation. Even if they know other youth-led organizations, mechanisms to share information and network are often missing. Developing support networks, learning communities and alliances is critical for young people and the broader youth-led movement.

Documentation and evaluation: Few youth-led organizations have the resources or time to really document or evaluate their work. While non-profit organizations are underfunded in general, youth-led groups are often more strapped. Having a reflection and evaluation process is very important to youth-led organizations' healthy development.



I don't think it's possible to be a youth with a disability and not be an activist.

– Naomi Ortiz, KASA



Why Take on the Challenges? The Benefits...

Even with all the challenges, youth-led organizations are powerful models for youth empowerment and organizational and community development. Young people involved with youth-led organizations develop skills and knowledge they cannot learn any other way. The young people profiled in this report and their adult allies spell out some of the unique benefits and impact of youth-led organizations. These outcomes play out on multiple levels.

Youth: By taking on authentic responsibility for organizations and campaigns, youth are engaged in a real-life cycle of learning that includes continual analysis, action, and reflection; develop an expanded vision of their potential and deep community with each other; gain powerful organizational and community leadership skills; are supported in their personal development and healing; and learn valuable skills in organizational and program development and management. Additionally, because most youth-led and youth-driven organizations are multiracial and multi-issue, they help to establish deep relationships among youth of different identities and backgrounds.

Adults: As allies, adults learn new ways of relating to young people as partners and peers. They learn how to shift to a coach and mentor relationship, supporting young people's full potential. In turn, they are challenged to continue their own process of learning and development.

Organizations: New models for organizational development and structure are developed to respond to and support young people's needs. These youth-friendly structures may have a lot to teach other organizations about accessibility, sustainability, shared decision making, leadership transition, healing, and community building.

Community: Because youth-led organizations address the issue of power and power sharing between youth, young adults and adult allies, they present a unique opportunity to redefine and renew intergenerational relationships. By developing new roles for adults, many youth-led and youth-driven organizations present a model for healing intergenerational relationships and establishing cyclical leadership development in their communities.

Policy: Youth-led organizations are spearheading policy advocacy and community organizing efforts that authentically represent young people's needs. By supporting youth voices in these decisions, youth-led and youth-driven organizations help decision makers create better policies.

Civic participation: Youth-led organizations provide a concrete forum for engaging young people in their communities and the broader civic process. Youth-led and youth-driven organizations directly address the widespread marginalization that young people feel. They also tap into young people's boundless potential, energy and curiosity. Because young people's concerns and empowerment are at the center, youth-led organizational models may be the most effective way to engage young people who are the most marginalized from other institutions. Many youth-led organizations help their members develop an analysis of social issues and create an action strategy to address these issues in their community. This involvement often leads to other types of civic and community involvement.

Broad social change: Youth-led and youth-driven organizations provide a tangible space for youth and their adult allies to create the world they want to see. Organizations have their own systems, rules, cultures and activities. They have norms for how people treat each other and what their members value. In this sense they operate as "micro-societies." Through conscious reflection and development, youth-led organizations can provide a space for young people to build and experiment with social and cultural change and to take personal responsibility for community well-being.



*Where else can I go to
meet a group of people
like me who want to
change the world?*

– About Face Youth Theatre
Participant

Youth Organizers United



The heart of Manhattan is famously intense. Layers of people, activity, history and desire surge over and under each other – the blood and tissue of New York City. On the surface, it is a land of adults. Business, trade and entertainment thrive in supersized buildings. Billboards sell power, beauty and health to those with money to burn. People in suits make policy. Security guards and key cards control entry and access. In this climate, it's easy to lose track of the young people who live, go to school and work just under the surface of New York's five boroughs.

In the center of it all, just blocks away from the construction site where the World Trade Center used to stand, lives Youth Organizers United (YOU), a youth-led and youth-governed advocacy organization. YOU informs and educates youth and adults from communities of color about health issues that affect young people, with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health. Inside YOU, young people find a haven to develop a sense of family, self-awareness, critical consciousness, and the power to make change in their lives and in their communities.

Youth Organizers United at-a-glance

Constituency	Young people of color ages twenty-five and under living in New York City.
Theory of Change Snapshot	Young people transform and revitalize their communities when they have opportunities to build real community with each other, develop skills and knowledge, run their own organizations, participate in decisions that impact their well-being, and lead community organizing campaigns.
Structure Snapshot	<p>The Core Leadership Team is made up of youth twenty-five years old and younger and includes an executive director, program coordinators and an administrative coordinator.</p> <p>Twelve Youth Organizers form the core membership. They develop and implement organizing and advocacy campaigns.</p> <p>Seventy-five youth participate in the Youth Leadership and Advocacy Institute, the entry point into the organization.</p> <p>An Adult Ally Consultant provides ongoing coaching support to the leadership team. The adult ally does not make any decisions.</p> <p>The Board of Directors is made up of young adults ages eighteen to thirty. They have policy and financial oversight.</p> <p>The Adult Ally Advisory Committee is made up of key players in the AIDS advocacy community. They provide advice and make no decisions.</p>
Role of Adults	Provide coaching, training, and advice as consultants and advisory board members.
501(c)3 Status	Independent 501(c)3.
Key Strengths	Young people involved feel deep ownership, power and family in YOU; the structure supports young people to develop while taking on organizational, community, and political leadership roles; youth policies are shaped by young people in New York City and State; and adult perceptions of youth change.
Key Challenges	Executive leadership succession; "star" pressure.; supervising peers; adultism – internal and external.
Funding	<p>Now: Primarily grant funded.</p> <p>Future: Hoping to expand to events, individual donors, membership.</p>

The Beginning: Rising Up from the Ashes

YOU's story begins when a group of young people in New York City took control of their own destiny. YOU was founded in November, 1999, by fifteen youth leaders who had been advocates at the AIDS and Adolescents Network of New York (AANNY), an adult-led advocacy group. Just one month earlier, the AANNY board voted to close their doors, two weeks after this crew of youth leaders had been hired. Nairobi Shellow, the program coordinator and first youth ever to run the program, had to deliver the bad news. With angry tears, the young people demanded to meet with the board. While board members justified the decision by saying that AANNY was no longer needed, this clashed with the statistics that the team had just learned in their trainings – over fifty percent of new HIV infections were among young people, mostly African American and Latino, and Brooklyn had the highest rate of infections in the country. They left the meeting stung by the fact that adults, whom they trusted, had made a decision that literally threatened their lives. This experience profoundly shaped their understanding of adultism. Angry and energized, the youth leaders organized another meeting, where they decided to start their own organization. They knew their work was too important to end and that young people needed to have some control over the decisions that affected their lives.

The founders quickly decided that YOU's mission would be two-fold. YOU, like the programs at AANNY, would continue to educate and inform young people as well as adults about HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health issues affecting young people. But it would also empower youth in roles usually reserved for adult leaders of nonprofit, community-based organizations. This decision helped to put all future questions about YOU's work in the hands of young people themselves. Despite caution expressed by concerned adults, within three months they found a fiscal sponsor and raised over \$250,000 to start up the organization. Four years later, they became their own independent nonprofit, the only youth-led health advocacy organization in the country.

WHAT IS YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE?

Out of its history, YOU developed its beliefs about organizing and how individual and community change happens.

When young people have opportunities to connect to community, develop skills and knowledge, and be empowered to make decisions, they are able to contribute to and transform their communities and personal lives.

Personal Transformation

YOU's transformational organizing approach values individual change and growth. Members increase their self-awareness, skills and confidence and develop a deep sense of family and collective power that positively transforms their lives.

Institutional Empowerment

YOU's youth-led and youth-governed structure supports real participation and empowerment. Youth run the organization, make all decisions, and learn together.

Community & Policy Change

Using personal transformation as a foundation, YOU engages in campaigns and advocacy to improve the lives and health of young people of color. YOU supports young people's involvement on local and state policy committees usually reserved for adults.



We're a new breed of activists.

– Robert Foxx, YOU

CONTEXT:

HIV/AIDS & Youth

In the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, many people assumed the disease only affected adults, especially gay white men. This was a myth - HIV/AIDS always affected old and young people from diverse backgrounds. As a result of this misinformation, youth are now at the highest risk for contracting HIV.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than half of the 40,000 Americans who become infected with HIV each year are between the ages of 13 and 24 - equivalent to two per hour. Almost 90% are young people of color.

Even in the 1980s there was no lack of evidence that youth were at risk. As early as 1987, HIV testing among federal Job Core applicants showed conclusively that young people were getting HIV/AIDS, but young people were not getting the information they needed to protect themselves. YOU believes that its time for young people to get real information and for youth to be a part of the solution to AIDS in their communities.

- *Youth Speak Out: Sexual Reproductive Health, Youth Organizers United, 2002*

YOU's Structure: Independent, Youth Led & Youth Run

In the world of nonprofit organizations, YOU is extremely youth led and run. YOU has written youth leadership and governance into its mission and bylaws. YOU's history taught its youth members that the internal workings of their organization must be part of their strategy for community change. Moreover, the way they function on the inside is just as important as the campaigns they run on the outside.

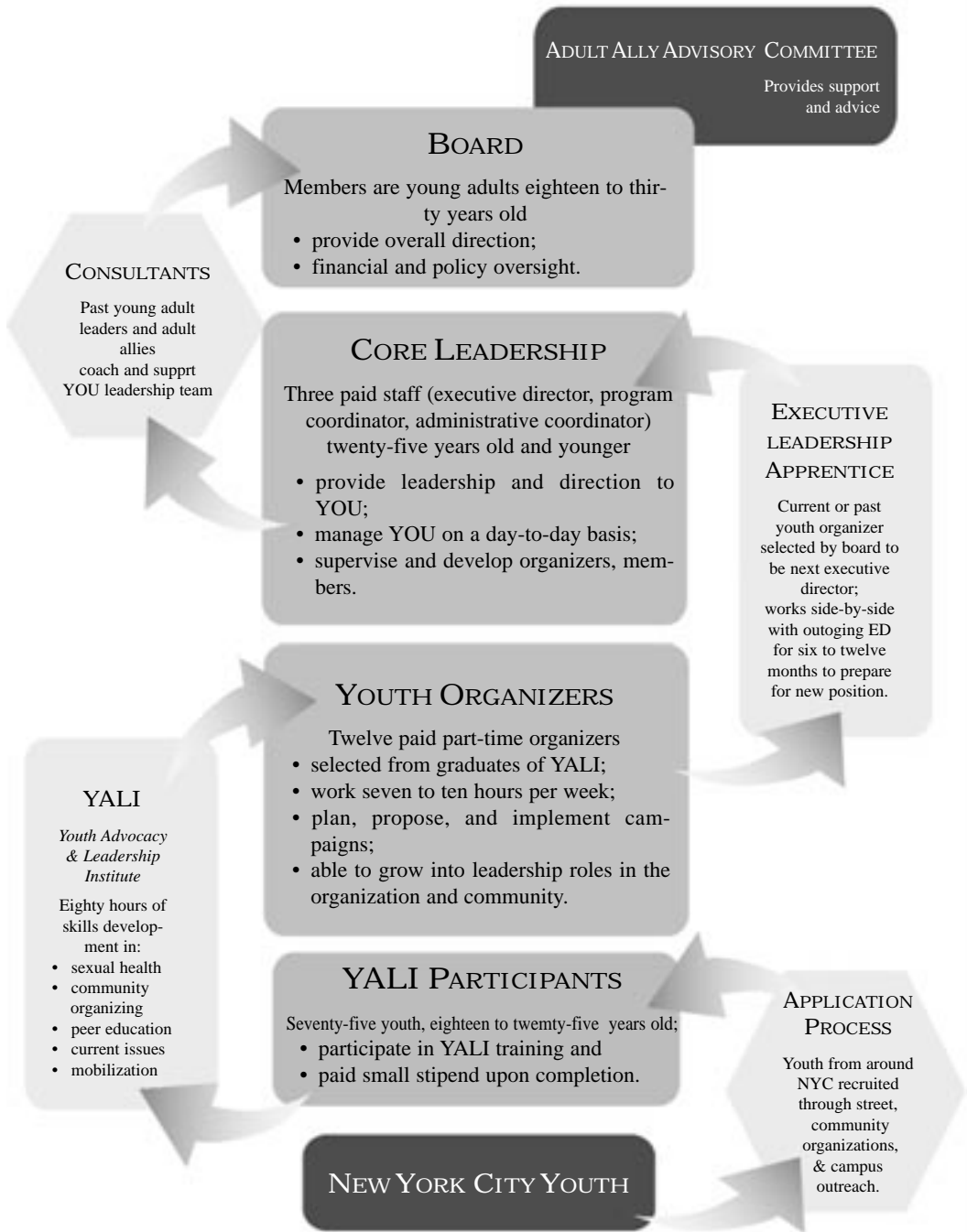
YOU's staff and board of directors are all young people from underrepresented communities. The core staff must be twenty-five years old or younger. YOU's general membership are ages fourteen to twenty-five and its board of directors ages eighteen to thirty.

