

# The Green Street Guide to Authentic Youth Engagement

by Jennifer Hoffman and Susan Staniforth

with contributions from the Green Street Youth Steering Committee

May 2007





# **The Green Street Guide** to **Youth Engagement**

Authentic ✓

**by Jennifer Hoffman and Susan Staniforth**

**Developed by Green Street, Emily Menzies (Green Street Youth Engagement Program Coordinator) and the Green Street Youth Steering Committee**

**May 2007**



National  
**Youth  
Engagement  
Program**

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# INTRODUCTION



## About this Manual

*True youth engagement is important because we have ideas, opinions, and passions but often have no reason to channel them into something positive. It's so important to recognize the value in youth's contributions and allow us to communicate our ideas to you because that shows us how we can contribute to creating change.*

– Liz, Green Street Youth Steering Committee Member

## What This Manual Is About

Welcome to our manual on working with youth! The purpose of this handbook is to provide an easy to use, succinct guide that outlines some of the best ways to encourage authentic youth participation in your organization. It's designed to include practical hands-on advice, real-life examples, reproducible checklists, worksheets and other tools, as well as a brief list of helpful resources and web links. The manual was written for Green Street program Providers (see page 5, and [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca)), but the information within can apply to any group interested in working effectively with young people.

## What This Manual Isn't About

This isn't a manual on how to engage youth in action learning projects and activities, or a guidebook of specific games, activities or projects to offer as part of your program delivery model. There are lots of great resources out there that *already* do this – everything from *Project WILD* to *Leap Into Action! Simple Steps to Environmental Action*.

The intent of this manual is to encourage and support Green Street Providers and other environmental and sustainability education organizations to further their level of youth integration and engagement. We hope that this manual will help you bring “youth voices” into your organization – in whatever capacity is appropriate. By encouraging and supporting authentic youth participation, active youth engagement in your organization will increase. The manual is not intended to be exhaustive or written in stone, but a work “in progress” that we hope you will use and contribute to.



## The four main objectives of this handbook are:

- To identify and address Green Street Provider needs and current barriers in working effectively with youth.
- To address key strategies involving youth in program evaluation, such as Youth Steering Committee formation and operations, focus groups, etc.
- To provide practical, useable ideas and materials to Green Street Providers and their programs.
- To share current resources.

## Why We Wrote This Manual

*...Providing guidance on youth engagement is needed because it is often hard for adults to connect with youth. Adults sometimes really let the age gap effect they way they talk to and act around youth. For an adult to be able to hear the things that are going to reach youth is very important and to have a manual to refer back to is a great resource.*

Joey, Green Street Youth Steering Committee Member



This manual was originally developed for Green Street program Providers (See Page 5 - **About Green Street**). Many of them have expressed a desire to increase the level of youth engagement in their program planning, delivery and evaluation, but cited a number of barriers and challenges. Hence – this manual!

The manual's contents and themes also apply to any person, or organization that wants to increase the level of youth engagement in their operations. You could be a program manager, a volunteer coordinator, a youth worker, or wear a different hat altogether. You could work for a social justice organization, an environmental activist group, or a nature sanctuary. No matter where you work or what role you may play, if you share a sincere desire to more actively recruit and engage youth in your organizational activities, this manual can help you!



During this manual’s development, Green Street Providers were polled regarding their organizational needs around working effectively with youth. We asked Providers three questions:

- What are your main organizational needs around youth involvement?
- What are the barriers to involving youth in your organization?
- Describe methods you’ve used to engage youth that have worked for your organization.

The following table summarizes their comments, which helped inform the manual’s themes. Many thanks to the Providers that participated, including Ducks Unlimited, Evergreen, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, The Pembina Institute, Otesha Project, Trout Unlimited, Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter, and Environnement Jeunesse (EnJeu).

<b>Question</b>	<b>Provider Comment Summary</b>
Organizational needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtaining youth input on program planning and resources.</li> <li>• Defining and ensuring authentic and meaningful youth participation.</li> <li>• Gathering youth stories on impacts of our programs.</li> <li>• Help in assessing student learning.</li> <li>• Attracting more youth to work directly with our organization.</li> <li>• Accessing youth who want to participate – where and how to recruit?</li> <li>• Having templates for key documents to modify and adapt as required.</li> <li>• Help identifying best practices to ensure meaningful youth engagement.</li> </ul>
Main Barriers to Youth Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logistics: What liability and paperwork needs to be considered (consent and forms, procedures, chaperones, etc.)?</li> <li>• Time and other resource barriers: youth and adults have busy schedules! Also lack of staff, hard resources, etc.</li> <li>• Experience: Lack of meaningful youth engagement experience.</li> <li>• Access: Where are youth? How do we find/recruit/train/retain them?</li> </ul>
Previous experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having student input on marketing materials.</li> <li>• Conducting class visits to see students using our program materials.</li> <li>• Student intern positions.</li> <li>• Exploring non-formal youth groups.</li> <li>• Peer teaching - older youth trained to teach younger students.</li> <li>• Participation in email, on-line and mail-in youth surveys.</li> <li>• Student focus groups as evaluation feedback tools.</li> </ul>

## **How to Use This Manual**

Based on the above feedback we structured the manual's contents around the following five themes:

- **Section One: A Youth Engagement Primer** reviews current youth engagement research, including the different levels of engagement and some of the benefits and opportunities for your organization when authentic youth engagement is achieved.
- **Section Two: Working With Youth** explores the “hows and whys” of working with youth, including overcoming barriers and addressing power dynamics.
- **Section Three: Project Ideas** presents the elements of a good youth project, and provides some tangible youth engagement project ideas for your organization to consider.
- **Section Four: Appendixes** includes pre-formatted and easily adaptable worksheets, forms and checklists for various youth engagement projects.
- **Section Five: References and Resources** lists helpful youth engagement-related electronic and print resources.

Each section is designed to both complement the other sections as well as be used individually. For example, some might find Section Two, which outlines the various ways to involve overcome challenges to working with youth, most helpful, while others might find the checklists and reproducible forms in the Appendixes useful. Flip through all the sections, example forms and resources to see what suits your needs.

## About Green Street and the Youth Engagement Program



Green Street is a national program that supports environmental and sustainability education programs for teachers and students across Canada. Green Street provides opportunities to actively engage students and teachers in environmental learning and sustainability education. The program funds environmental organizations, referred to as *Providers*, enabling them to offer programs to schools at little or no cost.

Green Street functions as a standard of excellence, with all programs meeting a set of Benchmarks (see the Green Street website [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca) for more information). Teachers are assured the programs they book are:

- relevant to students' interests and concerns
- curriculum-linked
- encouraging a sense of personal responsibility for the environment
- fostering a commitment to sustainable living
- promoting environmental stewardship

Today, Green Street is an evolving nation-wide community of practice, committed to excellence in environmental learning and sustainability. To date, over 14,000 classrooms across the country have participated in at least one of some 50 Green Street programs offered by 21 leading environmental organizations. To learn more visit [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca)

The **Youth Engagement Program** (YEP) is a special initiative of Green Street. Its purpose is to effectively engage youth that participate in Provider-delivered programs in ongoing environmental stewardship activities through a variety of initiatives. Ultimately, there is the desire that YEP will motivate Green Street youth to take greater action in environmental and sustainable education activities. To learn more about the YEP visit [www.youthactioncentre.ca](http://www.youthactioncentre.ca).



### ***Who Wrote This Manual***

This guidebook was developed by a host of individuals interested in meaningful youth engagement. Providers, Youth Environmental Non-Profit Government Organizations (YENGO's), evaluation specialists and youth workers all contributed. And, of course, youth led the way! From the initial brainstorming sessions to content development to section writing to editing, youth were instrumental in the creation of this manual.

The primary authors were:

**Jenn Hoffman:** Education Director for the Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter Education Program, Manager of the *Green Street Youth Engagement Program*

**Sue Staniforth:** Environmental Education Consultant and Evaluation Specialist for Green Street

In addition, Emily Menzies, the *Green Street Youth Engagement Program* coordinator, and the Green Street Youth Steering Committee contributed greatly.

### ***Green Street's Youth Steering Committee***

As noted, the Green Street Youth Steering Committee (YSC) greatly assisted in this manual's development. The YSC is a group of very cool, very inspiring youth who come from across Canada to help guide Green Street with their ideas and goals. Some have been Green Street interns, some have attended Green Street workshops, and others have heard about the program through youth networks and wanted to get involved.


The YSC is the YOUTH voice of Green Street. It helps make decisions for Green Street, like: What kind of school programs should they support? What's missing? Who would be a good person to contact for workshops or ideas? What environmental issues are REALLY important to youth, and what do they want to do to help?

The YSC has contributed extensively to developing the manual, and their quotes and ideas are highlighted throughout. YSC members involved in the development of this manual include Joey Chisholm, Keshia Laffin, Kelsi Prince, Caitlin Williscroft, Yvonne Su, Liz Kreitner, David Gale, and Ula Burns.



