


# Chapter Two



Essential Question:

Why is Y-AP important  
for our organization?



# Necessary Knowledge

What benefits can communities and organizations expect to gain by making Y-AP a local priority?

It is becoming accepted that youth-adult partnership is a fundamental element of effective prevention programming. There is a solid body of evidence demonstrating that Y-AP has developmental benefits for youth and can help prepare them to take on leadership roles within the community. There is an increasing awareness that Y-AP may also promote community-level outcomes, in terms of positively influencing adult staff, local leaders, and community policy.

The following section outlines the types of benefits that organizations and communications can expect when they design and implement strong youth-adult partnerships.

## Youth-Adult Partnerships promote positive youth development

When young people are actively engaged in meaningful volunteer service, and work in close collaboration with adults, they are likely to show better school performance, more positive self-concept, better relationships with peers, increased social contacts, a greater sense of responsibility, and higher rates of college graduation. They are also more likely to have lower levels of alcohol and drug use, later onset of sexual activity, lower levels of delinquency, and reduced levels of depression.

### Impacts on Youth Development

**Safety and Belonging:** Youth feel accepted, supported and respected within the organization. They experience a strong sense of collective identity and pride in membership.

**Efficacy and Empowerment:** Youth increase confidence in their ability to effect change within their settings. They come to “own” their expertise and accomplishments as leaders.

**Sociopolitical Awareness and Civic Competence:** Youth learn how to critically analyze the relationship between their own lived experience and larger social, economic and political structures. Youth also gain the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to participate as civic actors.

**Community Connections:** Youth gain a deep understanding of their community and a closer connection to their peers. Adults connect youth with professional networks and opportunities.

## Youth-Adult Partnerships have positive impacts on adult staff and community leaders

Research also indicates that Y-AP can enhance the ability and commitment of adult community leaders to address local issues, especially those regarding young people. Specifically, Y-AP challenges the negative stereotypes that leaders often have about young people. It challenges leaders to increase their own awareness about youth concerns and youth issues. With this awareness, community leaders become more motivated to include youth and to expand opportunities for youth voice. They become more confident in their own practice. After working with youth, for example, board members of organizations report an enhanced sense of organizational belonging and self-efficacy. The board members become better able to understand the concerns and perspectives of youth. Similarly, local government officials come to see participating youth as being “prepared,” “thoughtful,” and “respectful.” They start to reflect and become open to the idea that many youth are motivated and prepared to contribute to their communities.

### Impacts on Adult Staff and Community Leaders

**Confidence and Competence:** Adults develop skills and attitudes they need to effectively share power and responsibility with youth on an on-going basis.

**Generativity:** Adults experience satisfaction in passing along their experience to a new generation.

**Reflect on Negative Stereotypes:** Adults recognize and address their assumptions about young people. They develop a new respect for youth competence and expertise.

**Advocate for Youth Participation:** Adults commit to making youth-adult partnership part of their own practice and use the power of their position to promote youth engagement in new settings.

“My experiences have really changed me on a personal level. I am now a person that I can depend on. I think that anybody could call on me in this organization and I can do what they need me to do. I am usually a pretty busy, flighty person and now I’m trying to really be devoted to certain things. I think that I really feel my devotion as I am leaving high school – graduating high school – just to be involved as a youth mobilizer. I’m really proud of myself to have that devotion and be dependable.”  
—Youth Involved in Community Organizing

“This program changes you, changes who you are. It’s just really defined who I am and what I want to be doing. It’s really instilled the idea of social movements in me. I love that ideas and that’s what I really want to pursue in the future. Wherever I am with this, I want to be mobilizing people to do what they feel is important.”  
—Youth Involved in Community Organizing

# VOICES from the Field

## Youth-Adult Partnerships benefit organizations and communities

Ultimately, when youth and adults work together, organizations and communities get stronger. Their capacity expands and they are better able to provide necessary opportunities and supports to youth. The types of issues addressed by decision-making bodies (e.g., board of directors, school boards, local government) can begin to reflect the critical interests, concerns, and priorities of young people.

### Impacts on Organizations and Communities

**Institutionalized Expectations of Youth Participation:** Norms and traditions change as youth become a standard part of community decision making.

**Civic Agendas Reflect Youth Voice:** The types of issues addressed by decision-making bodies reflect the critical interests, concerns and priorities of young people.

**New Community Coalitions Emerge:** Youth organizers reach out beyond the youth development field to engage a wide range of community partners in order to address these complex issues.

**Responsive Public Institutions:** Public institutions respond with resources, policies and programs that better serve youth and communities.

*“I was resistant to youth on the board at first. But now I know them. My listening skills and understanding have increased dramatically...I get to see young people all the time now. I personally see and hear the passion of young people and it gets me more interested and engaged.”*

—Adult Board Member of a Youth-Serving Organization

*“The stories that youth tell us in the meetings change the decision making in ways that are totally unexpected. They tell us things like, “we are the statistics,” and “we are living the life so listen to what we are saying.” Now we have new ideas and new voice in the mix. Adults hear these stories. They organization tried to respond.”*

—Adult Board Member of a Youth-Serving Organization

**VOICES**  
**from the Field**

## **Youth-Adult Partnerships hold promise for preparing and motivating a new generation of community and nonprofit leaders.**

Civic participation – be it in conventional activities such as high school governance and sustained community service or in socio-political activities such as community organizing – starts youth on a developmental path toward constructive citizenship and civic action. Youth who are more involved during middle and high school are more likely to engage in early and middle adulthood. Indeed, the strongest predictor of adult voting, participation in social movements, and involvement in voluntary associations is participating in political activities as a youth. Moreover, Y-AP helps young people forge powerful identities as civic actors, while concurrently helping them gain the skills to become effective participants.

### **Take Away Message**

**Many adults think it's only youth who benefit from participating, but actually adults benefit as much (if not more) than young people.**



# Chapter 2

## Tools



It's time for a brief application tool. The one tool in this section, *Anticipating Your Impacts*, asks you to identify the impacts your organization is most interested in achieving by engaging youth.

# Tool #5

## Anticipating Your Impacts



*This tool contains two steps. Group members respond individually to the question in Step One. Then, in Step Two, group members share their responses and discuss the provided questions.*

### **Step One: Individual Response**

*In the previous tools section, you identified one area where your organization wants to strengthen youth engagement. What are the impacts you hope to achieve by strengthening youth engagement in this area? (Feel free to include impacts not listed in the Necessary Knowledge section).*

#### Impacts on Youth

- ➔
- ➔
- ➔

#### Impacts on Adult Staff

- ➔
- ➔
- ➔

#### Organizational Impacts

- ➔
- ➔
- ➔