The leadership development process in the organization is clear and transparent, enabling young people to come into the organization and move up to become the executive director or a board member. Young people first come into the organization through the Youth Advocacy Leadership Institute (YALI). Every year, about seventy-five YALI participants go through eighty hours of intensive training in sexual and reproductive health, community organizing and mobilizing, current youth issues, political history, and peer education. After completing YALI, members can apply to be one of twelve paid youth organizers. The Youth Organizers work seven to ten hours per week developing and implementing organizing and advocacy campaigns around YOU's core issues.

These are key leadership development positions - organizers with the ability and passion are supported to move into leadership roles in the organization and the community. The core leadership team includes an executive director, a program coordinator and an administrative coordinator. Young people move into these positions by apprenticing for three to twelve months with the person they will be replacing. As staff age out of their positions, they have the opportunity to become adult allies and consultants to the new staff. They also can become board members, who are responsible for policy and financial oversight of the organization.

Adults play two very specific advisory roles in YOU. First, they are internal consultants. A part-time adult consultant supports the executive director and other core staff with technical advice and coaching. Second, they are advisory board members. Originally, YOU's board was half adult and half youth. This changed in the strategic planning process when YOU decided to have an all young-adult board and an adult advisory committee made up of key players in the AIDS advocacy community.

YOUTH ORGANIZERS UNITED'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL





Challenges: Building Capacity & Transcending Adulthood

YOU's staff identify the following as their biggest challenges:

Executive leadership succession: Even with a good plan, preparing YOU for leadership succession is a challenge, especially since the current executive director is the founder. YOU has a general policy of promoting from within and has developed a leadership apprenticeship model where the incoming executive director shadows the person they will replace for six to twelve months. YOU is also considering a co-director structure that would enable incoming and outgoing directors to overlap and share responsibility through the transition period.

"Star" pressure: Often, charismatic executive directors are both a blessing and a challenge. Others outside of the organization often help to create a cult of personality, focusing on the charismatic founder rather than the larger group of people that makes an organization function. While this can help to get funding and recognition, it often hurts the organization by taking away leadership opportunities from others.

Supervising peers: YOU places a high value on developing personal relationships and true community. This value supports tremendous personal and community change. However, it also creates challenges. The transition from being an organizer to becoming a supervisor in a peer-led, community setting can be very difficult. Supervisors must be prepared for the pressure of making tough decisions and taking on a new role with regard to their peers. YOU deals with this by explicitly stating the responsibilities of all jobs in the organization and by discussing the difference between working in the organization and hanging out as friends outside of work.

Adulthood – internal and external: The stress of adulthood plays out in several ways, but especially in legal contracts. Funders and grant contracts, landlords and leases, and payroll companies often look like brick walls when it comes to youth-run organizations. In YOU's case, having an internal adult consultant helped, especially in their early days. The adult ally used his power to sign contracts that wouldn't have been approved otherwise. While this was a good use of adult power, YOU also had to pay attention to the internal tensions that came with it.

BEST PRACTICE: YOU's Campaign Proposal Process

One unique part of YOU's structure is the way that youth organizers develop their own leadership and organizational skills in running advocacy campaigns. Organizers are encouraged to step up and use the skills they bring into the organization – whether their talent is art, talking to people, or facilitating a team. When an organizer has an idea for a campaign or event, she must write a full proposal, including a budget, goals, project plan, strategy and timeline. She presents this to the Program Coordinator and then the Executive Director. Nothing happens without a budget and a proposal. As people move up through the organization and take on more complex projects, they continue to develop more sophisticated project plans and participate in fundraising. Through this straightforward process, organizers learn the basics of running YOU or their own organization or business. By keeping the structure clear, the organization develops a pool of new leaders who can direct YOU. In fact, many of the organizers in YOU have made that connection. Several youth organizers are planning to move into leadership roles in YOU and then start their own organizations.

...
if I don't own my own business, I'm gonna be the next ED. That's the office joke. Every one out of the 15 people here are saying they're gonna run their own business or organization.... Something in the field where they own it, they run it...
– Jaron Cook, YOU Organizer



YOU'S IMPACTS: Strong Community, Healthy Leaders

Youth experience real learning and skills development, including how to run a nonprofit organization. Youth are paid to do work that is meaningful to them. They connect to their own future and develop a deep sense of personal potential. They develop a feeling of ownership of the organization and become leaders in their community. Youth receive appropriate information about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and have increased awareness about sexual/reproductive health issues.



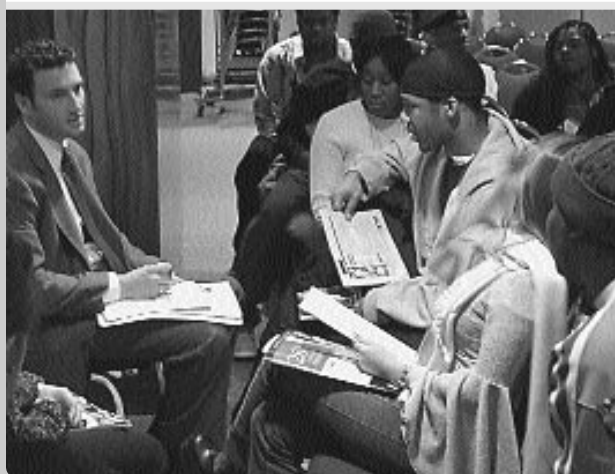
Organizations develop innovative structures that reflect young people's culture and needs; youth are not as tied to traditions and the unhealthy baggage of adult nonprofit organizations. Allied adult-led organizations gain sustained youth perspective and concrete tools for increasing youth leadership in their own organizations. Other youth-led organizations gain ideas and models for how to run their organizations.



The Community is energized and healed by young people's vision, energy and power – youth organizers use this to break apathy and transform pain and injustice into healing.



Policies change and organizing campaigns reflect young people's needs and concerns. Young people serve on task forces and committees making policy decisions; better policies are created on school, city, and state levels.



Success Story: Hit the Schools Campaign

Since YOU's inception, staff and members had known that mandated school based HIV/AIDS education programs were not happening in New York City public schools. To address this problem, YOU wrote letters, met with the Board of Education, and spoke with school principals and teachers throughout the city. Because these adults in charge were out of touch with what was really going on in the schools, YOU's organizers took to the streets with their "Hit the Schools" campaign. Through the campaign, they surveyed more than five-hundred public high school students and mobilized three-thousand students at ten New York City high schools to sign petitions protesting lack of access to HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health education and resources. Because of this groundwork, representatives from YOU are now the only young people sitting at the table for the Public School Task Force on HIV/AIDS and are helping to write a new K-12 curriculum. The campaign is far from over, and YOU continues to meet with dozens of school and community leaders to demand these classes for students as well as to include youth voices in policy discussions that affect their lives.

YOU's Future: Preparing for Transitions

As YOU heads into the future, it faces a key learning curve – how to put its leadership transition model into practice. YOU is moving from the first generation of the organization into the second: as the founder transitions out, staff are setting the model for handling future transitions. A key question is how to keep the mentoring and coaching system in place and healthy so that knowledge can be passed on as new leaders come up through the organization. This is happening while YOU is becoming an independent nonprofit, which brings additional challenges and opportunities around building the organization. The exciting part will be to bring more and more young people into the training and mentoring process around financial management, fundraising, evaluation, and other organizational development issues.



*I'm making a change in
my community.*

– Jaron Cook, YOU Organizer





Lummi CEDAR Project

It is a land of coastal mountains, salmon and cedar forest; long wet winters and deep green summers; nourishing air and sacred space. The Lummi Nation is located on a small peninsula just outside Bellingham, Washington, and is home to over five-thousand Native people. The Nation is part of the Coastal Salish family of indigenous tribes that stretches up to Southeast Alaska. Much of the Nation's original land was lost to the US Government with the Point Elliot Treaty of 1855 and the reservation is now only one of many ancestral village sites. This deep connection with the land and surrounding water holds both power and pain. Tradition and continuity live alongside the scars of colonialism and the mixed blessings of contemporary life.

Lummi youth are in a challenging position today, straddling two different cultures. As in many Native communities, they face new roles and meanings of "success" as they are challenged to live in mainstream society while maintaining traditions. They encounter enormous difficulties stemming from painful life experiences and cultural ambivalence.

The Lummi CEDAR Project recognizes the need to heal this historical trauma. Structured as a youth-led, elder-informed organization, the CEDAR Project's mission is to improve the health and well-being of the Lummi community. To realistically impact youth, it's important to think about how the whole community must change, not just individuals. The CEDAR Project does this through respecting and recognizing the role traditional values play in supporting healthy choices, building bridges between youth and elders, and supporting youth leadership and community organizing. In doing this work, the CEDAR Project is helping to plant and water the seeds of healing for all Lummi people.

The Beginning: Reviving Tradition

The CEDAR Project grew out of a deep need to revive a Lummi tradition important to the well-being of the community, especially youth. It also created a space for youth to reconnect with Lummi Schelangen (way of life). The acronym CEDAR stands for Community, Elders and Education, Drug-and-Alcohol-free, and Respect. Originally started in the early 1990's, the CEDAR Project focused on reviving the tradition and sport of canoe pulling and racing as a means to a healthy lifestyle and community well-being. The organization built a new canoe shed to store the tribe's older canoes, supported coaches and families to teach youth the art of canoe pulling, and provided seed money to start up new canoe clubs. New canoes were built and the new generation of youth returned to the water in single, six-man, and eleven-man canoes. It also organized youth and families to travel to different tribes to race. Canoe pulling allowed a space for elders to pass on traditional teachings. Through this experience, many youth learned the importance of traditional Lummi values and positive leadership models, involving living a healthy lifestyle, supporting one another and working together, respect for the ancestors, and being of one mind. After about five years, the canoe pulling project became self-sustaining and spun off from CEDAR.

With this opening, the CEDAR Project began to shift its focus to youth empowerment and leadership. Several adult leaders in the community saw young people struggling with difficult issues like substance abuse and high unemployment. As allies, they wanted to find a positive outlet for youth in the community. They advertised conflict resolution workshops at the high school and taught courses at the tribal college based on traditional peacemaking skills. The workshops took hold quickly and pulled in more and more youth. In 2000, the staff expanded the curriculum into a summer youth empowerment program with leadership, teamwork and prejudice-reduction training. The CEDAR Project's founders always had the vision that youth would eventually take over and lead the program. Over the next two summers, young people were integrated into the program as assistant trainers. Experienced Native American adult trainers and mentors ran "train the trainer" workshops to teach facilitation, program management and planning skills. Soon, youth trainers started evaluating and revising the curriculum itself. They decided to take it to the next level, helping participants solve community issues through organizing.

In the summer of 2003, the training program took a big step and went fully youth led. A training team of four youth leaders recruited par-



CONTEXT: The Importance of Cedar

The life of the Lummi tribe evolved around the cedar tree. The cedar tree contributes to many facets of life - homes, clothing, baskets, and canoes - and is held sacred for its spiritual and healing powers. The cedar dugout canoe plays a central role in the life of the Lummi and is the subject of dances, art, stories, song, and education. Ceremonies honor the canoes and cedar trees.

The traditional sport of canoe pulling has been recognized for years as a means to promote a healthy lifestyle. It is a highly revered sport, and many youth and families compete yearly throughout the region and with other Coastal Salish families in Canada. Many traditional teachings about canoe pulling bring meaning and relevance to Schelangen (Lummi way of life). Elders say that a canoe puller must be mentally, physically, and spiritually balanced in order to be in stroke with the rest of the crew. Pullers must work together to be in stroke, as this is what carries and moves the canoe efficiently through the water. Being "in stroke" means to be whole, unified, and of one mind.

ticipants, surveyed their interests, developed goals, planned the schedule with youth input, and created an evaluation plan for the trainings. They collaborated with a tribal youth employment program so all the participants would be paid stipends for participating in the training. Word got out that the training was “off the hook” and the first day was packed. The team was excited but nervous, wondering if they had the right to be standing up in front of the group in leadership positions rather than the adults. The first morning they gathered to “get in stroke” with each other as a team, and once they started, they were amazed at how great it felt. The CEDAR Project has now trained eighty youth and has a strong network of young leaders living a healthy lifestyle and working to heal and create positive community change.