### ***Resources to Support You***

There are lots of great resources that already exist! Throughout the manual you'll see where we've highlighted particular resources on the topic at hand.

Look for the  icon for these helpful resources.

And be sure to check out the **References and Resources** section at the back, which contains information on helpful websites, print resources and agencies that are focused on or support youth engagement.

### ***We Want to Hear from YOU!***

This is a living document, and the authors welcome any constructive feedback, tools or suggestions that would help improve subsequent drafts. Please send your thoughts and feedback to [youthaction@green-street.ca](mailto:youthaction@green-street.ca).



# SECTION ONE: A YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PRIMER



Section One provides a brief backgrounder on youth engagement through reviewing current research, identifying levels of engagement, and exploring some benefits and opportunities youth bring to organizations, while discussing the challenges of engaging them in a respectful and authentic way.



## Defining Meaningful Youth Engagement

*Participation is a process in which children and youth engage with other people around issues that concern their individual and collective life conditions.*

Louise Chawla - lead researcher in a UNESCO Youth and Cities project

*To me real youth engagement is challenging youth to consider a new concept or including them ACTIVELY in the planning and/or implementation of a project. It's about adults and youth working as equals, sharing ideas, and learning from each other.*

Liz, YSC Member

There are many different perspectives on what youth engagement is, the ways in which youth show their involvement or engagement, and why they become engaged (or fail to become engaged) in the first place.

**Engagement:** the word itself is complex. Check out the following definitions:


- Engage:** *Being actively involved in or committed to, to take part, participate. To hold the attention of, to induce to participate, the state of being in gear.*
- Engagement:** *The result of acting upon an object in some way, of gaining a promise or commitment, of holding, employing, or “keeping busy”.*

Webster's Dictionary

We asked some youth for their definitions of youth engagement (Green Street Youth Advisory Committee, 2005):

- *“Being involved, being part of something”*
- *“Being excited, feeling like you’re a real part of it”*
- *“Getting connected”*
- *“Respect, trusting”*
- *“It means empowerment, teamwork”*
- *“Getting into something”*
- *“Having good communication, and power to really do something”*

Youth engagement basically means young people who are actively and authentically involved, motivated and excited about an issue, process, event or program.

Youth engagement is a main goal of Green Street – and ideally all education programs – and is also a benchmark when it comes to *defining* the elements that make a program engaging to youth. Effective youth partnerships have been studied extensively by many, such as Roger Hart (1977), David Driskell (2002) and Natasha Blanchet-Cohen (2004). And a large amount of research has been compiled and summarized by the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE) , a national project funded in part by Health Canada, who recently posted the results of a youth survey that summarized some key elements of engaging youth.



### **Youth are engaged if...**

- They are respected, valued, trusted, feel appreciated, safe and comfortable.
- They feel they are working in a youth friendly environment and are involved in a meaningful way.
- Their voices are being heard.
- They are given the chance to be involved and make decisions, gain leaderships skills and see their ideas realized.
- There’s a social aspect to their involvement.
- They see change and progress happening.
- Their imaginations are touched and they are valued.
- They are in a space where they have ownership and control.

*CEYE Survey Report, 2005*

## **Getting Started: What's the “Hook”?**

In exploring effective youth engagement, one of the first questions we can ask is: Why do youth become engaged in the first place? Research defines three major reasons or initiating factors:

1. Because youth want to get something out of it (e.g. have fun, gain valuable experience, etc.);
2. Because of their own beliefs or motivations (e.g. because of a sense of responsibility to others); or
3. Because someone encouraged them to get involved (e.g. a friend or mentor).

What is really important, however, is what *keeps them engaged* once they have started – what are the *sustaining factors*? Often, these sustaining factors include the support of educators, family, friends and others, and the positive outcomes that youth experience through their engagement (e.g. feeling like they've made a difference, feeling respected). At the same time, there are other factors – *inhibitory factors* – that can make it less likely that a youth will stay engaged.

In Section Two, under *Training and Retaining*, we'll discuss further why youth would want to become involved with your organization or program, and strategies for making this happen. We'll also explore techniques for overcoming inhibitory factors. And we'll also touch on recruiting, training, and retaining youth that do become involved.

### **Case Study**

My initial interest in the YSC stemmed from my desire and personal goal to take my environmental activism from a local to a national level... knowing there were so many great projects going on, I really wanted network with so many other like-minded people who could help me with projects in my own community. The YSC, to me, seemed like it would be an interesting and meaningful experience, and I hoped that my voice would have an impact on Green Street's programs, and environmental education in Canada at large. Over my two years on the YSC, it's been incredibly rewarding and empowering to see how my involvement has helped make great things happen in the larger context of Green Street. The opportunities that are presented to me on a monthly basis make me feel my involvement is important and worthwhile, which is why I continue. Working with excited, energetic people to accomplish a common goal is one of the greatest parts! “

Kelsi, YSC Member



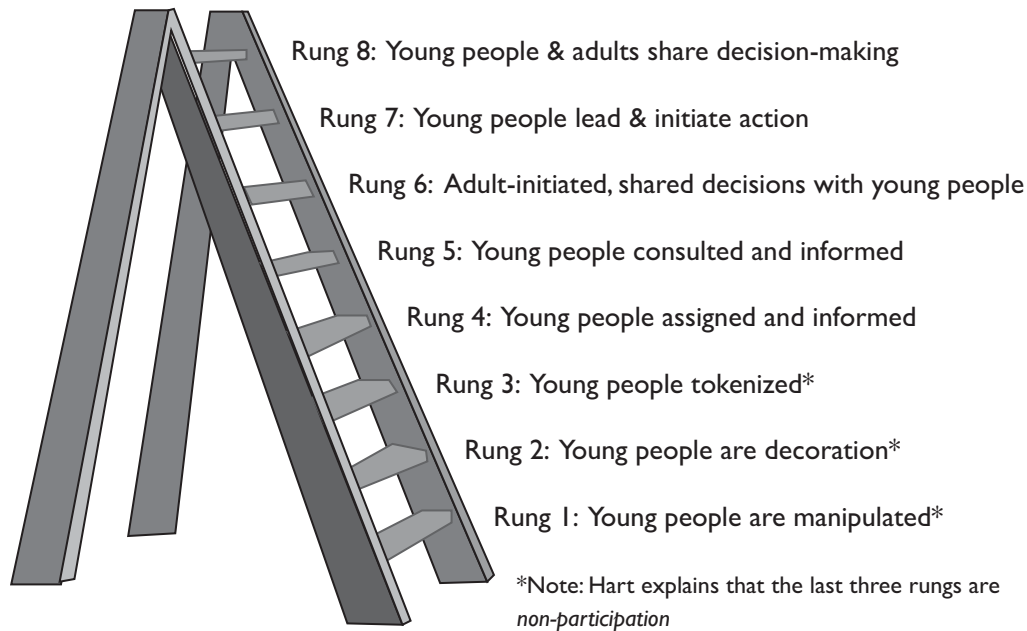
## **Identifying Levels of Youth Participation**

You have probably been at meetings where full participation is a goal, and yet the structure of the agenda just pays “lip service” to participation, leaving many feeling disenfranchised, frustrated and apathetic. Unfortunately, this is often what happens when youth are invited to participate in a project, organization or event. Most of the time the organizers truly want youth involvement, but don’t have the skills or experience to meaningfully include them. In order to effectively engage youth, it is critically important for organizations to actively solicit youth feedback in a respectful, authentic and relevant manner.

In order to rank or gauge ways in which youth are involved in projects, Roger Hart has identified eight levels of youth participation (Hart’s Ladder of Children’s Participation, 1997), as follows (in an ascending fashion):

1. Manipulation and Deception
2. Decoration
3. Tokenism
4. Assigned but Informed
5. Consulted and Informed
6. Adult initiated, shared decisions with youth
7. Youth-initiated and directed
8. Youth initiated, shared decisions with adult

## **Roger Hart’s Ladder of Young People’s Participation**



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children’s Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*, Florence: UNICEF Innocent Research Centre.

As one moves up the “ladder”, the upper levels express increased degrees of initiation by youth. For example, at level seven – *Youth Initiated and Directed* – youth are tasked with initiating and directing a project or program, and adults are involved in a supportive role. At level eight – *Youth Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adult* – youth are involved in self-initiated projects that empower them while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experiences and expertise of adults.

Hart notes that the levels are not meant to imply that youth should *always* operate at the upper levels, but are more for adult facilitators to be aware of conditions and decisions they’re making, and to support youth working at the levels they *themselves* choose to work at. Most importantly, one should avoid working at the lowest three rungs of the “ladder”: manipulation, decoration and tokenism are levels of “non-participation”, or worse, actively work *against* youth participation.



### **Scope of Participation: Authentic Participation and Partnerships**

A substantial body of research demonstrates that meaningful participation and effective youth/adult partnerships have extensive benefits for communities of practice. Moving from focusing on *youth participation* to *youth as partners* is a central issue in this research. Indicators of meaningful participation include a diversity of roles, partnerships with adults and youth across social contexts, and the inclusion of youth as part of an organization’s operational policy.

