

Recommendations for Starting and Sustaining a Youth Engagement Initiative

Ontario Public Health Association

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How is youth engagement different from traditional youth services?

There are a number of key differences between the traditional youth-serving model (i.e., working *for* youth) and the youth engagement model (i.e., working *with* youth), including:

Traditional Model	Engagement Model
Preventing and responding to problems	Nurturing assets and positive development
Young people as passive and/or helpless 'clients' in need of outside intervention	Young people as active community members with the wisdom, skills and expertise to contribute to solutions
Short-term one-off projects, programs, and services	An ongoing process of empowerment, capacity building, and action
Professionals as experts who 'work for' young people, their families and communities	Professionals as catalysts and facilitators who 'work with' young people

Adapted from Laverack, 2005; Delgado & Staples, 2008

What are the benefits of youth engagement for health promotion?

There are many practical and ethical reasons for youth engagement. These include:

1. **Youth engagement responds to the Ontario Public Health Standards, along with provincial and federal priorities.** The Ontario Public Health Standards (Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 2008) state the minimum criterion for effective practice in public health. Youth are identified in the Standards as one of many community partners with whom Public Health must collaborate to promote health and prevent injuries and substance misuse. The Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport is also working on a Youth Engagement Strategy to further support this important health promotion strategy, scheduled to be released in 2011. Further, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is finalizing a Youth Policy Framework to be released over the summer 2011. Federally, youth engagement is seen as a priority through various Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Funded projects via Health Canada.

Working collaboratively with community partners using a comprehensive health promotion approach, pilot sites engaged youth in school and community programming that increased their protective factors and fostered resilience to prevent risk taking behaviours such as substance misuse – evidence of the above requirements. Early evaluation findings reported a number of successes

- including parent reports that they observed positive differences in their children such as increased confidence and assertiveness, being more socially involved and more able to assist others.
2. **Youth engagement puts the Healthy School Model into practice.** Youth participation and empowerment are core principles of the health promoting school model¹ and the Ontario Ministry of Education's Foundation for a Healthy School.
 3. **Youth engagement leads to more effective programs and services.** Involving young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs and services makes these programs and services more accessible and responsive to young people's needs and priorities.²
 4. **Youth engagement enhances protective factors and resiliency among youth.** Young people can catalyze positive change in the settings in which they live, learn, work, and play (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; and Delgado & Zhou, 2008). This can enhance protective factors for all youth in your community. There are also additional benefits for youth leaders. Engaged youth commonly have a greater sense of control, empowerment, meaning and connectedness and other social and emotional capacities that enhance well-being and reduce the likelihood of risk-taking behaviours (see for example CEYE, 2003; Oliver et al., 2006; Clea, 2002; and CCSA, 2009).
 5. **Youth engagement respects young people's rights.** Youth engagement also responds to young people's desire to be heard and to take part in decisions that affect their lives (Ungar, 2007), as well as their right to be actively involved in such decisions (UN, 1989; Pereira, 2007; Sabo, 2003).

Sustaining Youth Engagement Programming in Public Health

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) Youth Engagement (YE) Project, funded by Health Canada, engaged 6 public health units in 2009 to participate in youth engagement project implementation and evaluation activities as pilot sites. OPHA provided each pilot site with training, resources and on-going support to implement local youth engagement projects with the goal of increasing protective factors and resilience among youth aged 11-14 years. Project implementation has been underway since February, 2010 and there have been many successes.

¹ International Union for Health Promotion and Education [IUHPE] (2007). *Achieving Health Promoting Schools: Guidelines for Promoting Health in Schools*. Retrieved July 2009 from: www.dashbc.org/upload/HPS_Guidelines_2008.pdf.

² London, JK, Zimmerman, K, & Erbstein, N. (2003). Youth-led research and evaluation: tools for youth, organizational, and community development. In Sabo (Ed). *Youth Participatory Evaluation: A Field in the Making. New directions for Evaluation*, 98, pg 33-45.

Following the cessation of OPHA support, it is the intent that the tools and resources created will be used to sustain youth engagement programming within the pilot sites as well as among other Public Health Units working to incorporate youth engagement into their plans.

This resource outlines some recommendations for developing a sustainable youth engagement program. Many of the recommendations come directly from input and learnings from OPHA's work with the project's pilot sites.

