

10 Steps for Implementing a Youth Leadership Development Program

The Faith and Service Technical Education Network (FASTEN)

FASTEN: Sharing Knowledge, Strengthening Connections, Improving Outcomes

1. Evaluate Organization's Capacity

Before you start planning, examine whether your organization:

- values youth,
- has opportunities for youth to serve,
- is willing to support a program, and
- has funding/time to develop and carry out a program.

It might be helpful to do a S.W.O.T analysis to identify the *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities* and *threats* in regard to your organization's ability to develop and sustain a leadership development program.

2. Determine Program Purpose

Clearly define and articulate the program's goals and objectives. Drafting a statement of purpose will help you make future decisions. A clear statement of purpose should include:

- the values of the program,
- what the ultimate goals are,
- how to achieve those goals, and
- who is to be involved.

3. Decide Target Population

Identify the type of youth that will be participating in your program:

- Determine any special needs, previous leadership experience or training, and qualities or skills they need to develop.
- Select adult leaders for the group based on the age, ethnicity/race, gender, socio-economic status, and life experiences of the targeted youth.
- Begin to explore the leadership approach that will best fit this group.

4. Investigate Youth Leadership Issues

- Seek to understand what youth leadership development actually means.
- Investigate current trends and ideas for youth leadership development.
- Identify the specific social and developmental issues that the youth in your target population face.

5. Identify and Involve Key Leaders

Determine key "decision makers" and leaders in your organization and community that should be involved in the program development process. Typically, when people are involved in a program, they will be supportive of it. Look for leaders among:

- current management and staff of your organization;
- members of the larger community; and

- local and national organizations that provide resources for leadership development programs.

This range of advisors can provide key insights about the operation of the program—possible problems and pitfalls to avoid. They may also help publicize and promote your program.

6. Create Budget and Explore Funding Options

- Create a budget, estimating the cost of supplies and training materials, space (if you are renting or leasing), equipment, and labor. Also estimating the number of participants, staff and volunteers is important as this will affect cost.
- Determine how much funding can come from within your organization.
- Explore potential outside funding from private organizations or government agencies if necessary.

7. Determine Leadership Strategy and Select Curriculum

Determine your leadership strategy by asking *how* and *what* you want to teach your youth. You can then select curriculum based on your strategy. Youth leadership development curricula follow many different strategies, such as skill building, character development, or developing "competency arenas."

8. Determine Volunteer Standards and Expectations

It's important to create a simple application and screening process for adult leaders or volunteers that includes checking references. Create "job descriptions" that outline the roles and responsibilities of youth, staff and other volunteers. In addition, if you want to use youth volunteers in the program, it's helpful to determine specific prerequisites for volunteer candidates such as leadership potential, interest, competency, and commitment.

9. Remember to Develop the Staff and Volunteers

Once you identify and select your youth and adult participants it is important to help *them* grow in leadership. Continually equip your adult staff to teach, model, nurture and develop young people as leaders.

10. Evaluate the Program

Assess the effectiveness of the program from all perspectives: youth, staff and volunteers. Measure the progress of youth leaders and assess the effectiveness of the program in meeting the goals set. Have the outcomes you desired been achieved?

Adapted from Leadership 101: Developing Leadership Skills for Resilient Youth, Facilitators Guide by Mariam MacGregor, Youthleadership.com, 2000, page 79. Used with permission from Mariam MacGregor.