#### ***Effective Youth Engagement Initiatives***

Several key elements of effective youth engagement have emerged from youth engagement research conducted since the Green Street program began in 2004. Data and learnings gathered from numerous events (including youth- and adult-initiated focus groups with youth after Provider programs, youth panel discussions at Green Street annual meetings, on-line surveys, YSC conference call analysis, and annual Green Street evaluation research) has helped us to identify several key elements of effective youth engagement:

- **Relevance:** Engage youth around relevant issues that affect their individual/ collective life conditions.
- **Accessibility:** Demonstrate accessibility that is inclusive, engaging a broad cross-section of youth, including marginalized youth.

- **Consistency:** Become an organization that champions the inclusion of youth as routine practice.
- **Authenticity:** Include authentic and formalized youth participation in program development, implementation and evaluation. A high level of meaningful youth participation includes clear roles, shared decision-making, a diversity of roles, youth empowerment, and/or increased personal agency for youth.
- **Hands-on, Action Learning:** Offer projects that emphasize experiential learning, and include action projects that have a range of structured and informal learning opportunities for youth to contribute.
- **Local projects:** Have a local community focus for youth action projects. Face-to face, frequent participation is easier, and results and recognition are more readily visible.
- **Scope:** Include an evolving capacity for youth to participate and an increased range of opportunities.
- **Recognition and Respect:** Honestly and openly respecting youth opinions, allowing them air time and space in discussions, and recognizing their contributions, including celebrating project milestones.

The above Green Street research also reflects the major *sustaining factors* for youth engagement that are highlighted in the literature, as follows:

- **Inclusion:** Special care is taken to encourage anyone to join the project, and marginalized groups are solicited.
- **Experiential learning:** Volumes of research point out that most people learn best by doing. Projects that include a range of structured, hands-on and informal learning opportunities engage more people and keep them around longer.
- **Localization:** Activities are rooted in the lived experiences, spaces and places that youth inhabit
- **Adult-youth partnerships:** Strong networks and relationships with adult supporters. Clear roles and decision-making spheres, and shared decision making power where possible and appropriate.
- **Institutionalization:** Organizations champion the inclusion of youth as routine practice, exhibiting a strong commitment
- **Capacity-Building:** Concrete steps are taken to strengthen the ability of youth and adults to participate in the work at hand and work together effectively.

Youth participating in the community-based organizations we studied are 26% more likely to report having received recognition for good grades than are American youth generally..

*Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development (pg. 6)*

## Youth Engagement: Why Do It?

So why should your organization involve youth in your programs?

*“Meaningful youth engagement produces benefits to youth and the community in which they live. Through engagement, youth gain a sense of empowerment as individuals and make healthy connections to others...in addition to the social benefits of the behavioural changes the community gains through the energy and ideas that youth bring to the organizations, activities and their relationship with adults”.*

Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

### **Involve Youth and Everybody Benefits!**

*...it is important to recognize that involving young people is not only about the qualitative idea of inclusion. Rather, it is about recognizing that youth can offer measurable benefits to organizations and individual adults.*

*Apathy Is Boring, Youth Friendly Guide to Intergenerational Partnerships (pg. 4)*

When adults and youth work together on meaningful, collaborative projects, the benefits to both parties can be significant. New perspectives, skills, and experiences are shared, and program goals are attained. We've divided this section up into three parts that highlight the specific benefits to Youth, Adults/Providers and to the Community at large.

#### ***Benefits To Youth***

Experience and research has shown that when youth become meaningfully engaged, the impacts and benefits are far-reaching and varied. These range from building civic responsibility to fostering skills and knowledge building to positively affecting post-secondary education and career choices.

In their *Youth As Volunteers: A Resource for Schools* manual, the Colchester Regional Development Agency identify a number of benefits to youth, including:

- Builds confidence, optimism, and self-esteem
- Teaches job-related skills and can lead to paid employment
- Connects volunteers and their community
- Allows for interaction with the "real world"
- Helps build communication and social skills
- Allows one to make a real difference in the world
- Is a great way to make new friends
- Provides an opportunity to discover individual strengths, talents and interests and to test them in a real environment. (pg. 6).

## A Youth Perspective

Youth activism is one way that youth are permitted to reach out to society, but another way which provides authentic youth engagement is through direct youth participation on a board or committee. Committees like the Green Street Youth Steering Committee enable youth to have a first hand voice in deciding the future of affairs that directly affect them. This form of youth engagement pushes youth to become more involved, knowledgeable and active, all which are qualities that help shape successful youth leaders!

Caitilin, YSC Member

From learning about democracy and diversity to helping develop a network of mentors and resource people to building confidence in youth's abilities to accomplish set goals – the benefits of authentic youth engagement can be extensive!

### ***Benefits To Providers/Adults***

*Youth engagement not only allows for a youth input but also for constructive learning on both parts. Personally there have been many times that I feel if I, as a youth, could have helped, the end result would have been more effective. For example, if a committee of adults were to be assembled whose focus was for/on the youth, I feel that if they had even just one youth voice, the end result would be more of what they were looking for.*

Keshia, YSC Member

Providers that engage youth in meaningful and authentic projects equally benefit. Youth bring new perspectives and youth-friendly opinions on program activities, and increased person-power within agencies. They also serve as resource persons who will act as 'living bridges' to a wider youth community.

Both the *Apathy is Boring* and the *Groundworks* agencies note that adults benefit from youth involvement by:

- Having opportunities to interact with young people in positive, constructive ways.
- Breaking down misunderstanding and mistrust between generations.
- Seeing youth as contributors, thus changing stereotypes about youth.
- Refreshing their own level of commitment, attachment and energy for their organization as a result of the positive energy of working with youth.

**Remember – providing mentorship, career experiences, and skills enhancement opportunities for youth also has positive impacts on the adults providing these opportunities – it goes both ways!**

## ***Benefits To Community***

*...besides benefiting young people, (youth engagement programs) also have a positive long-term effect on the community. The young people express high levels of civic engagement and a commitment to getting involved. They intend to be assets to their communities and examples for others to follow.*

*Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development (pg. 6)*

The community as a whole also benefits from engaging youth in programs and organizations. Groundwork's *Youth Hands! Youth Voices!* manual outlines a number of benefits to communities when young people are involved in participatory processes, including:

- Interaction with young people in positive, constructive ways.
- Breaks down misunderstandings, stereotypes and mistrust between generations.
- Brings young people's views of their community forward.
- Identifies ways in which the quality of life for local young people can be improved.
- Builds a stronger sense of community and builds bridges between the needs of all ages and interests.
- The creativity, ideas and contributions of young people are more widely appreciated.
- Time and energy is invested into the future of the community (pg. 8).

Remember the positive impacts that extend to the environmental health of your community as well. From organizing and implementing community clean up days to wetland restorations to sustainable living fairs, youth have extraordinary energy and power to create on-the-ground changes that benefit the environment.

### **Case Study**

I was glad to be engaged in a useful activity rather than just hanging around with friends. Being part of the founding group for the wetland project at my school it was very satisfying to continue on with the work expanding and enhancing the program. I'm glad to know that the work I'm doing now will help the program continue after I have left. It feels good to see the impact my work has and to know that it will make a difference.

YEP Summer Internship Program Participant 2007

## **Involving Youth in Your Organization – A Few Considerations Prior to Beginning**

It seems everyone benefits from youth engagement – so where do you start? It's important to assess the needs and context of your organization and lay some groundwork to ensure success – for you, for the youth(s) involved, and for your organizations.

### **Organizational Culture for Authentic Youth Engagement**

*Organizations need to be relevant to youth and through their programs and activities promote greater access and meaningful involvement. (...they need to provide...) a youth-friendly environment that is comfortable (fun, friendly, casual, safe), where youth are treated with respect and can freely contribute their ideas in a non-judgmental atmosphere.*

Summary quote from the CEYE survey, 2004

One important step towards successful youth engagement is considering the culture of the organization you work for.

- Are youth already integrated into your agency in some way – as interns, members, volunteers, or summer students?
- How are youth involved now – in joint projects, or in a power-sharing capacity?
- Does your organization have a risk management policy, or a policy for criminal record checks and other safety precautions for staff working with minors?
- And what about the people who work in your agency – is there anyone there who has experience working with youth?
- Are there previous experiences you can collectively draw upon, or resources you can use?

Taking the time to consider the culture of your work environment, and how youth will (or won't!) fit in is important to ensuring success.