Lummi CEDAR Project at-a-glance	
Constituency	Young people ages fourteen to twenty-five from the Lummi community in Washington State, Lummi elders, and other Native youth from neighboring tribes.
Theory of Change Snapshot	Community healing takes place when the dreams of the youth are united with the wisdom of the elders. When young people are given support to develop as leaders while guided by traditional values and intergenerational relationships, they rebuild and heal the community as a whole.
Structure Snapshot	<p>The Lummi CEDAR Project is a Lummi tradition-based, youth-led organization, informed and guided by elder advisors and intergenerational relationships.</p> <p>The Core Leadership Team is the youth staff made up of an executive director, program director, and program assistant.</p> <p>Youth Organizers in the Youth In Action teams and the Native Youth Leadership Program plan and organize the CEDAR Project's campaigns with staff and elder support.</p> <p>Elders inform the CEDAR Project as board members, mentors, and advisors.</p> <p>Youth Board Members provide leadership and input into decisions about the organization's development and future.</p>
Role of Adults	Elder guides, board members, adult ally mentors and consultants.
501(c)3 status	Independent 501(c)3.
Key Strengths	A structure and community organizing process that supports youth empowerment while strengthening traditional Lummi culture and intergenerational relationships.
Key Challenges	Creating a youth-led structure for an indigenous context; adapting organizational development models; creating a culturally relevant youth organizing model in a rural Native community.
Funding	<p>Now: Primarily grant funded.</p> <p>Future: Contracts with other tribal and non-tribal organizations; individual donors.</p>



*It's like ripples in the water.
Someone has to splash the
water so it will go out and
touch everyone else... I
guess you'd say we're the
splashes.*

– Josh Phair,
Program Coordinator

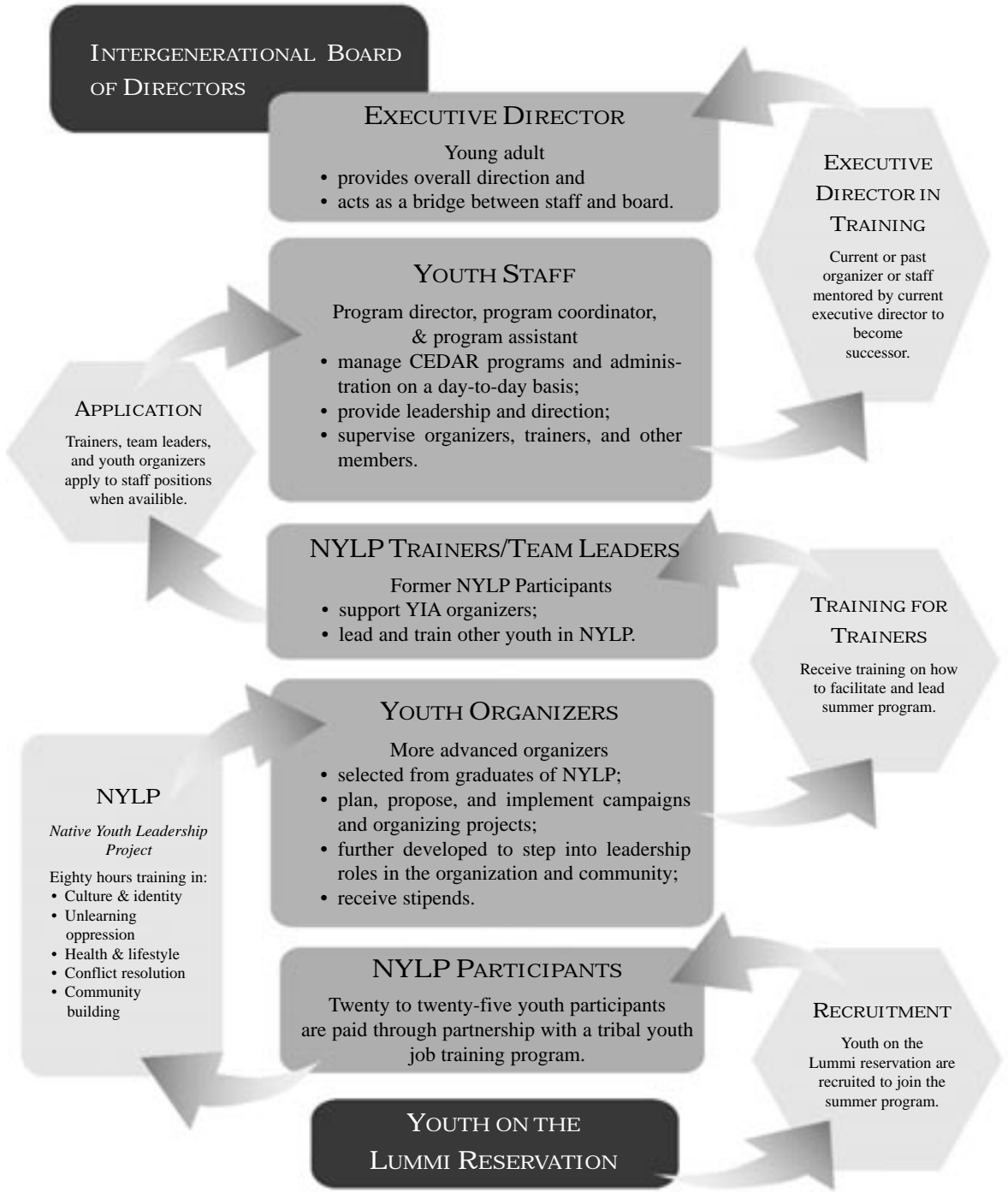
CEDAR Project's Structure: Youth Led, Elder Informed

As its story tells, the Lummi CEDAR Project's structure for youth leadership has evolved over time. Beginning with the vision of a few adult and elder allies, the CEDAR Project is planning to transition into a fully youth-led (and elder-informed) organization. This thoughtful path reflects young people's need to strengthen intergenerational relationships, reconnect with traditions, and develop as community leaders.

Youth enter the CEDAR Project through the Native Youth Leadership Program (NYLP). NYLP participants attend the program to develop skills in healthy lifestyles, traditional values and leadership, communication, conflict resolution, community building, teamwork, unlearning oppression, and prejudice reduction. They also learn about issues such as the misappropriation of Native culture. After NYLP, youth can stay involved as youth organizers during the school year. Through Youth In Action (YIA), youth organizers propose, plan and implement campaigns important to the community. This year, youth are focusing their campaign on creating a youth governance structure or tribal youth council on the Lummi reservation. They can also prepare to become NYLP trainers for the following summer's NYLP.

The core leadership team includes an executive director, program director, and a program assistant. The program director and program assistant are responsible for the development and management of NYLP and YIA and for the day-to-day operation of the organization. Both are young people under twenty-five who have come up through the program. The executive director provides overall leadership to the organization. This position is currently held by an adult ally; however, she has been transitioning out and coaching the current program director to take over that role. The goal is for the transition to be complete within six to twelve months. The board of directors is currently made up of tribal elders and other community members, including two non-native members. CEDAR has recently appointed three new youth board members to create an intergenerational board of directors that will provide input and fundraising support. Elders inform the CEDAR Project as adult allies, board members, staff mentors, and advisors to the organizing teams.

LUMMI CEDAR PROJECT'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL





The very first day of the training this year I was like, who do we think we are...we don't have a right to get up in front of the group... we've had all these adults... and they've had so much experience... [Then] we got ourselves ready and got in stroke with each other as a facilitation team... and I was like you know what, why did I even doubt myself?... we got the skills we need to lead it... why should we be afraid, because we've been training for this for years.

– Sharlaine LaClair, Project Director

Challenges: Creating Tools for an Indigenous Context

In addition to typical challenges for youth organizations, most of the CEDAR Project's challenges relate to adapting concepts to fit their indigenous community.

Creating a youth-led structure for an indigenous context: Intergenerational relationships and traditional culture are extremely important in the Lummi community and most indigenous cultures. At the same time, many young people are looking to find a way to increase their voices in community decision making and healing. The whole community, from elders to youth, needs opportunities to heal and develop their voices together. The CEDAR Project has worked extremely hard to develop a youth-led organization that builds on tradition and intergenerational relationships.

Adapting organizational development models: Most organizational development models are based on mainstream, Eurocentric models of thinking. The CEDAR Project had to transform and translate organizational development concepts such as needs assessments, strategic planning, and evaluation to support youth and Lummi values.

Creating a youth organizing model: The CEDAR Project is committed to promoting positive change in and for its community through organizing. However, most community organizing models are based on opposition and assumptions that there is an outside target. Respecting traditional values, it has been important for the CEDAR Project to develop its own model of community organizing and change that strengthens, rather than divides, the community.

BEST PRACTICE: Weaving A Vision for Strategic Planning

In many indigenous circles, information is passed on through storytelling. At the start of their strategic planning process, CEDAR young people found it necessary to reflect on their traditions and redefine what strategic planning means for them. Drawing on the teachings of the Coastal Salish canoe pulling culture, youth leaders made a connection between strategic planning and ideas such as “pulling together” in the canoe, “getting in stroke” with one another, and weaving strands of cedar to create a basket, or container to hold their dreams. They used these ideas to build a framework for creating a strategic plan that was relevant to Lummi culture. The three components of Weaving A Vision are like the steps taken when one weaves a cedar basket.

Phase 1. Gathering: people, information, ideas, history, identity, and support

The planning team conducted interviews and focus groups with other Lummi youth on topics such as tradition and relationships with elders, responsibilities, vision for the community, and programs or activities they would like to be a part of. The team also held a videotaped focus group with eight elders who shared their concerns for the youth, community, and the future. A Lummi youth artist created an image of Weaving a Vision using Coastal Salish art.

It's really awesome to me because our community is a small tribal community, and we have eighty young people trained now. So we have a broad network living a healthy lifestyle, caring about their community, inspired, motivated, and have this drive to make a positive change in their community. And that impacts their family... We're just building a collective movement...
 – Sharlaine, Project Director

Phase 2. Sorting: assessing and sorting what was gathered, determining vision

The planning team then refined the project’s mission, approach and strategies. Youth and elders held a dinner to get to know one another, discover ideas for sharing time together, and pass on historical and traditional knowledge. The ultimate outcome was to build a bridge uniting different community members’ ideas, visions and dreams. The planning team and CEDAR youth staff sorted the information gathered in the winter and spring by themes to make it ready for “weaving” into a plan for the CEDAR Project by the summer.

Phase 3. Weaving: pulling it together to contribute to Lummi Schelangen

The planning team analyzed the information that was gathered and sorted. A strategic planning retreat helped them reach consensus on the main strategies and structure for the CEDAR Project with their members. CEDAR Project youth presented the Weaving a Vision plan and strategies to CEDAR board members for approval and support.



LUMMI CEDAR PROJECT'S IMPACTS: Youth Empowerment & Community Healing

Youth develop culturally relevant leadership and organizational skills, including public speaking, conflict resolution, and campaign planning. Young people learn about their tribal rights, strengthen their sense of tribal identity, develop confidence about who they are, and strengthen their ability to be actively involved – and accountable – in the community. They gain positive relationships with elders and adults.



The Community has a strong network of youth leaders, elders and allies. Increasing numbers of young people are trained in youth organizing, healthy lifestyles, and connecting to tradition. The intergenerational network supports community and family healing by addressing and interrupting the pain and destructive patterns related to historical trauma and giving young people the outlet to participate in community development.



Elders have more opportunities to pass on teachings and encouragement to youth. They feel cared for, respected, and honored by young people. They also know that these valuable traditions will continue in future generations.



Tribal Organizations reflect indigenous values and culture. The structure of the organization and its campaigns help strengthen community relationships and young people's participation. Organizations gain a better understanding of youth concerns and increased respect for youth.



Tribal Policies are shaped by youth input and collaboration with elders. The CEDAR Project is also building its capacity to develop strategies for youth to impact policies outside the Tribe that affect Native youth such as protecting the Tribe's sacred sites and incorporating accurate accounts of Native American history into the local public school curriculum



I've changed in many ways, but most of all I learned to believe in myself and in others. The CEDAR Project taught me to respect.