The role of public health in youth engagement programming

The health unit's capacity for sustainable youth engagement programming

All public health units have the capacity to use YE strategies in their existing programming to varying degrees. Many public health units however, have a limited capacity to implement sustainable YE programming. Regardless of a health unit's capacity to implement sustainable YE programming, all public health units have the ability to make a valuable and meaningful contribution to youth engagement by adopting the role of YE program or policy advocate, YE program partner or YE project lead.

There are many ways that public health units can encourage the use of youth engagement as a health promotion strategy. Public health staff can:

- **Administer youth engagement:** Design, coordinate, and/or evaluate youth engagement programs that are facilitated by others. Consider hiring post-secondary students or contracting community partners to work directly with the youth.
- **Fund youth engagement:** Develop granting programs to support youth-led and/or community-based projects.
- **Implement youth engagement:** Work directly with young people and support them to design, implement and/or evaluate health promotion initiatives.
- **Be a champion for youth engagement:** Advocate within your public health unit, community, or province for policies and funding to support youth engagement. Share your knowledge about youth engagement, including its benefits to young people, the organizations that work with them, and the communities in which they live.
- **Partner in youth engagement:** Support community partners to implement their youth engagement projects. Sit on advisory committees, act as a guest speaker, and help community partners learn more about specific health issues.

Youth engagement implementation models

Alignment

Aligning your youth engagement project with like initiatives or programs can bolster support among project partners. By using language and lingo that will appeal to a potential partner and by promoting youth engagement as a strategy or approach to achieve shared goals, rather than another unique commitment, buy-in will be more easily obtained.

Some existing youth engagement models to consider aligning your project with include:

1. **Ontario Ministry of Education - Health and physical education curriculum**
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/healthcurr18.pdf>
2. **Healthy schools recognition program**
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/challenge.html>
3. **Foundations of a Healthy School**
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/foundations.html>

School and community programs and initiatives

It is also useful to consider the following when developing your youth engagement model:

1. **What are the existing School programs / initiatives that you can collaborate with?** (i.e. Student activity councils, wellness councils, social justice clubs, other existing clubs)
2. **What are some existing Community programs / initiatives that you can collaborate with?** (i.e. Faith-based initiatives drop in centre programs, after school programs, membership programs, community centre programs, etc.)

Delivery models (staff support)

A variety of delivery models were used by OPHA's pilot sites to deliver the youth engagement programming. The following are a few examples of delivery models used:

1. Ottawa Public Health engaged youth facilitators to work with their community-house leader in implementing the youth engagement program. Assess idea if your health unit has existing youth facilitators and/or existing relationships with community-house staff that can work with you to implement programming.
2. Halton Region Public Health engaged their health units existing healthy schools allies and worked to align their programming with the healthy schools programming. Consider connecting with schools in your region with the "healthy schools designation" or working with your school health teams to find ways to incorporate youth engagement programming into the healthy schools model.

3. Oxford County Public Health Unit was able to engage University Students working on their practicum to deliver its youth engagement programming. Consider applying for practicum students with your local university to recruit support in your youth engagement project implementation.
4. Various Public Health Units across Ontario have recently been provided with funding through the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport to support the hiring of a Youth Engagement Project Coordinator. This coordinator will work with various youth engagement programs within the health unit. With the additional FTE, health units will have a greater capacity for meaningful youth engagement participation in one or more of the roles described above.
5. Other strategies may include:
 - Working with child and youth workers
 - Utilizing existing school resources such as in-school social workers, school administrators, teachers, and parents, as well as the use of facilities for meeting space and use of school networks to obtain access to students.