### ***How Do Youth Fit in Your Organization?***

*“Intergenerational partnerships are based on an understanding of the interdependent, symbiotic nature of learning and teaching, and recognizing that both youth and adults have something different, yet equally valuable, to share with each other.”*

Apathy Is Boring, *Youth Friendly Guide to Intergenerational Partnerships* (pg. 4)

One place to begin is to evaluate the ‘type’ of intergenerational partnership you’re trying to achieve. Intergenerational partnerships are partnerships formed between individuals of different ages. As we saw above, these partnerships can be hugely rewarding on many levels. Supporting research into such relationships abound – from the *Generations Together* project out of the University of Pittsburgh to the *Intergeneration Foundation* that hosts an annual celebratory Intergenerational Day.


But forming effective intergenerational partnerships is also much more than simply bringing together different aged individuals to work together. Determining levels of youth participation, decision making and leadership will also help you define what sort of partnership you’re hoping to achieve.

While youth organizing offers diverse approaches to youth-adult partnerships, there are three main organizational models. Each approach reflects the emergence of young people as participants, decision-makers, and leaders in grassroots community change.

- **Participation in Adult-Led Organizing Groups:** This model ranges from young people positioned as participants rather than key decision-makers to young people having access to physical and organizational space, decision-making power, and training. Both ways, youth benefit from mentoring and youth decision-making power within overall decision-making in the parent organization differs from organization to organization.
- **Intergenerational Organizations:** In this model, youth and adults develop a common agenda without overly distinguishing youth concerns from adult concerns. Instead, groups work to actively mobilize, educate, and share power with a multi-age constituency that see youth and adults as equal partners in building and leading campaigns, and developing the organization.
- **Youth-Led Organizations:** This describes the classic YENGO or youth environmental non-governmental organization model where young people often share power and authority with adults based upon defined roles, responsibilities, and skills. Full implementation of this approach places young people in control of budget decisions, board governance, and campaign decision-making.

*An Emerging Model for Working with Youth. Listen, INC*



Once you've identified a model of youth-adult partnership that best meets your needs, capacity and project goals, it's good to consider what key steps your organization can put into place that will help your partnership succeed. The authors of *The Youth Friendly Guide to Intergenerational Decision Making Partnerships*  outline five principles to help ensure your organization achieves authentic and meaningful youth participation, thus avoiding those lower rungs on *Hart's Ladder of Youth Engagement* like manipulation, decoration, and tokenism!

1. Set Out Clear Expectations and Limitations
2. Encourage Creativity and Difference
3. Make Connections between Generations
4. Provide Mentorship and Support
5. Communicate Openly

For each principle the authors offer some helpful advice and strategies for success. For example, for #1 – setting out clear expectations and limitations – they suggest having realistic expectations that don't result in participants being overburdened, and creating timelines that lay out exactly who is responsibly for what, so that all responsibilities are clear. A full copy of their guide is available on-line; see the **References and Resources** section of this manual for more information.

Again, reflect back on your organization and the reality that you're operating within. What is your vision for youth participation in the context of your planned project or initiative? What is your organizational capacity to work with youth, currently and in the near future? Taking time at the beginning of an initiative to determine how you see youth being integrated and supported is important, so that the rest of your initiative will be set up for success!



### ***Feedback Loops Are Essential For Authentic Partnerships***

*For youth, getting feedback from adults is extremely important because it helps us to realize that we are an integral part and that adults actually care what we have to say. It also makes us feel like we are valued in the organization of events or activities. Not only does it also reinforce our drive and commitment to issues that we are passionate about, but it feels great when adults actually show a keen interest in working collaboratively with you and letting you know what you could improve upon next time.*

Kelsi, YSC Member

Another strategy for successful youth engagement is providing feedback to all participants. The idea of a ‘partnership’ is often assumed to be an integral part of participation, however there is an information flow relationship in partnerships that must be acknowledged. Great care must be taken to ensure that an organization both solicits youth for advice and recommendations, *and* actively integrates this feedback into operations and programs. Furthermore, the youth must then be notified as to how and where their contributions were used.

We’ll discuss this important topic further in **Section Two**, under *The Importance of Giving Feedback*. For now, we want to flag how important integrating feedback really is, to help you build it into your overall plan!

### ***Quick Tips to Making Your Organization More Youth-Friendly***

- Include a component on respecting diversity (including diversity of ages) in your mandate and goals.
- Have policies and procedures that contain inclusive hiring and board recruitment practices that include diverse populations, such as youth.
- Ensure staff, management, and board members receive youth-friendly training.
- Have staff who are willing and able to mentor and supervise these youth.
- Know what talents, skills, and gifts youth volunteers can offer your organization.
- Know what experience, skills, and opportunities your organization can offer to youth.

*Culturally Diverse Youth and Volunteerism*  
Calgary Immigrant Aid Society (pg. 16)

## **Summary**

**Section One** provided a brief primer on some of the current research on youth engagement, to give you a quick overview of this important field and how it might apply to your organization. Check out the **References and Resources** section for more research, guides and links to what we’ve presented here. In the next section, we’ll get down to the practical steps and logistics of working with youth, examining some common barriers and solutions that organizations have encountered, and providing some practical tips, strategies and tools for you to use.



## SECTION TWO: WORKING WITH YOUTH!



### First Steps

*There are two mistakes one can make along the road to truth...not going all the way, and not starting.*

Prince Gautama Siddharta, the founder of Buddhism

Perhaps you're an agency looking to engage youth in your organization for the very first time (that's great!). Maybe you've made attempts in the past, but these have been met with mixed results. Or perhaps you've been successfully engaging youth for some time now, but you're looking for further advice, insights, or suggestions on how to improve.

Regardless of your previous experiences – congratulations! You, along with the organization you work with, should be applauded for recognizing the value of engaging youth in your program planning or delivery, and for attempting to engage them in your activities – even if this is your first step!

In this section, we'll look at some the “hows and whys” of working with youth, such as how to identify and overcome barriers to working with youth, how to recruit and integrate youth into your organizations, and how to address problematic power dynamics, trust and safety concerns.

### **Defining 'Youth' (!?!)**

Before we even begin, it might be relevant to first stop and consider for a moment – what exactly do we mean by 'youth'? The term youth – and what it embodies – can mean many different things to different people. Opinions and definitions of youth can range anywhere from age 11 to 30! Other people define youth more 'as a state than as an age', a transition period or 'coming of age' where you are no longer considered to be just your parents' child but rather your own person.

Within the context of this manual, we've chosen to apply the term youth to individuals between the ages of 13 to 18. When considering your own particular project needs, you may wish to expand or contract this age range as you see fit.



## **Identifying the Youth Audience You Want to Work With**

An important consideration is identifying the youth audience that you want to work with. What are your ‘youth needs’ as a Provider? Are you looking for youth to help with short-term, small-scale projects, or in on-going organizational operations? Are you looking for insights from special populations, feedback from a certain grade level, young people who represent at-risk communities, or insights into particular topic areas such as gender or urban issues? Identifying the ‘type’ of youth you want to work with is a key first step.

It is also important to assess your organization’s capacity and needs for youth engagement. Younger youth, or youth entirely new to your mandate might require more mentorship, skills building or support, but could offer the potential of longer-term commitment and even eventual dedicated leadership. Older youth may bring greater skills, experience and insights into your organization. They may also have an eye on their own personal education and career goals. If there is room in your organization for employment or internship opportunities, these youth can contribute valuable insight. However, older youth often have to forgo valued volunteer opportunities in lieu of paid work or experiences that fulfill their career needs.

To develop committed, skilled, long-term youth volunteers, it is best to engage younger youth (ages 12-14) who are not already engaged in other projects and commitments. Furnish them with increasingly difficult and nuanced (but *always* fun, rewarding and meaningful) opportunities to keep them challenged while helping your organization accomplish its mandate.



A Green Street Youth Intern involved in bird banding in summer 2006.

To run a shorter-term or pilot project, it is often best to approach skilled and more experienced older youth (ages 16-18). This can be done through contacting or partnering with existing clubs, organizations, or school programs, and by – even better – offering internships, summer jobs, or volunteer positions with credit, recognition and references. We’ll talk more about incentives for attracting youth to your projects further in this section.

Many of the organizations that practice excellent youth engagement have a range of youth volunteers and workers, with older or more experienced youth mentoring the younger ones.

## Identifying Barriers

*“19% of youth agreed that they did not volunteer more because they didn’t know how to become involved... 49% of youth agreed that they did not volunteer because they were not personally asked.”*

*National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (pg. 2)*

In their *Youth Volunteer Program Implementation Manual* (pg. 9), the Boys and Girls Clubs of Newfoundland and Labrador note that youth generally gave four main reasons for not participating in volunteer community projects:

1. Lack of time.
2. Unwillingness to make a commitment.
3. Not knowing how to get involved.
4. Not having been asked.

Clearly, these can be seen as barriers with regards to enabling effective youth engagement.

This next section will look at some commonly identified barriers to creating effective youth-adult partnerships, and explore ways to overcome them. It’s important to clarify that this isn’t just about the barriers that *adults* encounter when working with youth, but also about the barriers that *youth* often face as well. After all, developing meaningful working partnerships is a two-way street!