– Participant in Lummi Youth Empowerment Training

Success Story: Healing Historical Trauma

The most significant impact the CEDAR Project has had on its community is the healing that every person experiences when they come in contact with its programs, whether it's through its interactive youth leadership trainings, community forums, or Board meetings. The CEDAR Project helps to create a sacred space in which young people, adults and elders find the safety and support they need to experience a deeper understanding of our community, and then to speak and act on what they are feeling in their hearts. The staff have a saying to sum up this transformational energy: *We are starting a fire in our community, and the spark is coming from the youth!*

CEDAR's Future: Planning for Sustainability

As the Lummi CEDAR Project moves into the future, the key learning curve they face is how to transition executive leadership to young people; build meaningful roles for young adults on the intergenerational board, including having a young adult co-chair; continue to transfer power from one group of young people to the next; and sustain financial and organizational support. They are developing a leadership transition plan that will train the current youth program director to become the executive director while maintaining an adult ally position for ongoing mentoring. They are also exploring collaborations with other tribal organizations to create sustainability for the summer youth leadership program while maintaining it as a fully youth-led program within the CEDAR project.

Kids As Self Advocates



How do you build a social movement when your community is isolated, spread apart by space and time? What do you do when your shared history is fragmented and the elders are separated from youth? What if you are not even sure who your community is or where to find them?

Although it sounds funny, you might try a search engine on your school computer. Start up and log in. The computer screen jumps to life. Voice activated software and staccato key strokes pierce the soft, blue glow and steady, high-pitched hum. A doorway opens and you enter, squeezing your words, your thoughts, and your world in through a wire. Electrical pulses travel through a maze of DSL and telephone lines, crisscrossing above your head and under your feet. This is the Internet linking your house, room, and dreams to those of your peers.

The digital revolution has fundamentally changed our lives – how we think about community and how we organize and advocate. Even how we date. Most movements start around some sort of table – a place to talk, share resources, and strategize. For youth with disabilities, you could say the Internet has become a virtual kitchen table.

Kids As Self Advocates (KASA) has harnessed this opportunity to break the isolation faced by so many youth with disabilities. Created by and for youth with disabilities, KASA educates society about issues concerning youth with a wide spectrum of disabilities and special health care needs. KASA supports self-determination, peer support networks, and self advocacy. They also help young people develop a sense of pride and a safe place to connect. In other words, they are using the Internet to build a virtual community and a nationwide movement and they help young .

CONTEXT: Disability Pride

For many disabled youth the most intense form of isolation comes from not having a sense of collective identity or pride. In general, disabled children do not have disabled parents or role models. Disability is seen by society as problem that needs to be fixed or a tragedy to “cure”. As they get older, disabled youth are segregated in many different ways. For example, they are tracked into special education classes, placed in institutions, or they are encouraged to pass and hide their disabilities. After graduating, many young adults face increased barriers if there are no resources to facilitate their independence in the community. The media reinforce the idea that disability is shameful.

The disability rights movement not only works for human rights; it also builds the visibility of disability communities, history and pride. It provides individuals with a sense of community and breaks down barriers of isolation and shame. Disability history, like that of other marginalized groups, reclaims the stories of leaders, community activism, and everyday people's experiences. KASA exists to help youth with disabilities build community with each other and develop this sense of pride and history. KASA chose to be on-line because it's inexpensive and accessible. Technology enables KASA members to speak directly with each other and reinforce a message of empowerment: every person with a disability has the right to make decisions about their lives, and segregation without choice is wrong.



Through KASA, I have learned valuable leadership skills that I have been able to use in other areas of my life. This helps me to make sure that despite my disability, I am treated with the same equality as my peers, even if it does mean asking for accommodations.

– KASA member

The Beginning: A Vision for Self-Determination

KASA was started in 1998 by a group of youth with disabilities and a few adult allies. Family Voices had just been launched six years before as a national organization of parents and families of children with disabilities and special health care needs. Family Voices created an outlet for parents to be advocates for their children. Soon, young people whose parents were involved in Family Voices started raising the issue of self-advocacy. They asked the Family Voices board, “you’ve supported my parents advocating for me, now what are you going to do to help me advocate for myself?” The Family Voices board decided it was an important project, so, in partnership with the youth, they secured funding and launched KASA as a project of Family Voices.

From the beginning, the goals of KASA were to promote and improve the lives of youth with disabilities and chronic health conditions through peer empowerment, advocacy and leadership development. KASA youth provided a model for leadership and the power of self-advocacy and self-determination. KASA began with an all-youth working program board and an adult ally project director who was also a Family Voices staff member.

Kids As Self Advocates at-a-glance

Constituency	Young people with disabilities and special health care needs living in the United States and some international members.
Theory of Change Snapshot	When young people are informed about their rights, give and get peer support, and organize, they are able to change systems to include young people with disabilities and achieve self-determination.
Structure Snapshot	<p>The Core Leadership Team is the KASA National Program Advisory Board and is made up of up to ten youth ages thirteen to twenty-four with mixed disabilities. Two Board Co-Chairs provide leadership to the board and support to other board members.</p> <p>The KASA Web site provides the hub for communication, community building, and coordination in this virtual organization.</p> <p>The Project Director is an adult ally who takes direction from the board. She supports the board's operations as an internal coach. In the future this role will be filled with a young adult constituent.</p> <p>KASA Members are youth and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs throughout the country, their family members and friends, and the professionals who work with and for them.</p> <p>Consultants are part-time paid staff who are former members. They coordinate KASA programs and administration with the program board and project director.</p> <p>The Adult Allies Committee provides fundraising support and resources.</p>
Role of Adults	Provide coaching, training, and advice as the project director, adult allies committee, and Family Voices staff.
501(c)3 status	Project of Family Voices, which provides KASA with a high level of autonomy, fiscal management support, technical assistance, and access to national network.
Key Strengths	Structure supports deep empowerment to speak out and act as decision makers. Youth have stability and support of adults without being controlled by them. Effective use of technology to build a strong, national community. Strong ethic and practice of inclusion.
Key Challenges	Raising the money to support in-person meetings and advocacy work; working within a parent organization; health insurance; staying in touch as a virtual organization; finding and cultivating disabled adult allies as mentors; raising money to maintain current staff and add additional staff.
Funding	Now: Primarily grant funded. Future: More foundation funding, individual donors, and on-line fundraising.



*Disability is a political issue,
not a personal problem.*

– Naomi Ortiz, KASA Consultant
and Former Board Member

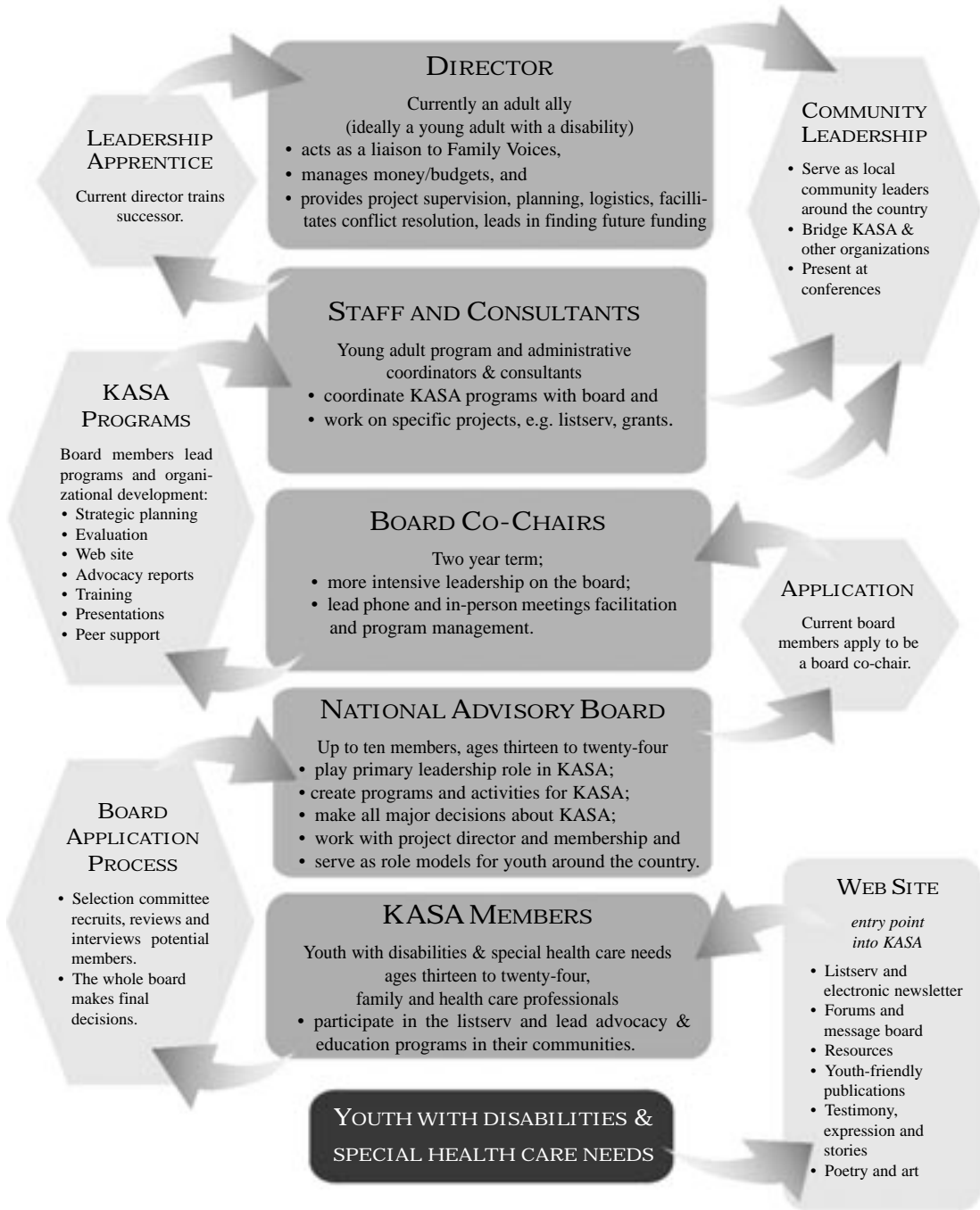
KASA's Structure: Youth-led Fiscally Sponsored Project

KASA's structure reflects its commitment to self-determination for youth with disabilities. KASA is both youth led and virtual, making it possible for youth from all over the United States and internationally to participate in the leadership and membership of the project. As a fiscally sponsored project of Family Voices, KASA has the support of a larger organization. This relationship enables KASA's all-youth program board to serve as its core leadership and working body, while depending on Family Voices for legal and administrative support and oversight. However, the fiscal sponsorship still creates some limitations around KASA's decision making autonomy.

The KASA Web site provides the hub for communication, community building, and coordination. KASA members are youth and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs across the country, their family members and friends, and the professionals who work with and for them. People become members by participating actively in the KASA Web site community. Members share successes, challenges, stories and strategies on-line by posting on the Web site. KASA supports and educates members to advocate for youth and disability rights in their own communities. The KASA advisory board is made up of eight to ten young people between the ages of thirteen and twenty-four with a range of disabilities. The advisory board is the core working body of KASA. They meet in person two times a year, and in between by e-mail and conference calls. Board members lead organizational development, strategic planning and evaluation in KASA and plan and implement KASA projects and programs. They serve as leaders and mentors to other youth with disabilities and the KASA membership, and represent the organization publicly through training and presentations. Two board co-chairs provide leadership and support to the board. They lead meetings and provide facilitation and program management. The co-chairs commit to two-year terms that overlap by a year, enabling KASA to pass on leadership and institutional memory. There are two part-time, paid consultants who conduct outreach, build collaborations, and coordinate projects when directed by the board. Currently, one of these positions is held by a former board member. These positions enable youth to age out of the board and move into ally roles, passing on skills and support to the next generation.

The KASA project director is currently an adult ally who serves as an internal coach to the board and staff. She is a staff person of Family Voices and acts as the liaison to Family Voices and funders. She provides overall project supervision and coaching, facilitates conflict resolution, and manages the KASA budget. In the future, the board is hoping to phase a young adult with a disability into this position. The adult allies committee provides fundraising support and resources.

KIDS AS SELF ADVOCATES' LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL





*Being a youth with a disability is like having
a full-time job without pay.*

– Amanda Putz, KASA Board Co-chair

Challenges: Practicing Inclusion in a National, Virtual Context

Money: Maintaining a virtual organization is expensive with conference calls, trainings and two annual in-person meetings. The cost of these meetings is challenging partly because funders often don't understand the expenses involved. For real inclusion for people with disabilities, you have to factor in costs that most non-disabled people do not think about (e.g. paying for personal assistants to travel with people).

Time: Many of KASA's youth are in high school or college and have obligations like family, relationships, and work. While KASA youth are very passionate and committed, this can be difficult to manage, especially as a virtual volunteer project.

Working under a fiscal sponsor: Given KASA's general goal of independence, working with a fiscal sponsor has been both a benefit and a challenge, particularly since their fiscal sponsor includes many of their parents. KASA is exploring other options, including other incubator organizations and an independent 501(c)3 status.