Partners and Stakeholders

Potential Partnerships and Considerations

Potential Partners	Possible Contributions	Considerations
Public Health Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project leadership and management ○ Influence and advocacy ○ Human resources – facilitator, guest facilitator support staff ○ Health knowledge / expertise ○ Meeting space ○ Resources – health promotion information and health services ○ Mandated to provide public health services to youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health focused ○ May be required to respond immediately to health priorities (e.g., H1N1) ○ May function with adult authority in programs ○ Adults promote health and healthy behaviours ○ Serves all-ages ○ May have limited staff time for process-driven activities ○ May not be well resources (dependent on region priorities)
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Influence and advocacy ○ Human resources – support staff ○ Education knowledge / expertise ○ Knowledge / expertise relating to youth ○ Meeting or event space ○ Resource – educational supports, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Education focused ○ Adult authority ○ Adult-led education and extra-curricular activities ○ Serves children and youth ○ Familiar youth-oriented environment ○ Often responding to multiple priorities with limited resources
Community Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project leadership and management ○ Influence and advocacy ○ Human resources – facilitator, guest facilitator, support staff ○ Varied knowledge and expertise ○ Potential knowledge / expertise relating to youth ○ Meeting or event space ○ Resources – sport / activity oriented supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recreation and leisure focused ○ Adult authority ○ Adults/older youth instruct lessons or supervise drop-in programs ○ Serves all-ages ○ Various facilities – gym, pool, courts ○ Generally a youth-friendly environment
Youth Centre or Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project leadership and management ○ Influence and advocacy ○ Human resources – facilitator, guest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth focused ○ Adult-youth partnership ○ Adults guide and support

Potential Partners	Possible Contributions	Considerations
	facilitator, support staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Knowledge / expertise relating to youth ○ Meeting or event space ○ Resources – partnerships with youth organizations, youth-friendly info and supplies 	youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Serves youth only ○ Responds to youth issues and needs ○ Youth-friendly environment ○ Potentially under-resourced
Faith-Based Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project leadership and management ○ Human resources – facilitator, guest facilitator, support staff ○ Religious knowledge / expertise ○ Potential knowledge / expertise relating to youth ○ Meeting or event space ○ Resources – religious information, community partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Faith focused ○ Adult authority ○ Adult-led education and activities preach and teach lessons ○ Serves all-ages ○ Formal, regimented environment
Activity Based Organization (sport, art, games, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project leadership and management ○ Human resources – facilitator, guest facilitator, support staff ○ Activity based knowledge and expertise ○ Potential knowledge / expertise relating to youth ○ Meeting or event space ○ Resources – sport / activity oriented supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activity focused ○ Activity expert authority ○ Expert instruction and coaches ○ Serves all-ages ○ Activity-focused environment

Roles and Responsibilities of Project Stakeholders

It is important to engage the right stakeholders when implementing your youth engagement project. Below is a list of recommended roles and responsibilities for the stakeholders you chose to engage.

Project Stakeholders	Roles	Responsibility
Lead Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The organization that has dedicated resources (staff, finances, space, etc.) to support the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To be youth-friendly ○ To ensure that the necessary resources are available and in place to support the project ○ To control the project resources ○ To report to project funders and/or management ○ To promote and support youth engagement
Project Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The staff person assigned by the lead organization to coordinate project activities and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To be youth-friendly ○ To coordinate project activities ○ To provide resources to effectively deliver the project ○ To ensure people and resources are used appropriately ○ To promote and support youth engagement
Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The people living, working and/or playing in the neighbourhood shared by the youth that are assigned to or volunteer to support the youth and project implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To be youth-friendly ○ To provide ideas, expertise and advice in the planning of a project ○ To provide additional resources (staff, finances, space, in-kind contribution, other) to support project implementation ○ To promote and support youth engagement
Project Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The adult ally that leads/facilitates the work with the youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To be youth-friendly ○ To lead and support the youth group in project activities ○ To create opportunities for the youth to gain knowledge and understanding and learn new skills ○ To create a safe space for the youth to express themselves and have a voice ○ To support the youth in planning and implementing a project to bring about personal and social change ○ To communicate with multiple project

		stakeholders ○ To support youth engagement
Guest Facilitator	○ The invited person that leads/facilitates an activity or series of activities with the youth	○ To be youth-friendly ○ To lead and support the youth group in specialized project activities ○ To support youth engagement
Parent / Caregiver	○ The person who provides consent for the youth to participate in project activities	○ To be youth-friendly ○ To provide consent for the youth to participate in the project (where appropriate) ○
Youth Group	○ The collective youth that meet regularly to participate in project activities	○ To meet regularly ○ To plan and implement a project to bring about personal and social change
Youth in the Youth Group	○ The individual youth that meets regularly and makes a contribution to the youth group	○ To attend and contribute to regular youth group meetings ○ To respect and support the project facilitator and the other youth ○ To contribute to and support the planning and implementation of a project to bring about personal and social change

Funding opportunities

Below are some recommended resources for potential funding of youth engagement programming. While much can be done on a shoestring budget, it is always a good idea to continue to search for additional funding to help support your work. The following list is for informational purposes only and does not reflect OPHA's support for the organizations listed.

