



FACTSHEET

Creating Effective Youth Leadership Development Programs for Urban Marginalized Youth

Content developed from information in the report *Changing Leaders, Leading Change: A leadership development model for marginalized youth in urban communities* by Rebecca Houser, YouthREX Knowledge Exchange Manager.

Did you know?

Fewer marginalized youth participate in youth development or leadership programs when compared to the number of non-racialized middle and upper class youth who participate in these programs. Urban marginalized youth do not often experience ongoing affirmation and reinforcement of their leadership potential.

Why is that?

Marginalized youth often have responsibilities such as working or taking care of younger siblings which can make it harder to attend youth development programs.

Marginalized youth are usually concentrated in racialized suburban communities where community service provisions do not match community needs.

Traditional youth development

program models that do not emphasize access, equity, and social justice result in marginalized youth feeling excluded.

Leadership in youth development programs often does not reflect the diversity of marginalized youth in society and tend to embrace more White traditional masculinized leadership concepts.

How can I ensure my youth leadership development program meets the needs of urban marginalized youth?

1. Assess what structural barriers prevent marginalized youth from attending your programs and find solutions to address them. Consider providing bus tokens, childcare services for children and younger siblings or creating paid job opportunities and offering stipends for youth for greater access.

3. Implement leadership

development models that reinforce the leadership potential of marginalized youth. Leaders in youth development programs should be given the same power and influence regardless of race, ethnicity, class, sex, ability or religion and should reflect the diversity of our society.

View our Leadership Model on the following page.

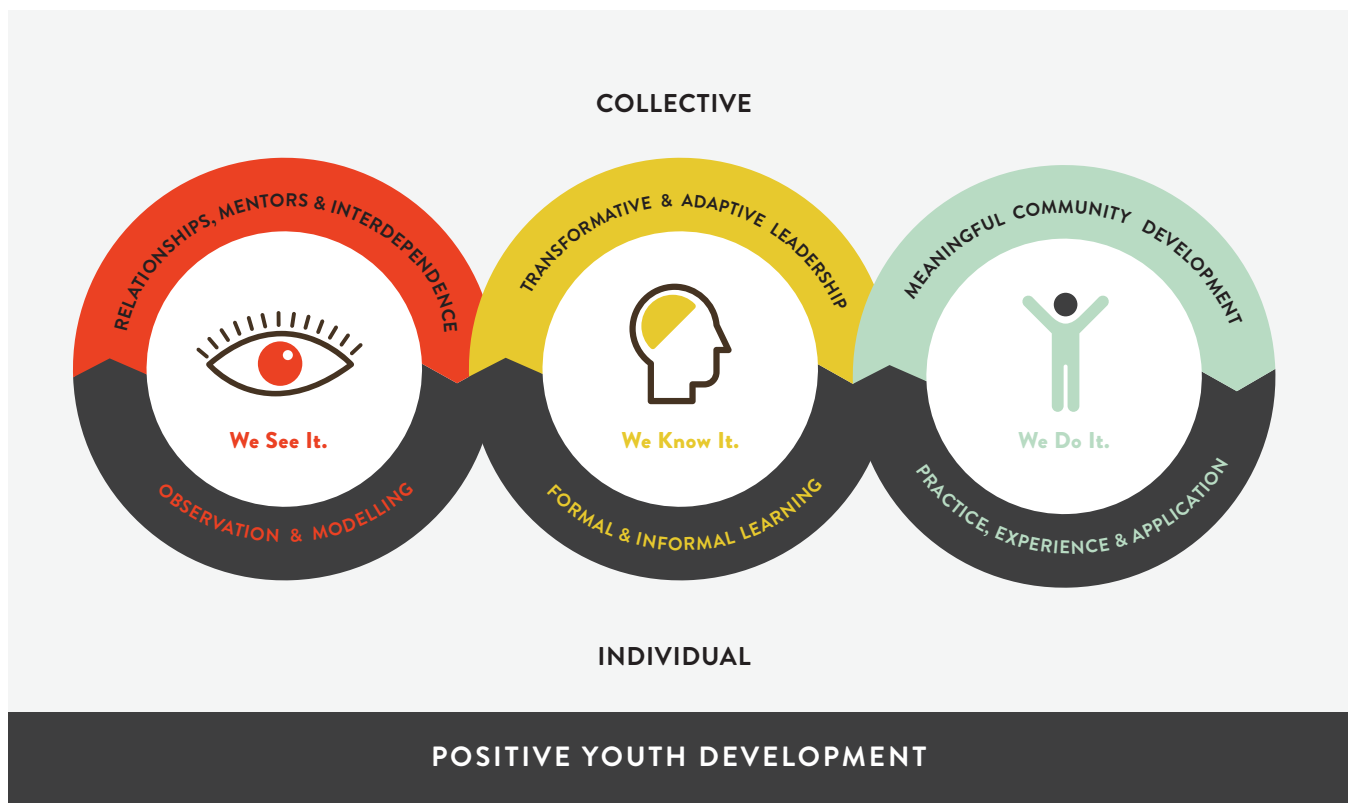
2. Ensure that your program delivery methods, content, staff training and program spaces are inclusive. You can provide Anti-Oppression Training for staff members or integrate accessible accommodations such as wheel chair ramps or sign language interpreters to meet varying ability-related needs.

4. Embrace strength-based

Critical PYD approaches that highlight and affirm positive assets of urban marginalized youth rather than blame youth for the structural inequalities that they face. Help youth understand how structural barriers impact their lives and the community.



Youth contribute to positive social change through exercising leadership in organizations, communities and public and private governance.



We See It.

Marginalized youth benefit from observing and interacting with leadership mentors in peer and adult mentoring relationships. In order to develop leadership skills, youth need relationships with people (peers or adults) who apply leadership skills and model how to enact a leadership identity.

Reciprocal relationships contribute to youths' sense of self-worth and self-efficacy. Leadership mentors serve youth leadership development needs best when they provide positive feedback, and model and support leadership development but do not interfere or overwhelm. Youth leadership mentors must be prepared to support youth's leadership development needs for a minimum of one year in order to be truly effective.

We Know It.

In order for youth to develop conceptual and practical leadership attitudes and skills, they need to be offered opportunities that are designed with knowledge of the youths' community, and mindful about how social systems are organized and function. There should also be activities that develop analytical, critical reflection and research skills.

It is important to consider intersections that exist between gender, sexuality, ethnic heritage, religion, socioeconomic status, geography etc. when developing youth leadership programs. It is also important to keep in mind the interests, passions, strengths, weakness, values, and sense of self-worth that youth may have.

The literature demonstrates the potential of youth programs to develop leadership skills, including: intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, oral and written communication skills, decision-making skills and collaborative competencies such as active listening, teamwork and conflict resolution.

We Do It.

Providing experiential opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills are essential to youth leadership development. Youth require public forums within which to contribute their voice and ideas and exercise their power. Civic activism provides opportunities for marginalized youth to directly engage in collective action to challenge inequities that negatively impact their lives.

Through civic engagement, youth apply leadership "knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties and capacity for action in political and social systems" (Borden & Serido, 2009). In doing so, youth practice social change and relational leadership skills including, but not limited to: group organizing processes, consensus building, planning, implementation, creating systems of accountability, public speaking, leading meetings, and deciding on agendas and training curricula. Participation in these activities can lead to feelings of self-efficacy and mattering.