To help us write this section, we surveyed Green Street Providers, youth (including our Youth Steering Committee), and other youth group members and leaders, to gain an understanding of the challenges that present themselves in forming effective intergenerational relationships. One underlying theme to all responses was the positive trend towards *attempting* intergenerational relationships. *Everyone* we heard from said they wanted to participate in youth-adult partnerships but many just didn’t know how. To us, this was a strong affirmation that both adults and youth value such experiences.

**“Youth inspire me, their potential, their energy – wow! We need them!!”**

GS Provider, 2006

From the feedback we received we came up with a list of commonly identified barriers that youth and/or adults face when working together. We've divided this list into barriers that are commonly faced by youth, those that impact adults more, and those that are shared. Responses varied from having different goals and objectives, memories of difficult past experiences, restrictions (e.g. ethics, bureaucratic requirements), to a differing sense of urgency.

Surmounting these difficulties is critical for program success and an effective working relationship. Each of these barriers can be overcome with strong communication, reciprocal education, and mutual trust and respect. Establishing a common end product or goal for the project, and then working toward that common goal, are key to the development of trust. If both youth and adults are committed to the same goal, the likelihood of overcoming these barriers greatly increases.

**The table below and on the next page outlines the main barriers we identified, and provides examples and quotes from participants.**

Barrier	Example
<b>Recruitment And Attracting Youth</b>	
Finding Youth!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we get to youth who want to work with us – where is the best place to recruit? - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>• Accessing youth who are willing to spend time reviewing developing programs and giving feedback and/or being a part of the development process - where is the best place to recruit? - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>• Reaching older high school students – they're difficult to connect with. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> </ul>
Finding Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm interested, but I don't know who to contact to get involved. How do you find projects with environmental groups that want to work with kids? - <i>Youth Participants</i></li> </ul>
Competing interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under-resourced or irrelevant projects that make action impossible. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> <li>• Difficulty engaging youth in events or activities, including volunteer events. This may be, though, because we don't offer anything that is specific to youth. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>• Difficulty engaging youth in activities – making things youth-relevant. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> </ul>
Training/ Retaining youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state of youth is transitory and diverse; youth have shifting ages, maturity, schedules, priorities, jobs, responsibilities, locations, etc. Sometimes getting them to stick around to see a project out can be hard! - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>• I didn't know what I was doing – after a 30 minute 'orientation' they gave me this big project to tackle, with no real information on how to start, or how to use the office equipment. I felt totally lost, so I didn't bother to go back the next week because I didn't feel very useful. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> </ul>
Making youth work meaningful and 'youth friendly'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lengthy meetings, complicated or long agendas, lots of jargon, inaccessible meeting times/locations – these can all be a turn off - <i>GS Youth</i></li> <li>• We gave all this input and then never heard if it made a difference. I feel like it was a waste of time! - <i>GS Youth</i></li> <li>• When it comes to ensuring meaningful participation, what exactly does that mean? Do we need to give incentives, etc, to make it meaningful? - <i>GS Provider</i></li> </ul>

Barrier	Example
<b>Communicating With Youth</b>	
Language/ Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I had a teacher in grade 10 who talked to us like we were in preschool. I couldn't understand the connection between asking us to do high school essays and talking to us like we were incompetent. I never contributed to class discussion because if he wanted to treat me like a child, I didn't need to share my thoughts. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> </ul>
Finding Techniques that Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do I connect with the youth? I tried posters and tables at fairs but got no response. And the ones that I did connect with – they dropped off after awhile. How do I stay connected? MSN Messaging? Blogging? Chat Rooms? I don't know the first thing about those. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> </ul>
<b>Integrating Youth: Power Struggles/Intergenerational Gaps</b>	
Power Struggles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's really undermining when the decisions you make are considered to be naïve, or are overturned without any discussion by an adult. It sends the message that you're really not as competent as they are. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> </ul>
Ageism, tokenism, and Stereotyping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a youth I feel like I sometimes face stereotypes and assumptions than are neither realistic nor useful – just because of my age. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> <li>My supervisor kept trying to connect on a level she was not comfortable with. She tried sound and act younger and use what she thought was teenage slang. She thought it would make me feel more comfortable but it was actually insulting. I felt as if she was stereotyping the way youth act and it came off very dishonest. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> </ul>
<b>Organizational/Capacity</b>	
Lack of Funding / Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I don't have money to take the bus/subway/train to the meeting. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> <li>I have no line item in my budget to host a youth project. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> </ul>
Lack of In-Office Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our staff resources are stretched too thin as it is; I don't have the ability to supervise a youth and do all my other work too. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>We need a staff person who could adequately coordinate, relate to and support youth. - <i>GS Providers</i></li> </ul>
Time Barriers – both youth and adults are busy people!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth have busy schedules; we have lots of personal time constraints. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> <li>I worry I would lack the time to adequately engage and support youth. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>Sometimes youth cannot keep their commitments due to factors out of their control (such as their parents or their teachers, etc) - <i>YENGO Representative</i></li> <li>Working around youth's busy schedules can be difficult. We find meetings have to be after school or weekends, which doesn't match my schedule. And they lead very busy lives. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> </ul>
<b>Training and Experience</b>	
Lack of experience working with youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have no training in working with youth – I don't relate. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>Youth leadership – what do I know about it? - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>My agency doesn't work with youth directly – yes we make website and kits for youth, but we don't actually see youth in person! - <i>GS Provider</i></li> </ul>
Lack of experience in working with adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I didn't want to offer to help because I didn't have any environmental experience and was worried I would be more of a problem than a solution. - <i>GS Youth</i></li> <li>What skills would I have that they would need? - <i>GS Youth</i></li> </ul>
<b>Paperwork!</b>	
Creating the right forms and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We need operating principles, practices and questionnaires to set up a youth advisory committee. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> <li>The challenges around all the forms, consent, logistics and the time it would take to properly involve youth stop us before we begin. - <i>GS Provider</i></li> </ul>

## Overcoming those Challenges!

As we can see from the above chart, Green Street Providers identified a number of challenges that act as barriers towards working more effectively with youth. But have no fear – most challenges can be overcome with additional resources or information!

Below are suggestions to some of the barriers Providers identified. We'll start off with the main challenge Providers noted – that of finding youth to work with in the first place!

### How To Recruit Youth – Where Are They???

*Plan to spend as many resources as possible, time and otherwise, in the recruitment or building of any team. The composition of a group is very important and you need to invest time in order to reach a large variety of youth.*

*The Expedition Guide to Youth Agenda, 2002 (pg. 21)*

**Finding youth** to participate in their projects was a main topic for Providers, with many noting this was in fact their biggest barrier. While you think it would be easy to connect with youth, the reality for many Providers who work in adult-oriented offices, at field stations, or from home, is that the actual number of youth they see on a regular basis is quite small.



We pooled our Youth Steering Committee to help us come up with a list of ways in which to find and recruit youth. Here's what they had to say:

- **Meet youth where they are at.** In their schools, community, via parents and other relatives, through the programs and interests they already have, and show them how they can do and be more through working with your organization.
- **Give out outreach materials** to potential youth participants, but also make also sure you get their contact information, and follow up with them; it is unlikely that they will follow up without a mediator at home or in their school etc. who encourages them to take the plunge unless they are already seasoned activists – in which case they may be busy and forget to follow-up anyway.
- **Connect with mediators in the lives of youth** – those adults/mentors that work with, support, and care about youth and actively want to help them in finding new opportunities.
- **Recruit youth along with their friends**, and create real opportunities for them to make friends in the group.



As for places to go to recruit youth, they suggested:

- Environmental or sports clubs
- Student unions, school advisory committees, youth councils, parliaments
- Youth events (including having a table there)
- Leadership groups
- Teachers, counsellors, school administrators
- Community partners, youth drop-in centres, other youth organizations
- The Green Street Youth E-Newsletter
- Community centres

When asked about what types of recruitment materials and strategies work best, youth highlighted the big impact that showing up and being present has - as one youth noted: "...one-on-one rocks! When I get a chance to talk with someone directly about their program or project, that's the best". **Personal contact** and **direct outreach** were the top recruitment choices identified by youth.

Other types of recruitment materials include posters, postcards, word of mouth, presentations, teacher liaison, pamphlets, the Green Street Youth Action Centre E-newsletter, and agency web sites (kept up to date!). As one youth also pointed out, everyone she knows is on-line these days, so organizations that don't have attractive and up-to-date websites that include youth-friendly text about their projects don't inspire her to stay connected to them.



### ***Why Youth Would Be Attracted To Your Organization***

*Personally, I feel like I have a lot to give! But I do also wonder, what's in it for me? I hope that I can get something out of it that will help me grow and become a better person.*

YSC Member

**It's important to ask yourself:** why would youth want to become involved in your project? This is worth pondering, as it can give insights into how to best market your initiatives to youth and also help determine the needs of the youth you're working with – and how you can best plan to address those needs.