Breakfast Clubs of Canada

http://breakfastclubscanada.org/index.php?page=apply-for-funding&hl=en_CA

Breakfast for Learning Ontario

<http://www.breakfastforlearning.ca/en/ontario/apply-for-a-grant>

Build-A-Bear Workshop Foundations

<http://www.buildabear.com/aboutUs/community/BabwFoundation.aspx>

The Grocery Foundation

<http://www.groceryfoundation.com/index.html>

CAAWS (Canadian Assoc. for the Advancement of Women)

<http://www.caaws.ca/e/grants/wise/criteria.cfm>

Carolyn Sifton Foundation

<http://siftonfoundation.com/>

Charity Village

<http://www.charityvillage.com/>

CIBC Children's Foundation (would have to submit in February 2011)

<http://www.cibc.com/ca/miracleday/about-foundation.html>

Community Foundations

<http://community-fdn.ca/about-cfs/find-a-community.cfm?id=6>

Community One Foundation Rainbow Grants

<http://communityone.ca/index.php?id=20>

Dare to Dream Program

<http://www.daretodreamprogram.ca/about.htm>

Dreamcatcher Fund

http://www.dcfund.ca/funding_programs.php

Elementary School milk Program

<http://www.dairygoodness.ca/milk/elementary-school-milk-program/elementary-school-milk-program-ontario>

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) AgriSpirit Fund

http://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/AboutUs/Responsibility/agrispiritfund_e.asp

FedEx Express Canada Greening Canada's School Grounds Program

http://www.treecanada.ca/site/?page=programs_school&lang=en

General Mills Canada – Champions for Health Kids

<http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/commitment/champions.aspx>

GoodLife Kids Foundation

<http://www.goodlifekids.com/about-2/grants-recipients/>

Grand Bend Community Foundation

<http://www.grandbendcommunityfoundation.ca/granting.html>

Green Apple School Program

<http://www.greenapplegrants.ca/home.en.html>

Hamilton Community Foundation

http://www.hcf.on.ca/grants_hcf.shtml

Healthy Communities Fund (Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport)

http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/english/healthy_communities/default.asp

Home Depot – Evergreen Rebuilding Nature Grant

<http://www.evergreen.ca/en/funding/grants/home-depot.sn>

Hydro One Power Play Grants

<http://www.hydroone.com/OurCommitment/Community/Pages/powerplay.aspx>

Imperial Oil – Community Investment

http://www.imperialoil.ca/Canada-English/community_invest_apply.aspx

JumpStart-Canadian Tire

<http://www.canadiantire.ca/jumpstart/funding.html>

KidSport Ontario

http://www.kidsportcanada.ca/index.php?page=ontario_how_to_apply

Laidlaw Foundation

<http://www.laidlawfdn.org/programs>

Let Them Be Kids Program

<http://www.ltbk.ca/kids/index.php/nominate/>

Lifesaving Society's Swim-to-Survive School Grant Program

<http://www.lifesavingsociety.com/default.asp?PagelD=796>

Loblaw Companies Ltd.

http://www.loblaw.com/en/pdf_en/lcl_store_donations.pdf

Mike Weir Foundation

<http://www.themikeweirfoundation.com/grants>

Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) Access and Activity Grants

http://www.mec.ca/Main/content_text.jsp?FOLDER%3c%3efolder_id=2534374302883358&bmUID=1262795186079

NHL Players' Association Goals & Dreams Fund

<http://www.nhlpa.com/Giving-Back/Goals-And-Dreams/>

Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) Grade 9 Try Day Program

<http://www.ofsaa.on.ca/site/index.cfm?DSP=Section&ID=684>

Ontario Market Investment Fund (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs)

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/domestic/omif/guidelines.htm>

Ontario Physical and Health Education Association's (OPHEA) recommended funding opportunities supporting healthy schools In Ontario

http://www.ophea.net/sites/default/files/ENV_school_funding_doc_updated_25OC10.doc

Ontario Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Municipal Grant Program

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/sustainability/programs/tdm-grant.shtml#grant>

Ontario Trillium Foundation

http://www.trilliumfoundation.org/cms/en/youth_recession.aspx

Parents Reaching Out Grants for Regional/Provincial Projects (Ontario Ministry of Education)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/regional.html>

