

nothing but the facts

This information provides a look at realities of youth–adult partnerships and the research and practice that bring it all together. It also offers Tips for Practitioners.

fact one: limited funding

Money can often be a big issue when an organization needs to hire more staff and create new programs in an area with limited funding opportunities.

Many community programs are chronically underfinanced and suffer from low morale of dedicated staff forced to limit vital resources . . . while the potential of community organizations to promote youth development is enormous, they have been largely neglected in public debate and policy information.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development

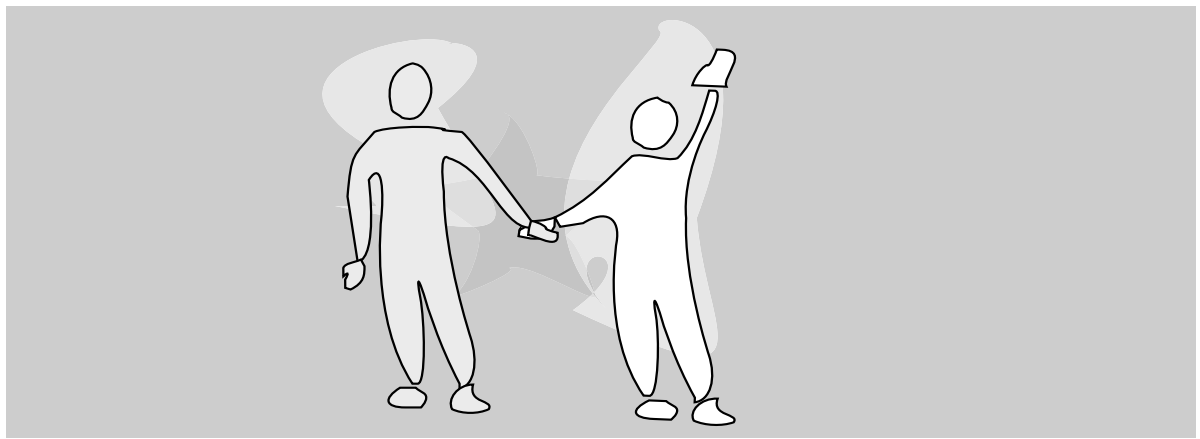
tips for practitioners

Use the Internet—many private foundations focus their financial resources on youth development issues.

When applying for new grants, encourage additional youth involvement by including youth in paid staff positions and budgeting money for incentive-based programs.

Be patient with your current funding status; advocate for a reallocation of present funding to meet the demands of the youth and youth programs in your community.

Watch state and federal legislation—advocate for and support legislation that allocates money to youth development issues.



fact two: limited research

Individuals, organizations, and funders want proof of what we already know—that youth–adult partnerships and youth development work.

The natural outcome of having high expectations for youth, for viewing youth as resources and not as problems, is the creation of opportunities for them to be contributing members of their community.

Bonnie Bernard

tips for practitioners

Use information from curricula on youth–adult partnerships and youth development. Find literature on what others are doing and what has worked to further youth–adult partnerships, and share information openly.

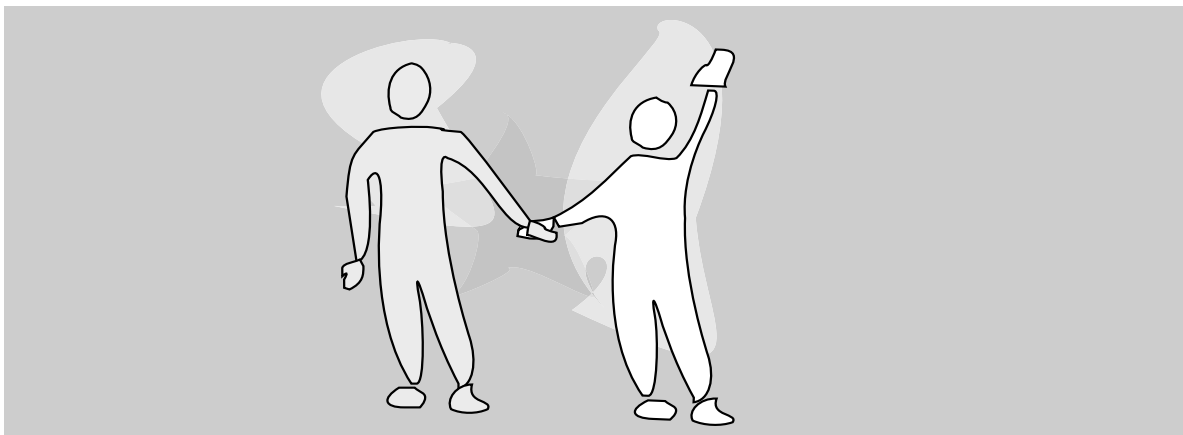
Seek out research projects on youth development, and include yourself in getting the research completed.

fact three: youth apathy

Youth may appear to not care, but it may just be they didn't know that they could.

In 1996, 13.3 million teenagers aged 12 to 17, or 59% of teenagers, volunteered. Teens were nearly four times as likely to volunteer if they were asked than if they were not asked. Among the 51% of teens who reported being asked to volunteer, 93% actually did, compared to the 49% who were not asked, 24% of whom volunteered.

—Points of Light Foundation



tips for practitioners

When provided with meaningful opportunities, youth can and will be active contributors to the systems that affect them.