As noted above, youth interest in participating in volunteer projects ranges from gaining valuable career experience to seeking skills development to making new friends. Some youth are looking for mentoring experiences or opportunities that enhance their resumes; others are looking for the opportunity to make a difference or feel valued through their contributions. And others are attracted to a particular thematic area or focus your organization might hold. The Colchester Regional Development Agency suggests that:

*The best youth volunteer opportunities are those that directly relate to their interests and skills, that make a difference for another person, group or place, are fun (!), and provide an opportunity for the youth to make new friends, try new things, and accommodate their schedule and personal style.*

*Youth as Volunteers: A Resource for Schools.* Colchester Regional Development Agency, 2005

**Wow – good advice!** And the impacts of meaningful engagement experiences that incorporate elements such as those listed above can be enormous. As one researcher who studied the impacts on youth through their volunteer experiences with local community organizations commented:

*Young people need life skills as well. Those skills and attitudes include a sense of personal worth, a positive assessment of the future, and the knowledge of how to plan for it. They also include attitudes of persistence, reflection, responsibility, and reliability. Self-confidence and a sense of efficacy are critical if youth are to strive for success in school and society. Enhancing these life skills, in addition to supporting more traditional academic outcomes, is at the center of the youth organizations we studied.*

*Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development.* M. McLaughlin (pg. 6)

Other helpful strategies that can motivate young people to become involved in your projects include:

- Frame opportunities & issues so that they are relevant to youth.
- Offer pertinent experiences & concrete skills. Consider what they need to include on a college, scholarship or employment application.
- Use language like ‘fast’, ‘fun’, and ‘innovative’. Speak about a work environment that encourages contributions and involvement.
- Have visuals that attract youth, feature pictures of young people doing things, and promote diversity.
- Invite youth input in the development of the project – such as through advisory groups.
- Provide leadership roles - team & project leaders.
- Have competitions/games.
- Vary your online positions – change the titles and descriptions every few weeks. Keep your site interesting to draw people back.

Merrill Associates

## **Training and Retaining Youth**

So you've successfully attracted youth to your organization. That's great! Your next step is to ensure that they are adequately prepared and integrated so they can perform the roles and responsibilities expected of them. After all, you want everyone, including yourself, to be set up for success. Training, or orientation, is an important part of the equation. It doesn't have to be complex or hugely time-consuming, but it does have to happen. Regardless of their length and complexity, training programs should provide opportunities for volunteers to:

- Discuss and practice tasks and activities.
- Ask specific questions.
- Develop a team feeling.
- Get to know and appreciate each other.

*Culturally Diverse Youth and Volunteerism.* Calgary Immigrant Society. 2005. (pg. 12)

### **Generally, youth will remain committed to an organization or project if:**

- They feel appreciated.
- They receive private and public recognition.
- They can see that their presence makes a difference.
- There is a chance for advancement.
- There is opportunity for personal growth.
- They feel capable of handling the tasks offered.
- There is a sense of being a part of a team.
- They have opportunities for input.
- Their personal needs are met.

*Starting right: Designing an effective, inclusive volunteer program.* S. Wright, 2003 Calgary Immigrant Aid Society (pg. 16)

Emily Menzies, the *Green Street Youth Engagement Coordinator*, suggests these tips to help shape a successful and fun youth meeting or training session:

- While waiting for everyone to arrive, have some snacks available (healthy, but tasty). I also like having something for them to do if they don't know each other – I prefer having art materials available – felt pens, a big piece of paper with a question or topic on it so the youth can doodle and write their ideas on it. Otherwise have someone who is a greeter, introduces people to each other, shows them around etc, and makes them feel comfortable with small talk.
- When everyone is there, bring them together, remind them why they are there and what they can expect during the meeting/event (agenda).

- Do an ice-breaker/introductions round. If the group is going to work together a lot and needs to know everyone else's name, do a name game, such as have everyone stand in a circle, and one by one say their name and an act out an adjective that starts with the same letter as their name. Otherwise a round of introductions including name, why they are there and something random, like their favourite food or hobby.
- Discuss or do whatever is on the agenda. You may want to insert energizers if the group is getting listless, tired etc – an easy one is just getting them all to stand up and switch chairs.
- Highlight action items, debrief all around, and make plans for your next meeting.

Another important consideration is that of **retention** – keeping youth interested and engaged after you've recruited them. As noted above, if the project is not kept interesting or engaging over time, youth can lose interest in it. Similarly, being kept informed about the true impacts of their work – whether their energies and efforts are actually making a difference – can be a huge factor for long term retention of youth in projects.

Of course, the reasons youth will remain committed can be applied to adults and youth alike. The Calgary Immigrant Society has identified a number of **barriers specific to retaining youth volunteers** such as:

- "It's no fun".
- Youth feel undervalued or unsupported.
- There's a lack of staff 'buy-in'.

Luckily they also identified some **strategies for overcoming these barriers**, including:

- Make it fun!
- Offer tangible rewards and incentives such as reference letters or gift certificates.
- Be supportive of youth by providing additional training or just taking the time to talk with them.
- Involve their parents.

Calgary Immigrant Aid Society (pg. 16)

**Keep connected to your youth volunteers, ensure that their needs are being met, and that there is good communication and feedback all around, and you'll build a committed and valuable partnership!**

## **Communicating With Youth**

Another barrier to youth engagement identified by both adults and youth was that of *communication*. It is interesting to note that while adults were more focused on the ‘logistics’ or the ‘how-tos’ of communicating with youth, the youth focused more on the *dynamics* of communication between youth and adults. Both are valid, and should be equally considered. After all, it makes sense to consider both: an adult could spend huge amounts of time and energy developing a poster, presentation or website text to connect with a youth audience, and then get left with zero return. The Provider could walk away thinking perhaps the youth were not interested or they didn’t see it/read it, when in fact it might have been the complexity (or simplicity) of the language, the tone of the messaging, or even the graphics used that turned youth off.

### ***Choosing Language That Works***

*It really drives me nuts when adults call us ‘children’. I’m 15! I’m a ‘young adult’ or a ‘youth’. To me, children are little kids, and I feel like I’m more than that!*

YSC member

*The title of the project sounded really interesting but I didn’t really get what they were actually proposing when I read the write up. Like, under Project Description they used word like ‘UN Millennium Goals’ and ‘UNESCO’. I didn’t know what those even were. If they had used more simple language that related to me but still talked about the subject then they might have caught my interest. Instead, I was just confused.*

YSC member

We pooled our Youth Steering Committee for feedback on **how adults could more effectively communicate with youth**. Here’s what they had to say:

- Be very open, honest, with no political games, and don’t be manipulative. Just talk to us like we are people and with a sense of equality, no superiority complex.
- Walk the talk! If you are going to tell us to do something, be doing it too.
- Active listening! When we are talking listen to us, and hear us. Don’t just wait for us to finish talking and then continue on.
- Show interest in our ideas, and acknowledge them as valid points.
- Be enthusiastic and specifically passionate in our context. We will be more inspired and engaged if you are.
- Be accessible. Be open to us – encourage making contact by saying ‘here’s my name, here’s my phone number, you can reach me between nine and four, give me a call whenever you need to’, etc. It can be a bit intimidating picking up the phone and calling an adult you don’t know, especially if you’re not sure they want to hear from you. And don’t say ‘call me’ if you really don’t want to hear from us – that’s awkward!

## ***How You Choose to Communicate***

*The most effective outreach strategy that I am aware of is word of mouth. When youth hear things from other youth, it's already made it through a lot of filtering. It already has credibility coming from someone they relate to. That being said, the word needs to start somewhere!*

Michael Sheely, Youth Group Facilitator

There are numerous ways to get the word out about your youth engagement project or needs. From electronic communications to in-person sharing to producing and distributing 'stuff' (stickers, buttons, handouts, brochures, posters, temporary tattoos, etc.) – the opportunities are numerous.

So once you do connect with youth, and draw them into your project, how do you best establish and maintain communications with them? What does your budget afford? Not to mention your available time? If, for example, you strike a steering committee of eight youth to work on a project, it's important to consider how and how often you are going to communicate with each of them (by phone, email, in-person meetings, etc.; and are these weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, etc.)? Who will be doing the communicating: yourself, another staff person, or a trained volunteer?

You'll also need to establish networking opportunities for the youth involved as well. After all, it's important that they feel connected to *your agency* and also to *each other*.