Health insurance: Health insurance is a particularly critical issue for disabled youth. Given the state of insurance and health care systems in the United States, it is nearly impossible to find quality, affordable, comprehensive health coverage as an individual with "pre-existing conditions." As a small organization based in one state, Family Voices cannot afford most national plans. Without health insurance, youth with disabilities cannot work at KASA because they will lose their state covered benefits once they start earning a salary.

Staying in touch as a virtual organization or project: There are obvious challenges in being a national project that has no central office. Staff that are not colocated need to find ways to coordinate work and stay connected. One of their solutions has come through technology and to "email, call, email, call, email, call..."

Disabled adult allies. Disabled youth want disabled adult allies. For a number of reasons, these equitable, intergenerational ties are not easy to develop. KASA is paving the way in developing young adults with the experience and skills to be adult allies to young people with disabilities.

BEST PRACTICES: Board Leadership and Technology

Leadership Transitions in KASA

KASA is constantly bringing in new membership and some of the original board members are now becoming adult allies and consultants. KASA's structure is set up to pass on leadership and reinforce mentoring between generations of board members. On the board, two rotating co-chairs each commit to a two-year term. New chairs come in on alternate years, so that one senior co-chair is always mentoring a new co-chair. This system helps to transition power from one generation to the next. It also allows a wide range of people the opportunity to be leaders in the organization. Naomi, a former co-chair, explains, "My role automatically turned more supportive. I couldn't hold onto power, I had to give it up." She naturally grew into being a coach to the new board co-chairs. "I'm much more in the background now, doing fact finding, formatting, research." Committees also help to diversify skills and leadership development on the board. Christina, another KASA consultant who has gone from the front lines to supporting the next generation, describes this system: "We've created committees of youth to handle some of this administrative stuff. We have a fundraising committee and youth are writing grants. [We] give them the information and support they need to make those decisions." Ultimately, they are helping build a new cycle of leadership and inter-generational support where the future generations of young people won't feel alienated from their elders.

Self-determination means having the right to fail... youth with disabilities are really over-protected by families, or by institutions in general... school... rarely allowed to take risks... having self-determination for youth with disabilities means having that space to fail... so that's really powerful when you give that opportunity to young people.

– Naomi Ortiz, KASA Consultant



Technology in KASA

KASA uses technology to build a community and movement among youth with disabilities who are often isolated and segregated from each other. KASA operates at a national level and technology plays a role in each part of the organization.

The Advisory Board: Board members are located all over the United States. The Board meets two times a year in person and has bi-monthly conference calls to coordinate and plan their work. They also use email, the Web site and one-on-one calls to keep their work going.

The Staff: Also located around the country, staff uses teleconferences, email, and phone calls to stay in touch and coordinate work.

The Membership: The Web site serves as the central hub for membership. Email, forums, and the listserv also keep communication and community-building going.

The Web site for KASA, www.fvkasa.org, is a place where members go to learn about subjects like advocacy, leadership, health care, education, employment, different disabilities and health conditions, and much, much more. It also has information on sports, dating and sexuality. The KASA advisory board helps determine what will be on the Web site based upon input and submissions from members.

KASA'S IMPACTS: Putting Disabled Youth on the Map

Youth Board Members gain leadership skills, including public speaking, nonprofit organizational development, funding, management, and training. They learn how to work with young people with a range of disabilities and special health care needs and gain a national network of peer support and activism. They have increased confidence and sense of pride.



Youth Members gain a sense of identity, history, community, and self-determination. They learn how to advocate for themselves and others. They have more opportunities to communicate with others like them. They have a better understanding of disability issues, their rights, and needs. They are able to express themselves through articles, art and poetry on the Web site.



Adults learn how to work with youth, particularly youth with disabilities, in an equitable way. They gain youth perspective about what a teen with a disability is thinking and feeling.



Other Organizations improve their programs for youth with disabilities and become more inclusive and respectful. They gain access to user-friendly materials that are helpful for all ages regardless of disability.

Community - youth with disabilities are more visible. Through members' self-advocacy, schools and other parts of the community are made more inclusive.

Local, State, and National Policies are impacted directly by the opinions and voices of youth with disabilities.





Success Story: Reaching Out Across the Web

Through its Web site, KASA provides an opportunity for people with disabilities to communicate with others like them and empowers people to stick up for their rights and their needs. Many times people with disabilities are not educated on subjects that KASA provides information and stories on, such as dating and relationships, health care, or educational issues. The fact sheets (which are written by youth) are useful for all ages and give a new perspective around disability. Youth also get the opportunity to feel accepted and part of something bigger than themselves by either contributing a piece of writing or poem, or by participating in a forum. As a result, they gain a powerful sense of identity and community.

KASA's Future: Building Leadership for the Long Haul

KASA is preparing to transition youth leaders who have moved up through the organization into the coaching and director roles of the organization. As they do this, they are also considering different models for their organizational structure. While Family Voices has been an incredibly supportive fiscal sponsor, KASA is also looking at other options that would support and strengthen its own identity as an independent organization. Possibilities include spinning off as an independent 501(c)3 or finding a fiscal sponsor that is set up to incubate emerging non-profit organizations. Whatever they decide, this next step will likely be a three to five year process. KASA is also focusing on how to train their board in fiscal administration, fundraising, and other skills to be able to become more independent as an organization and to prepare disabled young adults to lead throughout society.

Youth with disabilities in general are highly segregated and isolated. Being a virtual organization has given us an opportunity to come into these youths' lives... Where we may not have been able to get in the door if we said, "hey come to this meeting." We can say, "hey, come to this Web site...check us out or give us a phone call." That's been really powerful.

– Naomi Ortiz,
KASA Consultant and Former
Board Member



About Face Youth Theatre

For many marginalized communities, the ability to connect across generations and pass stories from one person to another is a key strategy for survival. Around a kitchen table or during a late night discussion in the safety of home, true stories provide testimony to struggle and pain, resistance and healing. They communicate both change and continuity. Storytelling magic is alchemy – weaving experience into the doorway and path of the future.

For most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, this intergenerational space does not exist. Most queer youth grow up in families where they are different than everyone else, and in communities where relationships with queer adults can be taboo. Instead of a refuge, home may be hostile and dangerous. School is a place to silently survive. Community is something LGBTQ youth must leave and then build themselves. Without a family or community that shares their identity and experience, there is no safe space to tell their stories and hear how others have walked the path.

AFYT believes in the power of performance and storytelling as vehicles for social change. Storytelling allows young people, especially those on the margins, to claim the truth of their own experiences and to start to transform the world around them. AFYT uses theatre as a vehicle for LGBTQ youth to gather and share their own true stories, build community and catalyze youth-led dialogue and action in schools and communities. Through this mutual exchange, they aim to increase the visibility, safety, empowerment and leadership of queer youth and their allies.



Having youth articulate these issues in a theatrical form is powerful advocacy. It puts a human face on the issues so that young people become agents of change rather than subjects of change.

– AFYT Staff Task Force

CONTEXT:

Breaking the Silence

AFYT believes in the **power of true stories** to inspire dialogue and create change. Many LGBTQ youth feel invisible in their classrooms, communities, and even their own families. From history to health, queer youth do not learn about themselves in school. A reported sixty-nine percent of LGBTQ youth have been physically, verbally or sexually harassed at school and up to twenty-eight percent drop out to escape this treatment. With no biological LGBTQ family to show the way, many youth learn to hide their identity rather than celebrate it.

AFYT creates plays based on true stories as a method to empower LGBTQ youth and allies. The process fuses testimony with artistic transformation. As performers share their experience, they also catalyze dialogue and action around big community issues. Young people are able to reclaim their power, reconstruct history and build a safe, nurturing community.

The Beginning: A Queer Youth Movement

About Face Youth Theatre was launched in 1998, at a moment when significant numbers of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth across the country were organizing to form Gay Straight Alliances and coming out in their schools and to their parents in their early teens. Ignited by the highly publicized Matthew Shepherd murder, a national movement of youth and adult leaders was catalyzed to address the needs of LGBTQ youth, assuming that, if given the resources and a viable forum, youth could advocate for themselves. The early stages of this movement were critical to the birth of the Youth Theatre. Founders of the then fledgling company became aware that there was a population of LGBTQ youth in Chicago interested in the use of theatre as a tool for social change.

At the time, the core theatre group was made up of young adult actors and directors. Based on experiences with theatre as a transformative process, they came up with two goals: 1) to empower individual youth through storytelling and 2) to create an intergenerational artistic community for queer youth to share training, stories and skills with allied adults. They put a call out for participants and soon had fifty youth participating in weekly workshops. Each week highlighted a specific technique or storytelling exercise. At the end of the summer, staff adapted the stories into a play that participants performed. It was a hit. Youth and adults from all over Chicago came to see the play.

The second summer built on the first. AFYT participants came back with incredible stories of how they had helped to start Gay Straight Alliance clubs in their schools. They talked about how their experience in AFYT had helped give them the courage and the skills to be a part of this activism. At that point, staff realized they needed to be intentional about leadership development in the program. They started the Youth Leadership Council and internship program to bring youth into the day-to-day operations and decision making of the theatre. Now in its sixth year, AFYT is continuing to grow in the complexity of its performances and the degree of youth leadership in the program.

About Face Youth Theatre at-a-glance

Constituency	LGBTQ youth and their allies living in the Chicago region.
Theory of Change Snapshot	Engaging youth in the rigorous process of creating and performing an ensemble-based play with high production qualities in a dynamic collaboration with a community of accomplished adult artists encourages youth development and supports youth to become agents for change in their communities.
Structure Snapshot	<p>About Face Youth Theatre is a youth-driven project within an adult-led theatre. Youth drive the program and performance content and participate in project operations and planning.</p> <p>Three Adult Directors form the leadership core of AFYT. The AFYT artistic director is a young adult and is supervised by the About Face Theatre's artistic director. She also works with the Theatre's education and outreach director.</p> <p>Youth Staff operate as artistic and educational program assistants.</p> <p>Paid Youth Interns receive intensive training and provide administrative and program support to AFYT and the mainstage theatre.</p> <p>The Youth Leadership Council provides leadership to the mainstage ensemble, and participates in strategic planning, program evaluation and decision making.</p> <p>Workshop Participants participate in workshops and develop and perform productions.</p> <p>The Adult Allies Council and Adult Mentors support AFYT fundraising and program development and youth performers' artistic development.</p> <p>Outreach Tour Members perform and facilitate dialogue in schools and communities.</p>
Role of Adults	Adults form the leadership core of the project as a team of directors. They also provide resource support as allies on the adult allies council.
501(c)3 status	Project of About Face Theatre.
Key Strengths	<p>Young people have highly supportive structure to learn theatre performance and production skills, express their stories, and develop leadership skills.</p> <p>Intergenerational relationships are developed and nourished in the queer community. The broader community hears and is changed by true stories of queer youth.</p>
Key Challenges	Sustaining intergenerational work; creating new opportunities for institutionalizing youth leadership; creating new roles for adult allies and founders; creating a professional vs. participatory process.
Funding	<p>Now: Primarily theatre ticket sales and some grant funding.</p> <p>Future: More grant funding, individual donors.</p>