Advocate for youth. Assist them in negotiating the systems that surround them—systems that many times control youth, yet are not designed with youth. Be supportive and patient: When experiencing new opportunities, people need guidance, reassurance, and reward. New experiences are exciting and can be intimidating.

fact four: leadership skills

It is important for the partnership's participants to have the skills to lead as well as to be active members in the partnership.

Developing skills in coaching providing legitimate opportunities for youth to take on meaningful roles in the partnership, while also holding them accountable was hard for adults.

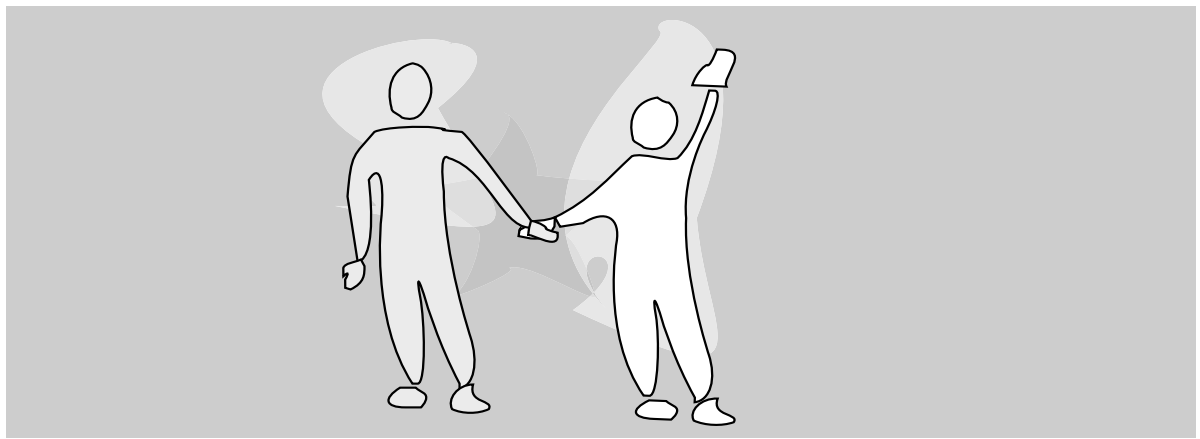
Linda Camino

tips for practitioners

Share training, knowledge, skills, and resources with all members of the partnership.

Offer proactive guidance and support. All participants in a partnership need to understand what the effort entails, the challenges they may encounter, and the skills and resources available.

Remember that equally contributing does not mean contributing the same things. Each member of the partnership will have unique challenges, skills, and resources to contribute to the partnership.



fact five: youth turnover

Keep youth involvement and participation consistent—from policy to practice and everything in between.

There are a growing number of organizations that pointedly recruit and develop young people as key players in problem solving for organizational functioning, community development, and larger social change. In these settings, young people are asked to assume responsibility for trying to improve the organizations and environments they will inherit.

Karen Pittman

tips for practitioners

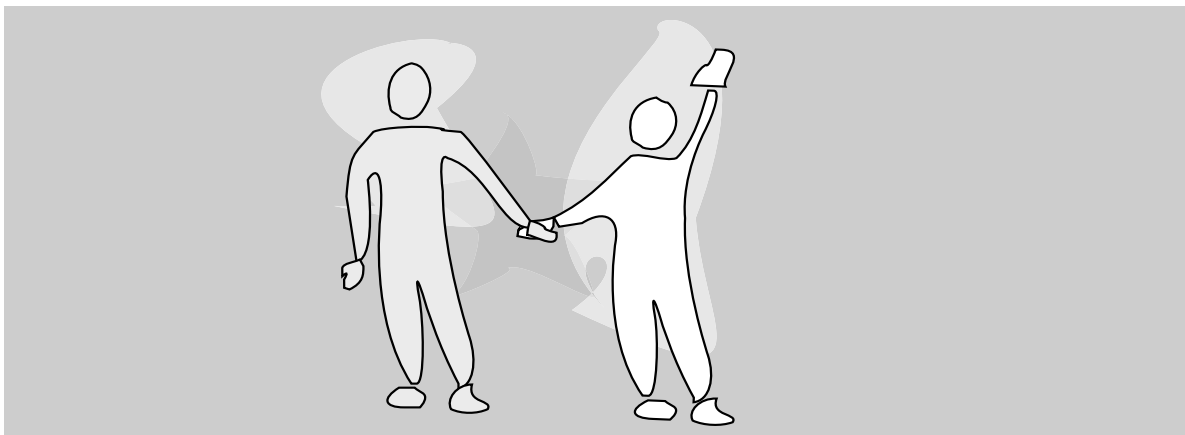
Advocate for agency wide policies on youth development, youth involvement, and youth-adult partnerships.

Solicit input from both youth and adults when developing policies. Hold focus groups and meetings often. Be passionate and share ideas.

Follow through with your promises. Do not offer something you are not willing to do.

Prepare your organization for accepting and encouraging shared decision making with youth.

Assist youth in making decisions; do not direct or manipulate youth.



fact six: slow process

People often complain that they can get more work done—and done faster—if they work by themselves.

We all remember much better what we have discovered and said ourselves than what others have told us.

Zimbabwe phrase

tips for practitioners

Involvement and participation by your target audience will ensure that your efforts have a positive impact on your target audience.

Sharing work with others can bring up ideas, questions, and suggestions that you may never have thought of by yourself.

Plan ahead to give yourself enough time to finish work by your deadline.

Ownership by both youth and adults for creating, implementing, and evaluating efforts will result in greater dedication to the process and determination to make the effort successful.