

Begin reading here about best practices for connecting adults as partners.

"Youth take the responsibilities seriously – that surprises adults. I was impressed with the thoughtfulness of the questions asked when I attended their meetings. I think an important lesson is that youth can do that and maybe can do it better than we do because they don't have the years of experiences and biases that guide us."³⁰

*Building Community Together
adult advisor*

Best Practice:

Connect adults as partners

Successful youth philanthropy programs engage adult partners who believe in the potential of youth. Adults provide valuable information and create opportunities for young people, while learning from and alongside them. Adult partners consistently consider ways to position youth in active leadership roles. Adults can open doors that have been historically closed to young people, advocate on their behalf, challenge them to succeed, and prepare them to interact as equals with adults in a variety of public settings.

Working in partnership with youth requires changes in attitudes and behaviors on the part of many adults. Adults may need to challenge their stereotypes about the capabilities of youth and model leadership that is collaborative rather than authoritative.

Adults benefit from the kind of shared decision-making inherent in quality youth philanthropy programs. According to a recent study, which looked at youth philanthropy, youth on boards, youth court, and other youth in decision-making models, positive outcomes for adults include:³¹

- Adults are energized and feel increased commitment to the organization.
- Adults feel more connected to the community.
- Adults' perceptions of youth competency improve.
- Adults improve their competency working in partnership with youth.

> Where does your organization stand?

Explore **Develop Youth-Adult Partnerships** further by reviewing program development questions on page 32.

Building decision-making partnership between youth and adults

Consider the following for building working partnerships between youth and adults:

Include sufficient time in training and orientation to address how partnerships work and continue these dialogues as part of supervision and coaching.

Emphasize building an environment where both youth and adults feel comfortable discussing difficult issues.

Find ways for youth to assume a variety of leadership roles, e.g., facilitate meetings, review proposals, conduct training, make presentations, and visit potential grantees.

Involve youth and adults in reflection about how the partnerships are working and make necessary changes.

Provide opportunities for youth and adults to examine their respective roles within the group and organize their roles to take advantage of individual skills and knowledge.

Listen with an open mind to fresh ideas and approaches.

Use consensus-building to make important decisions.