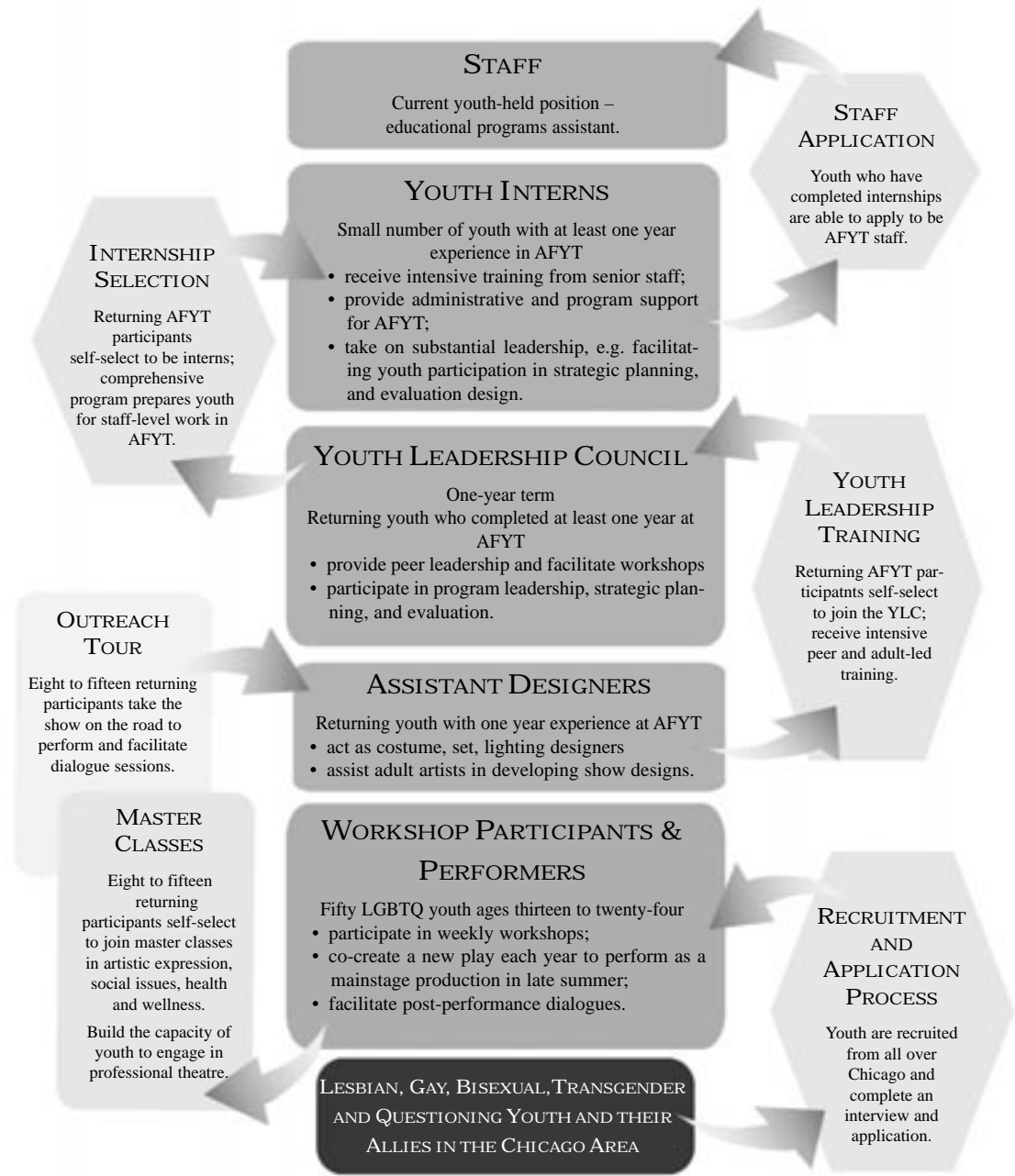
AFYT's Structure: Youth-driven Program in Adult Theatre

About Face Youth Theatre's structure is evolving along with its story. Currently, it is a semi-independent, youth-driven project within an adult-led theatre. Young people drive the program and performance content and participate in project operations and planning. As it develops, AFYT is working to become increasingly youth led and to integrate youth into the leadership of their parent organization, About Face Theatre. This change is being facilitated by a passionate and talented core of youth who have stepped into leadership roles.

Young people enter the program as workshop participants. Youth from all over the Chicago area apply and go through an intake interview to be part of the program. There are no previous theatre requirements, but youth must commit to attend six months of weekly workshops and to abide by the ground rules that the community establishes. Those who stick with it and are interested go on to be part of the mainstage performance ensemble that performs the annual play each summer. Youth who return to the program a second year can join the Youth Leadership Council (YLC). This group provides leadership to the mainstage ensemble and each year takes on more defined responsibilities. Members of the YLC mentor new workshop participants, help facilitate and lead workshops and retreats, and participate in strategic planning, program evaluation and decision making. Returning youth apply to be part of the outreach tour, performing and facilitating dialogues in schools around Illinois. Returning youth can also apply to be paid youth interns. Interns receive intensive training and are involved in the behind-the-scenes operations of both the youth theatre and the adult company. They provide administrative and program support and take on special projects, depending on their interests and skills. In the past, interns have developed AFYT's evaluation systems, developed a public education workshop, written a policy report, and created a 'zine (magazine) project. After internships, young people can become staff. This year, AFYT hired its first youth staff as the educational programs assistant.

Three adult directors provide leadership and direction to the project. The About Face Theatre's artistic director supervises the youth theatre's artistic director. The youth theatre's artistic director also works with the youth theatre's education and outreach director. Additionally, the adult allies council and adult mentors support AFYT fundraising and program development and youth performers' artistic development. Given the program's success at developing young leaders through its production process, leadership council, and internships, there is a strong potential for the AFYT to transition into a fully youth-led project.

ABOUT FACE YOUTH THEATRE'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL





Challenges: Nurturing Intergenerational Partnerships

About Face Youth Theatre has several challenges that specifically relate to intergenerational, youth-driven organizations.

Sustaining intergenerational work: Youth-driven, intergenerational projects have different challenges than youth-led projects. As the project matures, the number of youth who can fill leadership positions grows. With this change, the relationships of youth and adults must also shift, eventually blurring the line between who is a youth and who is an adult. To sustain this, adults need to invest in their own training around how to work with youth as full partners, and how to develop a leadership ladder where a youth participant can eventually fill the adult positions.

Creating new opportunities for institutionalizing youth leadership: As youth competence and investment grows, young people push the envelope on what they are capable of taking on within the organization. This also can challenge adults on how much they are able to trust young people to do the work, and whether they are willing to let go of their own power and position in order to create room for younger people to take over. This leads to a need to create new and transitional roles for adult allies.

Creating new roles for adult allies and founders: Creating and implementing a strong vision for turnover and passing the torch is important and difficult work. If younger participants build the skills and interest in taking on increasing leadership, what happens to the adults who have invested so much in the program? How can they deal with their own sense of loss when letting go? Sometimes adults transition into being more of a coach than a director or artist. It's important for adults in this position to pay attention to their own needs, and to intentionally plan a transition before they are burned out or feel unappreciated.

Professional vs. participatory process: AFYT is invested in creating theatre that is both professional and participatory. However, sometimes there is tension between these two goals. Concern over professionalism can lead to a fear of turning over the process to youth, and young people's demands for participation can lead to challenging the project's assumptions about professionalism.

From the first year until now, the change is amazing. Adults are a lot more conscious of including youth in decisions. We [now] have a lot of the same skills the staff have.

– Brenna Falcon, Former AFYT Intern

BEST PRACTICE: Internships & Leadership Development

Youth leadership flourishes through youth internships at AFYT, where participants have the opportunity to learn about the management of the theatre itself. Based on a principle of collaboration between adults and youth, the internships grow out of an individual's initiative and interest. Interns are paid and are provided with intensive training and support by staff and/or other adult allies. They participate in staff meetings and are supervised by the AFYT artistic director and educational program assistant. Past youth interns described the internships as an amazing partnership with the adult theatre. While interns provide program and administrative support, they also have a core project that they work on. Interns have been part of the strategic planning team, developed and facilitated the educational outreach tour, directed and wrote the *Youth Speak Out: Safe Schools* policy report, developed an evaluation system for AFYT, and participated in coalitions such as the Coalition for Education on Sexual Orientation. Interns also provide core leadership to the Youth Leadership Council. While the internships require time and resources from the core staff, the benefits clearly pay off. For example, the evaluation design set up by an intern caused AFYT to change its program and outreach model and strengthen its marketing, materials, and grant proposals. Because of this investment in youth leadership, past interns express tremendous confidence in their leadership and artistic skills.

*At
About Face, it seems like the
right person comes in at the right time for a
position that hadn't existed yet... When they need-
ed someone to help with the evaluation process, I was
in school studying that. I used the internship as an oppor-
tunity to try out [my evaluation skills]. I got involved in
conference calls to set [the evaluation] up. It was a
lot of responsibility.*

- Ryan, Former AFYT Intern



AFYT'S IMPACTS: Creating an Intergenerational Queer Community

Youth develop an increased sense of self, confidence, and skill through being part of a safe, empowering space. Many use the opportunity to come out. They develop a strong sense of community and family with other youth and adults, a strengthened network of personal support among peers, and increased access to adult role models. They develop a stronger sense of their collective history and future and are better equipped to handle homophobia and heterosexism in their own lives. Through internships, youth develop intensive leadership skills and capacity and a network of professional support.



The LGBTQ Community captures its living history that is not documented in history books. Through intergenerational exchange, an expanded sense of family helps both youth and adults to generate a new sense of acceptance and role models. In **the Broader Community**, awareness about queer youth issues catalyzes and supports cultural changes on individual, interpersonal and institutional levels. Queer youth and adults who attend performances feel less isolated.



Adults learn new ways of working with youth and have a better understanding of the issues facing youth. They experience a sense of healing as they help to create something that wasn't available to them when they were younger. They also develop a sense of family as they pass down stories and the legacy of queer experiences. Teachers and school administrators gain tools for addressing homophobia in their communities. The adult artists who work on projects experience tremendous growth in their craft. Many say the participatory process encourages accountability and helps them think deeply about their artistic choices.



Policies - AFYT indirectly influences policy through supporting youth leaders to become activists and advocates in their communities and by creating broader awareness of queer youth issues. Former participants have started Gay Straight Alliances in their schools and have written policy reports. In some cases, schools have included LGBTQ issues in their curricula and have strengthened school discrimination policies.

Success Story: *Youth Speak Out: Safe Schools*

AFYT believes that true stories can inspire dialogue and create change. In 2002, a group of young people from AFYT conducted action research on safe schools, interviewing young people from throughout the Chicago area. *Youth Speak Out: Safe Schools* was created to grant a voice to those who are voiceless, to empower those who are not out, who can't be out, those who are ostracized just for looking queer, those who are harassed because of their queer family members, those whose homes are not safe, those who are just holding out until college, those who may get infected with an STD or HIV just because no one told them how to be safe. The report gives youth activists, teachers, school staff, policy advocates, policymakers, and adult allies the stories and tools they need to create positive changes in schools.

AFYT's Future: Growing Models for Youth-Adult Partnerships

With five years under its belt, AFYT has developed an amazing group of young artists and leaders who are itching for new leadership opportunities and challenges. As the theatre grows, they are working to develop new ways for youth to take on leadership roles and to be full co-creators with adult mentors and staff. This development includes creating roles that will allow youth to take on more responsibility for organizational leadership and artistic development of the performances. It also includes preparing adult allies to work as partners with youth where each contributes to the storyline and development of the performance. In 2004, young people will be part of a research team where they collect stories from youth, adults and elders around Chicago. They will then be part of the scriptwriting team and serve as assistant costume, set, and lighting designers. Eventually, there will be a youth assistant director position. Similarly, on the organizational leadership side, AFYT is continuing to strengthen the structure and curriculum for the Youth Leadership Council and internship positions. Perhaps the biggest challenge is how to plan for the eventual transition of leadership of the theatre. Given the unique culture of AFYT, they are looking to pass the directorship on to someone who has come up through the program. While there are no clear answers for how to do this, AFYT is taking deliberate, careful steps in this direction.

When About Face Youth Theatre came to my school of 4,000 students, 500 came up to me afterwards and said it was powerful. We are empowering ourselves.

– AFYT Youth Participant

National Conference for Community & Justice



Falling down the rabbit hole and into the looking glass; a trip to Wonderland changed Alice's world view forever. How many of us have had an experience like that, where one day you think you know how the world operates, then something happens and your ideas change radically?

We live in a world where power and perception are shaped by race, gender, sexual orientation, class and disability. Our identities and families mold our experience of the world and how we see these power dynamics. For many of us, youth is a key time when we test and reshape our world view. Sometimes this means stepping outside of our birth community and coming into contact with others whose experiences are very different than our own.

In the Los Angeles region, the youth programs of the National Conference for Community and Justice/Los Angeles (NCCJ/LA) provide youth with such an opportunity. The mission of NCCJ is to fight bias, bigotry and racism in America through advocacy, conflict resolution and education. NCCJ/LA's youth programs provide an opportunity for diverse youth in the Los Angeles metropolitan area to come together and confront issues that divide their homes, schools, and communities. The annual Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp (with the connected year-round Youth Leadership Program) is the centerpiece of these programs.

CONTEXT:**California
a Multicultural Society**

On August 30, 2000, the census bureau announced California had become a majority people of color state. White people of European descent now made up forty-nine percent of its total population, while Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans and Native Americans collectively constituted fifty-one percent. While this demographic shift was expected, it became a reality sooner than predicted.

In the year 2050, the United States is also projected to reach the same multicultural milestone. As the most diverse society in the world, the country will have no racial majority. With this shift, the opportunity and challenge presented becomes whether or not this diversity can transform California and the United States into authentic multicultural democracies.