### **Getting Your Word Out – A Hint on Using Technology to Communicate**

*The number one challenge we faced was that in order for a communication strategy to work, it needs to be used! Ours, despite considerable effort being put into its creation, was never fully applied. Additionally, we realized that just because we have technology such as email, there is no need to give up on the old telephone! More one-to-one conversations to discuss our progress could have made an enormous difference.*

*The Expedition Guide to Youth Agenda, 2002 (pg. 17)*

Below are a few suggestions from our youth steering committee on what works and what doesn't when communicating with youth:

- **In person:** One-on-one conversations are still best, with the adult expressing interest in hearing and relating to the youth's ideas, perspectives, experiences, or goals – both personal and in relation to the project/organization.
- **At events:** It can also be helpful to hold meetings or events where community members like parents/friends/siblings etc. can witness the work the youth is doing with the organization, in order to build trust, recognition, and value .
- **Using Technology:** If you can, use communication technologies that youth already use – such as online forums, blogs, interactive websites and messenger programs such as MSN messenger, Facebook, Myspace, or Bebo.
- **Using Email:** Email can sometimes be less effective with youth. Youth tend to receive large amounts of email when they first get involved in projects or organizations (especially from list serves associated with those agencies), and may have not learned how to effectively organize and moderate their email. They also may not have easy access to email, and this level of access can fluctuate dramatically from month to month or year to year.
- **On the Phone:** Calling youth at home by phone is a great communications tool, as it is personal, direct and immediate. Try to set up a quick conversation with a parent to help create trust between parent and youth, youth and organization, and parent and organization. This can enable deeper participation by the youth.

### Using Email and List serves

- Use email guidelines such as clear subject headers, response deadlines, specific tasks and action items, and team list serves.
- Remember that quiet team members can be left behind when using email.
- Remember that not everyone has internet access and/or a home computer.
- List serves tend to work better after people have met each other, and particularly after an event.



### Using Chats and Forums

- To be effective, chat rooms and forums need “real people live”. If there aren't people online and interested at the same time, then the website will seem barren and that can make it look like a bust.
- Discussion forums where people can post messages allow for time lags, and are good for the beginning stages of projects before large numbers of people are involved.



## Using the Phone and Conference Calls



- It's really hard for youth to make long distance calls if there's not a 1-800 number. Also youth should be able to contact someone before or after school hours.
- It is really important to have both a structured agenda for the call, as well as opportunities for everyone to have a chance to voice their ideas.
- The purpose of the call must be very clear – is it to make decisions, brainstorm, or provide information updates or a mixture of all three? It can be difficult to include content along with the procedural stuff that needs to be done.
- More people will continue to participate if your conference calls are fun! Make them creative – word games, go arounds, fun icebreakers, etc.

 See *How to Facilitate A Conference Call* in the **Appendixes**



### **A Note About Working With Youth Volunteers**

*“Youth volunteered a total of 154 million hours in 2000, or almost 15% of all volunteer hours in Canada.”*

Colchester Regional Development Agency

The topic of working with youth volunteers is enormous, and there are many resources already available on this subject. Providing a detailed overview of working with youth volunteers is outside the scope of this manual. See our **References and Resources Section** for recommended agencies and resources.

However, we did want to provide you with a few words of advice about working with youth volunteers. Most of the advice and suggestions in this manual – such as having risk management policies, or planning projects that meet the elements of effective youth engagement – apply to working with youth volunteers as well as other youth engagement opportunities. A thoughtful, well-planned project is essential for all types of youth engagement, including volunteer positions.

Depending on the project, you may ask youth for references or to fill out an application. ( See the **Appendixes** for a sample of a youth application form for a steering committee). It's important to provide youth volunteers with job descriptions or terms of reference for their participation (again, see the  **Appendixes** for samples).

Employing simple strategies, such as scheduling two or more youth to volunteer at the same time, including youth on orientation or training teams, training youth team leaders, and creating opportunities for youth to work with paid staff and adult volunteers, can go a long way towards creating a supportive and inviting work environment.



As a youth volunteer supervisor, it's important to remember your responsibilities as well. Below is a partial list of key characteristics from a 'job description for an adult advisor', developed by *Youth Advisory Committee* members of the Community Foundations of Canada.

A good adult advisor ...

- Is organized
- Doesn't get involved 'too much'
- Points out weaknesses with constructive criticism
- Trusts us even if we look completely lost
- Is open to new ideas
- Recognizes who we are
- Is young at heart
- Is patient
- Is constructive

*Vancouver Foundation's Youth In Philanthropy Council:*  
L. Chen, D. Sadler and B. Oates. (pg. 24)

### **Tips for working with Youth Volunteers**

These ideas are based on tips developed by the Greater Coquitlam Volunteer Centre:

1. Use youth to their fullest potential –they are probably way more capable than you think!
2. Treat youth as you would adult volunteers, with respect and trust. Involve them in decision making wherever possible. Young people have excellent ideas and your organization will benefit from giving them the opportunity to voice them.
3. Be organized and keep them busy. Make sure you have enough work to fill their time at your organization.
4. Design service opportunities that meet real community needs, and take the time to talk openly about these needs. It will help youth make the connection between their contributions and the 'bigger picture'.
5. Have a space for them at your workplace to put their things, so they don't feel as though they are in the way.
6. Be sensitive to the needs of young people by making sure that transportation is affordable and accessible. Be prepared to provide bus tickets for youth volunteers.
7. Consider timing. Be aware that most teens are full-time students. Ask them about busy times during the week, semesters, and exam schedules.
8. Be enthusiastic! Make sure their orientation is interesting and upbeat.
9. Give your staff orientation on working with younger volunteers. Make sure that you introduce the youth around on their first day, and have everyone make them feel welcome.

*Greater Coquitlam Volunteer Centre Youth Manual (pg. 25)*

The power of youth volunteers can't be underestimated! From website development to article writing to event planning to workshop facilitation to film making – youth volunteers are capable of just about anything. While not many youth (or adults for that matter) would be able to do *all* of these things, it is important not to underestimate the capacity and level of expertise that can be found amongst a *diversity* of youth.

And remember that if you're an agency that relies on volunteers, youth can often mobilize their friends and families to get involved and support what they are doing.

.....

## **Once You've Connected – Integrating Youth Into Your Organization**

When considering integrating youth into your organization, it's important to expand your thinking to beyond that of the *physical space* – i.e. where will youth sit, meet, store their stuff, etc. to that of the *cultural* or *philosophical space*. For example, consider elements of trust, safety and security, existing power dynamics within your organization, and any subliminal messaging that other adults may extend to participating youth, such as that of tokenism or passive acceptance. Will there be intergenerational gaps that create significant barriers? How will the youth be recognized for their endeavors? These are all important considerations that will help in successful youth integration.

### **Organizational Integration – the Physical Space**

The physical space, or the places in your organization that youth will actually work and hang out, really affects how youth feel about achieving successful outcomes. It makes a big difference to feel like you're really part of the team, and the layout of a work space contributes to this.

Check out the list below for some ideas on how to integrate youth.

- Consider creating a work space for them, including a place to store supplies for the project they're working on, a place on the computer to store electronic files, and a place for personal items (water bottles, coats, resource books, etc.).

{ “I felt really integrated into the office. They gave me a desk (with a plant!), a place to store my stuff that didn't get moved when I wasn't there, and even a spot in the fridge to put my lunch. I felt really at ease going there.”

GS Summer Youth Intern

- Invite youth to staff meetings, board meetings, lunch dates and other key events.
- Outfit them: give them name tags, t-shirts/uniforms (but only if everyone else has one!), water bottles, business cards, etc.

*If possible, try to create a space within your office that is more youth friendly. Get hold of an old couch, floor pillows or comfy chairs, put up youth art, and start a resource library of youth-friendly, but on-topic magazines, books, videos, brochures, stickers, action post cards etc. A message board is nice too, somewhere they can doodle, leave notes, etc. It can be something as simple as a chalk or whiteboard, or a piece of paper stuck to the wall.*

Emily Menzies, Green Street Youth Engagement Program Coordinator

### **Trust, Safety and Security**

Much of the youth engagement literature speaks to the importance of youth feeling safe, secure, and welcome in a committee or group. While this seems like common sense, it is often something adults can easily overlook. The Green Street YSC members reflected on what it was like for them to come to earlier meetings without ever having talked with or met other student participants beforehand, and not knowing anyone else who was attending.

- *“It was really hard to just come without knowing (anyone). Like who else was coming...”*
- *“I was really nervous – I hadn’t met anyone, not even any of the teachers.... I didn’t know what to expect, or what I was supposed to do at the meeting.”*



The best case scenario is to have one staff person directly responsible for recruiting, convening and communicating with the youth that participate in any form of work for an organization. Familiarity and consistency are elements that help build security. Emails and – even better – phone calls introducing the organization and its members and other participating youth members, explaining goals and objectives and developing an agenda are part of this process.

Equally important is considering the safety and security of youth involved in your agency. Some important elements to consider include:

- Does your agency have a *risk management policy* that includes a section on working with minors?



See the **References and Resources** section for sources for risk management policy development.

- Does your staff or volunteers undergo *criminal record checks* prior to working with minors?
- What type of (if any) *liability insurance* do you have? Does this extend to special events, or off-site activities?
- Do you have a *photo waiver/image policy* for pictures you collect of minors?



See the **Appendices** for a sample *Photo Waiver Form*.

- Does your agency have *parental permission forms/waivers* for youth travel or participation in special events?



See the **Appendices** for a sample *Travel Waivers and Special Event Waivers*.