RBC After School Grants Program

<http://www.rbc.com/donations/after-school-pre.html>

RCMP Foundation

<http://www.rcmp-f.ca/funding/funding.php>

Roots Community Support & Sponsorship

http://demandware.edgesuite.net/aacg_prd/on/demandware.static/Sites-RootsCorporate-Site/Sites-RootsCorporate-Library/default/v1262968995085/content/documents/Sponsorshipguidelines.pdf

Saputo

<http://www.saputo.com/investors-and-medias/social/default.aspx?langtype=4105>

S' Cool Life Fund

<http://www.scoollifefund.ca/index2.php?id=3>

Shell Environmental Fund

http://www.shell.ca/home/content/can-en/responsible_energy/shell_in_society/social_investment/social_investment_areas/environment/shell_environmental_fund/

Shoppers Drug Mart

http://www.shoppersdrugmart.ca/english/corporate_information/about_us/community_investment/community_focus/how_to_apply.html

Spark Community Advocacy Fund (Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario)

http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/site/c.pvI3leNWJwE/b.5109557/k.92BA/Apply_for_the_Advocacy_Fund.htm

SpeakUp Projects

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/index.html>

Sport Chek's Power of Sport for Kids Program

<http://www.forzani.com/corporateGiving.aspx?selected=pos>

The Counselling Foundation of Canada

http://counselling.net/jnew/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58&Itemid=61

The Lion's Club

<http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/lci-foundation/grants/lcif-grants-faq.php>

Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds School Ground Greening Grants

<http://www.evergreen.ca/en/funding/schools/index.sn>

True Sport Foundation

<http://www.truesportfoundation.ca/en/page-5-grants>

Wal-Mart – Evergreen Green Grants

<http://www.evergreen.ca/en/funding/grants/walmart.sn>

Recommended Steps for Starting and Sustaining Youth Engagement Programs

All the listed items below should be considered before committing to youth engagement programming within your organization.

	1. Ensure programs are based on existing best practices.
	2. Ensure programs are desired by the audience.
	3. Involve more than one partner in program development.
	4. Ensure there are no other local programs serving the same audience with the same need.
	5. Allow sufficient time to plan for integration. The potential adopting organization needs time to see the program value.
	6. Allow a high degree of local program control so that there is flexibility to customize the program to community need/capacity.
	7. Ensure there is a program champion who develops and sustains a personal commitment to continuing programs.
	8. Lay the financial groundwork for integration in the early stages of program development.
	9. Ensure programs use existing resources within the community (as much as possible) and build on the strengths in partners and program participants.
	10. Work towards programs being delivered in the absence of paid staff.
	11. Ensure access to the necessary tools, resources, supports and training to assist with program implementation and maintenance.
	12. Ensure programs help partners achieve their individual mandates.
	13. Involve a health professional as one source of information either directly to the audience or via a 'train the trainer' approach.

	14. Involve participants who have completed the program in some way - program promotion, implementation or other aspects of the project.
	15. Ensure that the front line staff support the intervention. This is more likely to occur if programs are not imposed from above, don't cause additional hours of work, and they have helped create and evaluate.
	16. Ensure that the program evaluation data being collected will be useful for convincing potential lead agencies to adopt the program or funders to continue support.
	17. Ensure that program participants are very positive about the program, its implementation and its effect.
	18. Ensure that there is early and continuing success based on established objectives, combined with an expectation of future success.
	19. Ensure that the program has demonstrated the impact having a greater value than the costs associated with its delivery.
	20. Ensure that participating partners can identify benefits as a result of being involved in the program. These can be promoted as incentives to encourage potential adopting organizations.
	21. Ensure that the program is desired by a host organization (demonstrate need for the program; show it is wanted by constituents; and prove it will help to meet organization's goals.)
	22. Ensure that the organization which intends to take the lead role in the program has carefully examined its own capacity to introduce and support the program over the long term.
	23. Ensure there is a strong connection between the potential lead agency and the program (i.e. is consistent with the mandate, objectives and /operations).
	24. Select an "adopter" organization that has already set its own direction, priorities and program areas of emphasis - a mature organization.
	25. Provide the adopting organization with clear and thorough manuals/guidelines for implementation and training.
	26. Ensure there is some carryover of personnel from one phase to the next

	phase, if only as a consultant/advisor.
	27. Ensure an intentional process of gradual turnover of project responsibility has occurred or is occurring.