California has the potential to lead the nation in the shaping of new politics of diversity, justice and equity, but it needs leaders and citizens with the analysis and courage to make the changes that are necessary. NCCJ/LA helps prepare young people for this role. Through NCCJ/LA programs, youth develop a deep understanding of all forms of power and diversity, including race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability and language, and develop the skills needed to take responsibility for transforming the world.



The Beginning: A Vision for Multicultural Justice

NCCJ has a long history. It was founded in 1927 as the National Conference of Christians and Jews to address interfaith divisions, race relations, and social and economic barriers among persons of different faiths, cultures and ethnicities. One of the motivations for creating NCCJ was the religious intolerance directed toward Alfred E. Smith, Governor of New York, when he ran for President of the United States. Governor Smith was a Catholic, and a movement against him ignited fear that the Pope would influence the country's decision making. In 1998, the organization's name was changed to The National Conference for Community and Justice to better reflect the breadth and depth of its mission and the growing diversity of the United States.

Over the last seventy-five years, NCCJ has grown into a large, national organization with sixty branches throughout the United States. In 1948, the Los Angeles office was established to develop programs that could reduce prejudice and inter-group conflict in this complex community. In 1951, Stewart Cole established the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp, a week-long retreat for high school students. The camp exposes youth to an analysis of power and privilege and presents tools for creating a multicultural, interracial and interreligious democratic society. The Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp is now in its fifty-second year.

NCCJ/Los Angeles

at-a-glance

Constituency	Diverse high-school and college age young people in the Los Angeles metropolitan region.
Theory of Change Snapshot	The NCCJ/LA Youth and Education Department believes that youth will become effective agents of change in their own lives and in their communities when they have a safe space in which to explore their identities, are made aware of social justice issues, are equipped with skills to address individual and institutional challenges, and are provided opportunities to act on their interests and passions. The NCCJ/LA model is based on a foundation of positive identity development and support systems, including new kinds of relationships with adults.
Structure Snapshot	<p>NCCJ/LA Youth and Education Programs Department is a youth leadership program within an adult-led, national organization.</p> <p>Eight Adult Staff form the Leadership Core of the NCCJ/LA youth program. They provide administrative and program leadership and direction to the program.</p> <p>Youth Trainers are former program participants who serve as youth leaders and planners for the annual Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp.</p> <p>Program Participants take part in the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp, the Youth Leadership Program, and other youth programs including NCCJ Presents and Latino/a College Leadership Institute.</p>
Role of Adults	Adults direct and run all programs and serve as trainers, staff, and mentors to younger staff and participants.
501(c)3 status	Youth leadership program within an adult-led chapter of a national, adult-led organization.
Key Strengths	Young people go through a deep consciousness raising experience at the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp; the experience provides a strong analytical foundation for future activism; provides a setting for youth to develop strong relationships with adults.
Key Challenges	Increasing youth leadership opportunities, large adult-centered organizational culture; developing a youth empowerment philosophy.
Funding	<p>Now: Primarily grant funding and major events.</p> <p>Future: Developing major donors from alumni and others.</p>



NCCJ/LA's Structure: Youth Leadership Program in an Adult-led Organization

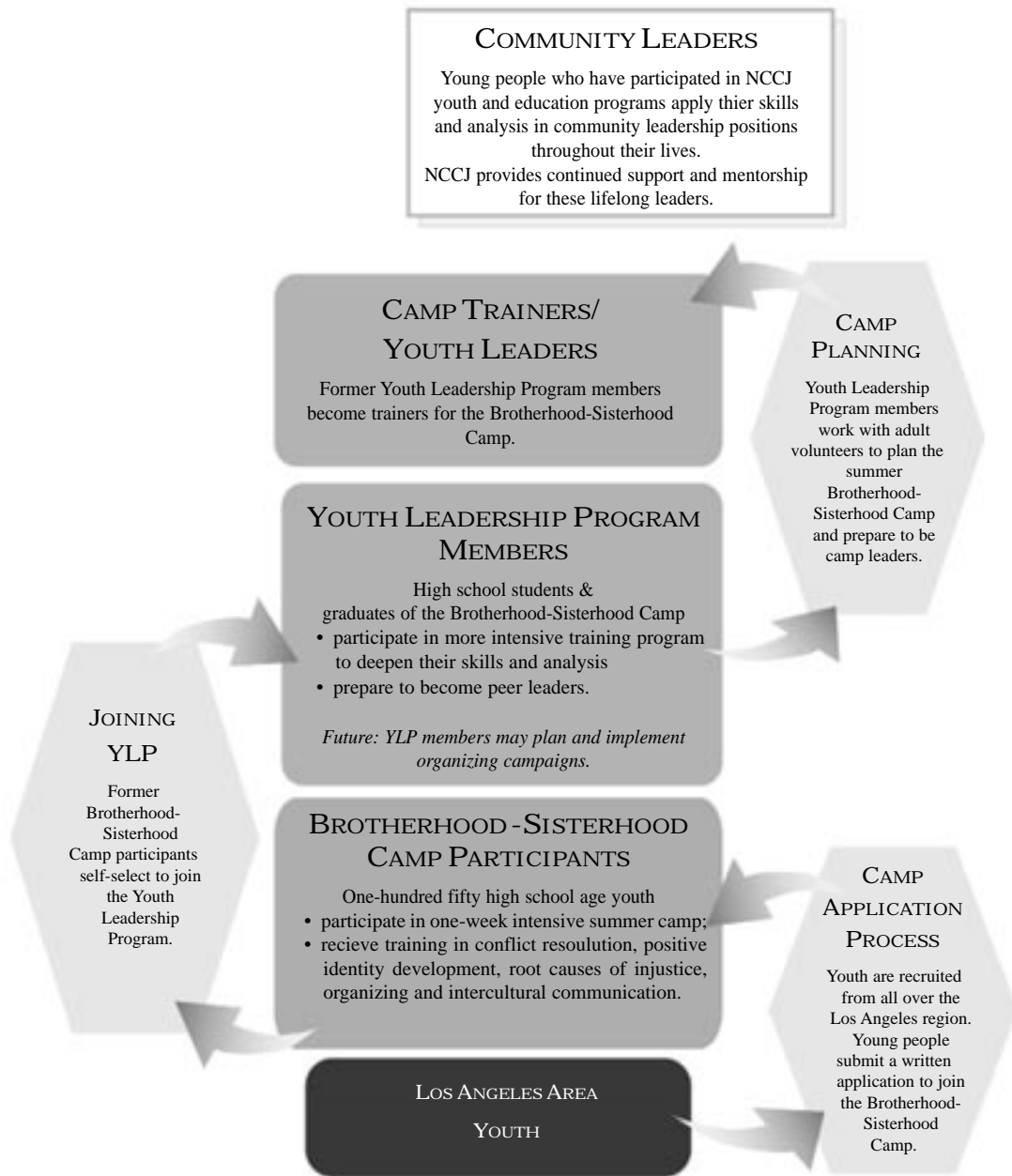
NCCJ is by far the largest and most adult-led organization of the five profiled in this report. With over sixty branches nationwide, the youth department of the Los Angeles office is a small piece of a much bigger institution. Its seventy-five year history far surpasses the average five-year life of the other organizations. Their story represents the challenge and opportunities for larger, adult-led organizations that want to increase youth leadership and the organizational culture shifts that must accompany this work.

Adults make up NCCJ's board and staff at the national and regional levels. Young people are primarily program participants, but also are supported with stipends to be peer leaders in some programs. Former participants often feel a strong allegiance to NCCJ/LA and want to give back to the organization. Several of the adult staff are former camp participants.

The NCCJ/LA Youth and Education Programs Department has eight staff and three distinct programs: NCCJ Presents, the Latino/a College Leadership Institute, and the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp which is linked with the year-round Youth Leadership Program. NCCJ Presents is a school-based program that brings theatre performances and workshops on controversial issues such as racism and stereotypes into LA classrooms. The Latino/a College Leadership Program is a four-day residential program to enhance leadership skills, affirm cultural identities, and provide support to Latino/a college students.

The Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp, along with the Youth Leadership Program, has the most integrated structure for young people to come into NCCJ and develop leadership over time. It also has the most potential for increasing and expanding youth leadership and governance in its operation. Young people enter NCCJ/LA through the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp, where they are immersed in a one-week, intensive consciousness raising and skills development program. Following participation in camp, they are invited to join the year-round Youth Leadership Program (YLP). YLP meets weekly from October through March. YLP operates as a place to deepen youth participants' analysis of power and privilege and supports them to put this analysis into action through activism in their own communities. After graduating from YLP, youth can become peer trainers and leaders at the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp. Along with adult staff and volunteers, youth leaders meet every week from April-July to plan camp. At camp, they play an important role in supporting new campers and are taking on more and more management and facilitation responsibility. 2003 was the first year that NCCJ/LA hired a young person to co-direct the camp itself.

NCCJ/LA's LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL



Challenges: Creating Change in Larger Organizations

As a large, national organization that is adult led, NCCJ has several challenges for increasing youth leadership in its programs.

Increasing youth leadership opportunities: Over the past three years, NCCJ has made big strides in increasing youth leadership, particularly in the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp and Youth Leadership Program. Young people are poised to take on roles as staff, directors, and decision makers. One of the most exciting developments was the decision to hire a youth camp co-director. NCCJ/LA is currently developing a youth advisory council that will advise NCCJ staff and board of directors on programs and policies. They are also creating a board task force to address the integration of youth on the board of directors. Integrating more youth leadership into NCCJ/LA will have great benefits for adult staff as well, helping the current staff relieve themselves of some pressures and tasks. Keeping alumni connected can also create an individual donor pool that is currently untapped.

Facilitating change in a large, national organization: As a large organization with a seventy-five year history, NCCJ lends continuity and financial stability to its programs. However, large organizations present special challenges. Rather than promoting local control, participatory decision making, and regional culture, they must find ways to create a common culture, unity and accountability on a national level. The opportunity here is that as NCCJ/LA becomes more youth driven and participatory, other chapters can learn more and improve their own programs and structure.

Philosophy of youth empowerment: NCCJ/LA's youth department believes that youth can be the most effective social change agents when they receive adequate support from adult allies. They reject social change models that exploit young people's energy and commitment and do not allow them the support to develop their own vision. Interestingly, this genuine concern and support that adults have for youth is also a challenge for creating a youth leadership structure at NCCJ/LA. They have concerns about putting youth in positions that could take young people away from other responsibilities and opportunities - such as school. They struggle with how to maintain and integrate intergenerational experiences and values and still allow for change and youth leadership development within the organization.

Transitioning adult roles: As youth leadership increases in NCCJ/LA youth programs, it will be important to actively engage adults in redefining positive adult roles in the organization. Clearly, adult roles are extremely important to NCCJ/LA's model. However, to create more space for growing youth leadership, adults will need to shift from being leaders and counselors to being coaches and mentors of youth leadership.

Best Practice: Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp

NCCJ's Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp is a powerful experience for the young people who attend. The week-long camp is an intensive experience in analyzing issues of power and privilege and in building relationships and alliances with a diverse group of youth and adults. The primary goals of the camp are to encourage self-respect; promote mutual respect; and develop a multicultural, multiracial, interreligious community through dialogue.

From seven AM to eleven PM participants engage in an intense schedule of activities. A typical day includes community service projects, community meetings, sharing groups, identity-based discussion groups, experiential workshops, a faith experience, cultural storytelling, cabin meetings, and one-on-one sessions. The most incredible part of the whole experience is how hungry the participants are for this type of discussion and how they stay engaged even with such a rigorous agenda. Participants leave camp with an analysis of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and ableism and how the issues intersect. They also develop a sense of personal responsibility and mission for creating a just and inclusive society – something they take back to their communities.

For many, camp is often the first time youth have the opportunity to talk about these issues with peers and adults. As a result, strong intergenerational relationships are built. For many youth, it's the first time they are with adults who treat them as equals. The legacy of being part of a community that is working for justice over generations is very moving.

I'm more of an activist than I used to be. I've always had a desire to talk about issues of systemic oppression, but I never had the resources to articulate it. But now having the organization to back me up, it allows me to be more of an activist.

– Raquel Bernaldo, YLP member



NCCJ/LA'S IMPACT: A New World View

Youth develop a new world view. They see each other and society through a lens of culture, identity and oppression that supports them to make changes in their families, schools, and communities. They develop a strong network and profound sense of community. Many youth say that they develop respectful relationships with adults for the first time in their lives. Many go on to play leadership and activist roles outside of NCCJ/LA. On an individual level they develop strong facilitation, analytical, leadership and interpersonal skills.



The Los Angeles Area Community gains a diverse group of young adults who are thinking about issues of power and privilege and ready to challenge these issues together in their schools and work. Youth think about their community as one that is multicultural, multi-racial, and interreligious and are skilled at working with others across differences.

Adults connect to a powerful intergenerational legacy and community of people working to end bias and discrimination. They learn how to respect young people's voices and opinions.



Institutions and Policies indirectly become more inclusive and accessible by having trained, informed, and active leaders.

Success Story: Taking Dialogue Into The World

For young people, Brotherhood-Sisterhood Camp and the Youth Leadership Program are the beginning parts of a life-long dialogue between themselves and the world around them. People who have been through this process gain skills and raised awareness around elements of dialogue and communication, risk-taking, cultural sensitivity, respect, honesty and personal responsibility. Alumni then use these skills and awareness to confront a variety of social issues within themselves, their families, their workplaces, their schools, and everyday life. Former participants have taken part in the anti-war movement; become anti-racist, anti-capitalist grassroots organizers; engaged their families in dialogue on homophobia, sexism and racism; started clubs and newsletters on high school campuses; organized open mics that bridge the gap between art and political education; and have undergone personal growth in understanding their many identities.

NCCJ changed the way I think and act – it opened my perspective. I'm now inspired to model these cross-cultural dialogues in my own community.
– NCCJ Youth Leader

NCCJ/LA's Future: Making Space for Youth Leadership

Not every organization is born to be youth led or youth driven, yet there are many opportunities for large, adult-led organizations to include youth voices in their decision making. Some questions that NCCJ/LA is asking itself are: Which programs within NCCJ/LA have the greatest potential to increase and strengthen youth leadership and governance? What are the strengths of these programs now and where are the opportunities for young people to take on more leadership? How can youth and adult allies on staff provide training on adultism to adult board members and youth advisory council members and create a structure that is supportive to both youth and adults? How can all NCCJ/LA programs strengthen real opportunities for intergenerational alliances?

NCCJ/LA's strength is its ability to support youth to go through a consciousness raising process and then to put this analysis into action in their communities. The key strength of these programs is that young people have a stable, supportive space and community to change their lens on the world and develop as leaders. As NCCJ/LA looks to the future, it can expand on these strengths to create more opportunities for young people to play leadership roles both in the organization and in their community. For example, NCCJ/LA has recently established a youth-adult task force

to explore bringing young people onto the LA region's board of directors. NCCJ/LA is also considering adding a youth advocacy component to the Youth Leadership Program. Participants will design and lead advocacy campaigns based on their analysis of community issues. At the same time, NCCJ/LA has the potential to develop their current projects into an integrated program that becomes youth driven, and even youth led, by collaborating with young people who are already committed leaders in the program. This could be a model for NCCJ chapters around the country and a truly inspiring project.

Perhaps the learning curve for NCCJ as well as other adult-led organizations is the organization's ability to honestly evaluate and articulate its capacity and intention for youth leadership as it moves forward.

Conclusion



The movement for youth-led and youth-driven organizations is spreading across the country, and it's no accident. After decades of political attacks and negative publicity, young people are taking matters into their own hands. Like other groups that have been marginalized, youth have started organizing as a constituency. They are hungry for opportunities to develop their communities, take on leadership roles, and participate in local and national politics. Youth-led and youth-driven organizations are their tools as changemakers – providing a concrete community of like-minded individuals and a place to invest hope in their world.

The stories in this report show the power of youth-led organizations to promote youth development, youth organizing, and broader social change. By prioritizing constituent leadership and cultural context, these organizations have tapped into the tremendous creativity and skills of youth in their communities. As a result, they are creating a road map for our collective future.



RESOURCES FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Are you interested in applying the lessons from this report and increasing youth leadership in your organization?

Check out the **planning worksheets on pages 78-79** to help you with organizational planning.

Contact the Youth Speak Out Coalition for resources, training and consulting support:
www.movementstrategy.org

Stay tuned for the **YSOC Organizational Development Tool Kit** coming soon!

Living Models: Lessons for Our Work

Youth-led and youth-driven organizations offer all of us:

New models for youth development and leadership: Creating spaces for holistic development (creative, intellectual, social, political, and spiritual); supporting youth to build skills, participate in peer learning, and create an environment where young people can come into their own power and become creative change agents.

New models for intergenerational relationships and community: Healing historical trauma; shifting power relationships between youth, adults, and elders; creating new roles for mentorship and coaching.

New models for democratic organizations: Creating structures and cultures that support positive cycles of individual and community health, learning, and growth in organizations that are participatory, constituent-driven, and culturally relevant.

New models for empowerment and collaboration: Developing an integrated cross-issue analysis where everyone can be a constituent leader and an ally.

New models for community organizing and social change: Developing campaigns and projects that address policy and social issues in creative, culturally relevant ways - solutions that come from the communities most impacted.

Youth Speak Out Coalition (YSOC)

Ultimately, this movement is rooted in a commitment to self-determination and a deep awareness of our interdependence. Looking forward, we see that youth-led and youth-driven organizations must come together to share experiences, skills, resources and strategies and to pass capacity from one generation to the next. The five organizations profiled in this report – Youth Organizers United, The Lummi CEDAR Project, Kids As Self Advocates, About Face Youth Theatre and the National Conference for Community and Justice/Los Angeles – have taken on this challenge and created the Youth Speak Out Coalition. The YSOC is being incubated through the Young Wisdom Project and the Movement Strategy Center.

The YSOC's mission is to create a diverse network of youth leaders from youth-driven and youth-led organizations and projects around the country. Coalition members represent organizations and projects concerned with Native American youth; youth with disabilities and special health care needs; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender youth issues; sexual and reproductive health; and helping young people to understand and resist oppression. Through the YSOC, young activists and their adult allies come together to educate each other on their issues and how each group defines its communities, challenging each other to grow in tolerance and understanding. Members share knowledge, resources, training techniques, social support, and challenges and successes with one another through annual retreats, email, conference calls, and exchanges. The YSOC hopes to grow its membership in the future.

YSOC GOALS

1 To create a thriving, **national learning community of youth activists** and their adult allies working on diverse social change issues for support, knowledge sharing, and peer training.

2 To **support youth leaders to increase the skills they need to run their own nonprofit organizations** (including organizational and program development, youth-led organizing and advocacy, and creating strong intergenerational partnerships, among others).

3 To train young people to do participatory research and **document models of youth-led and youth-driven organizations**.

4 To **develop youth-friendly materials and trainings** to offer to other youth organizations.

YSOC TRAINING & CONSULTING

YSOC members provide training in the following areas:

- ❖ Youth-led and youth-driven organizational development
- ❖ Youth-led strategic planning
- ❖ Youth-led fundraising
- ❖ Board structure and development in youth-driven organizations
- ❖ Staff development and leadership transitions in youth-led and youth-driven organizations
- ❖ Youth-led campaign planning in different cultural contexts
- ❖ Youth-led participatory evaluation
- ❖ Setting up youth internships
- ❖ Applying technology for community building, campaigns, and organizational management
- ❖ Youth-friendly materials
- ❖ Issue-specific analysis and training

Vist www.movementstrategy.org for:

- copies of this report
 - links and resources
 - YSOC consulting or training
- and coming soon...**
- YSOC Organization Development Tool Kit
 - YSOC audio series





Tools for Youth Leadership: YSOC Resources

If you are thinking about taking the next step to increase youth leadership or governance in your organization, the YSOC and its members can help. The YSOC offers youth-friendly resources to other organizations.

Consulting support to other youth organizations: YSOC members provide one-on-one consulting support to organizations on organizational development, program development and in specific issue areas.

Trainings and workshops: YSOC members provide youth-friendly group training and workshops for youth and adults.

Youth-friendly materials: the YSOC is developing youth-friendly materials on organizational development, program development, and campaigns.

Join the Movement!

The YSOC and the Young Wisdom Project plan to continue and expand our community of youth-driven and youth-led organizations across the country. We invite you to join us. If you are a funder, you can support this innovative work with resources and partnership. If you are an organization that works with young people, you can tap into the YSOC community and resources. We believe that together we can change the world. By creating relationships and sharing resources, we empower individuals, heal our communities and create models for how we want our world to be – a world of vision, learning, compassion and justice.

Planning Questions for Organizations

Activity 1: Six Steps for Planning Change

Do you want to increase youth leadership in your organization? The following are questions for your board, staff and other stakeholders to consider as your organization creates a youth leadership development plan.

1 Reflect on your organization's identity & community context

How does your organization's mission include young people's leadership? In practice, where is it on the spectrum of youth leadership (see page 16 for youth leadership chart)?

What is your community's history and current situation? What are common beliefs about young people's role in the community?

2 Develop vision and goals for youth leadership

Where does your organization want to be on the spectrum of youth leadership and why?

3 Assess the strengths and assets of your organization

What parts of youth leadership does your organization do really well now? What untapped skills, ideas, and energy do young people in your organization have?

4 Identify fears and needs

What are people in your organization afraid of when thinking about youth leadership? What do they need to feel supported as your organization evolves to incorporate more youth leadership?

5 Learn from others

What organizations or programs reflect where you want to be in terms of youth leadership structures and practices?

6 Develop and implement a strategy

How will your organization take its first step to achieving its vision and goals for youth leadership? Who needs to be involved? What support and training do you need? How will you support ongoing leadership development and training?

Activity 2: Growing Youth Leadership

Where is your organization on the youth leadership spectrum and where does it want to be? The following are examples of specific questions to consider given your place on the spectrum (see page 16 for the continuum):

Adult-led organizations with youth leadership programs

How will you set up your program to **integrate youth leadership** and decision making?

How will you create **structures** where **young people** can graduate and **take on increasing levels of leadership** and responsibility the longer they remain in the organization?

How will you build the **ability of adults** to listen to and support young people in this process?

Youth-led project within an adult-led organization

What are the **benefits and limitations of your current structure**?

Do you want to eventually **spin off** from your fiscal sponsor? If so, what **training and structure** will you need to do this?

How will **adult allies** support this process?

Youth-driven organization or project

How will you establish **structures, training programs and processes by which young people** in the project or organization will graduate and **become the next generation of** executive and program **leaders**?

Youth-led organization

How will you establish **staff development** and **leadership succession structures** that support the sustainability of your organization?

411: YSOC Organizations

About Face Youth Theatre

1222 West Wilson, 2nd Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60640
773-784-8565
www.aboutfacetheatre.com

Kids As Self Advocates

KASA/Family Voices
1400 West Devon, Suite 423
Chicago, Illinois 60660
773-465-3200
www.fvkasa.org

Lummi CEDAR Project

2600 Kwina Road
Bellingham, Washington 98226
360-384-2341

The National Conference for Community and Justice/LA

1055 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1615
Los Angeles, California 90017
213-250-8787
www.nccjla.org

Youth Organizers United

105 Washington Street, 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10006
212-608-6365

Youth Speak Out Coalition Young Wisdom Project & Movement Strategy Center

1611 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 510
Oakland, California 94609
510-444-0640
www.movementstrategy.org

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Across the country, young people are rising up to take on the most pressing issues of our time – and they are creating vibrant new organizations to make their visions a reality.

Making Space, Making Change

is the only available guide
for thinking about and understanding
youth-led organizations
and their place in the
contemporary youth movement.

Inside, follow the stories of five youth-led and youth-driven organizations from around the US – how they started, build youth leadership and power, deal with challenges, and make real change in their communities. Each chapter contains:

- Practical methods for developing new leaders
- Real strategies for addressing transitions
- Spelled out theories of change
- Methods for connecting youth organizing to culture and tradition
- Tools to put youth at the center of decision-making
- Tips on how to involve adult allies in ways that maintain youth empowerment

This report is for all young organizers and their allies who want to put their principles into practice and invest in the next generation.

Young Wisdom Project /
Youth Speak Out Coalition
Movement Strategy Center
www.movementstrategy.org
510-444-0640 x310

This is a must read for anyone interested in understanding how young people lead, direct, organize and champion issues in their own communities and organizations. The report confronts the difficult questions about youth-led efforts and articulates with clarity the promise of youth-driven organizations.

Shawn Ginwright
Santa Clara University and
Co-Founder of Leadership Excellence

This report is phenomenal.

It's healing. Here's a report that asks all the things I would have if I could have talked to these folks.

It is going to look all worn out from use!

Lateefah Simon
Executive Director
Center for Young Women's Development

As organizers, we often feel isolated, as if we're building from scratch, but this report shows that we are part of a growing movement of youth groups

tackling important issues in our communities. From the cities to the Rez, we are weaving new systems so young people can shape the policies that impact us all.

Jen Soriano & Malkia Cyril
Youth Media Council