### **Addressing Power Relationships To Achieve Authentic Partnerships**

*Nothing About Us Without Us.*

Quote from CEYE website video

Green Street Youth Steering Committee members spoke to the importance of being able to participate in person at the annual GS meeting as an important factor in their understanding of what the organization was all about.

{ Yes – when you come down here, you realize that they do care about what you say, what you think should be in the programs, because they wouldn't pay money to fly you down here and pay for your meals, you see that it is meaningful.

YSC comment

{ It was obvious that they really listened to what we said, because they made a whole chart of what we said.

YSC member, referring to Green Street meeting

### ***Partnership Challenges: Youth Dis-engagement...***

Valid youth/adult partnerships require both the **recognition** and the **redistribution** of power, as well as some capacity building. However, it is important to recognize that youth-adult partnerships can be challenging to foster and sustain, and that different organizations have different capacities in this area. Adults often require training in practicing open communication and respectful dialogue with youth. Many of us don't have opportunities to work directly with young people, and are often unfamiliar with cultural dynamics and inclusive processes.

Green Street YSC members have had frustrations about feeling excluded from dialogues. Consider this feedback from three YSC members after a meeting with Providers in 2004:

*(YSC 1): Once in a while we talk and the Providers don't listen. That's the most frustrating thing. Because some of us went to the working groups and we did not get to speak, and if we did speak, we got cut off! Like, I was pretty mad, like, "This is youth engagement??"*

*(YSC 2): Yeah, and then if you spoke, you pretty much got judged for what you said!*

*(YSC 1): Oh, we were like totally ignored! We had to like sit outside the circle, and we were looking at each other, like "Hey... We're engaged...???" It was really bad. They were actually rude. Here you are talking about youth engagement and you have an opportunity to actually engage youth in planning, and like, some people just can't do it. It really depends on the person running the group.*

*(YSC 3): I know what you mean – like I kind of felt like an inconvenience sometimes, like, this is a mature conversation and you should just go back to the teddy bears! Not quite to that extent, but like, once in a while, you kinda got that vibe.*



However, the majority of adults in organizations are committed to engaging and partnering with youth, but youth-adult and youth-organization partnerships are challenging to foster and sustain. Good intentions are not sufficient; adults often require special skills in practicing open communication and respectful dialogue with youth (Cook et al; 2004).

Also, it is important to note that successful intergenerational partnerships are not based on uncritically accepting everything youth or adults say, but involve honest debate and critical inquiry on the part of both youth and adults. This process takes time and practice.

### **Get Experience!**

Here are a few training and information gathering ideas to overcome the ‘lack of experience barrier:’

- **Mentor, partner, or seek advice** from a YENGO (Youth Environmental Non-Governmental Organization) or other type of youth-focused organization.
- **Observe.** Spend some time with another agency that has success in youth engagement. If they have a youth steering committee, arrange to attend a meeting. If there’s a youth-led project underway, see if you can connect with those youth to ask a few questions, or drop by and see the project in action.
- **Seek training.** Lots of local, regional or provincial associations offer (often free) programs on working with youth.
- **Surf the web.** There are tons of resources on-line that can give you guidance and ideas on how to work with youth.
- **Hire a summer student,** or someone who has experience working with youth and who can be a “bridge” to youth culture.
- **Partner with a school.** Find a class of students and partner up with them so that you become the learner. Spend time with them observing, interacting, fielding questions and gathering ideas.
- Check out the **References and Resources** section for other suggestions and materials.

## **Recognition, Relevance and Respect**

The “3 R’s” – **Recognition, Relevance, and Respect** – are critical components of creating an organizational culture that supports continued youth engagement. Work and efforts that feel meaningful and relevant to participants are more likely to be embraced and show results.

### **Recognition**

Regardless of where you are in life, being recognized for your contributions towards a project is always important. YSC members were positive about the amount of recognition they’d received from Green Street members, and from each other:

- *I think it’s great to get a thank-you from so many Providers who say “thanks so much for doing that” and I didn’t even know they saw what we did.*
- *Because we get asked a lot of questions – it’s nice for us to be acknowledged.*

### **Recognition Strategies for Youth**

- **Celebrate.** Have a house party, an awards ceremony, or a spontaneous get-together. A little pizza and chocolate never hurts!
- **Make it Immediate.** Young people tend to be impatient. Don’t wait for an annual recognition event. Give recognition frequently and consistently.
- **Be personal.** Recognize individual achievements and contributions. A one-year certificate for service is nice, but everyone who serves for a year receives the same thing that recognized continuity, commitment, and longevity, but not individual contribution. Be certain youth receive specific, individualized recognition.
- **Provide reference letters** for scholarship, college and job applications.
- **Profile it.** Put a story about youth involvement on your website, in your newsletter, the local newspaper, or your annual report.
- **Nominate** a youth for a community or civic award
- **Send letters** to parents and schools.
- **Send articles** for school papers or to company newsletters where parents work.
- Recognition is a perfect place to **interject some fun.** Volunteering doesn’t always mean serious work. Find innovative fun ways to say thank you and lighten up the environment. Host special picnics, field days, beach clean-ups, chocolate treats, fun notice boards, achievement announcements and music jam sessions. Get creative and have fun – this is a huge benefit of working with youth!

Merrill and Associates and the *Youth Volunteer Program Implementation Manual*,  
Boys and Girls Club of Newfoundland and Labrador

## Relevancy

The relevancy of a project to youth is critical to their engagement. It's important that the project or activity directly relates to the youth involved and that the work they do is clearly related to the project goals. Youth often feel disempowered when they do not know how relevant their contributions are.

**As one youth noted,** *“It’s frustrating spending time working on something when in the back of your mind, you’re wondering if it really makes a difference to the bigger picture, or if it’s just a ‘make work’ project.”*

### Case Study

In earlier years of Green Street there was no feedback mechanism to let youth know how their contributions were reviewed or applied to Green Street operations. Participants spent a lot of time reviewing several projects and proposals, but then never heard back as to whether their comments were used or relevant to the larger decision-making process. This is a sure-fire way to disenfranchise your youth volunteers and alienate them from a project.

**See *Remembering the Elements of a Good Youth Project* in Section Three for more suggestions on how to choose and plan projects that are relevant to youth.**

### Ideas for sharing youth voices:

- Provide opportunities for youth to represent the organization. Arrange for them to staff tables at conferences, and participate in workshops and other events
- Create a space in your organization’s electronic or print newsletter, on your website, or in your annual report for a youth opinion or experiences piece.
- Arrange a media interview, or if there is one already planned, include youth as an equal voice for your organization
- If you have a board meeting or other key event coming up, consider having youth as guest speakers or presenters. Be sure you don’t make them ‘just entertainment’ though – that’s tokenism.



## Respect

*“It’s so demeaning when I hear from an adult ‘wow, you’re so smart for your age’. Like, what did they expect? And who ever said that being smart was linked to age?”*

Youth Comment

Remember the ‘**golden rule**’ – treat others as you wish yourself to be treated. It’s important to listen to the experiences, ideas, questions and opinions of youth in the same way you would an adult colleague. It also means expecting the same level of commitment and achievement from youth that you would from anyone else, while acknowledging youth will need the same mentorship, support, encouragement, and constructive criticism that any new volunteer would. Respect involves open communication, active listening, empathy and seeking understanding.

It is important to consider respect within the context of mutual respect. Respect is a two-way street. Youth and adults need to respect that they both have expertise and that, although their skills and experiences differ, each makes a valuable contribution.



Language incompatibility can hinder this process. The language of adults and youth may not always be the same. Significant effort must be made to ensure that both youth and adults understand each other. When beginning a collaborative process, it is important to ensure that adults and youth spend adequate time talking with each other, soliciting each other’s opinions, and checking to make sure that there is a reciprocal understanding of what each partner views as the primary research question.

### **Avoid Tokenism**

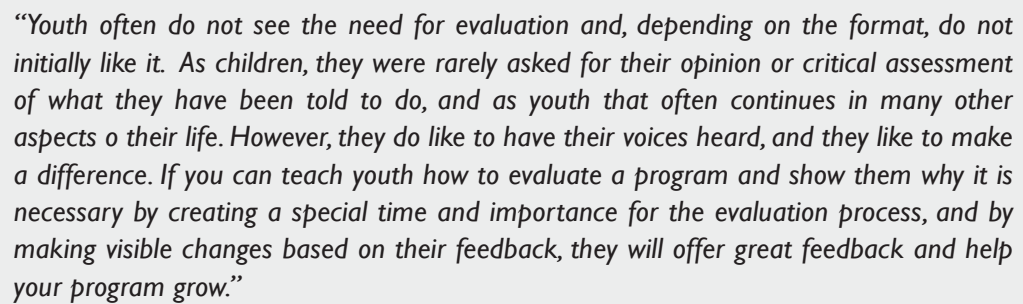
*“Tokenism is when young people appear to have been given a voice, but really have little or no choice about how they participate. It is participation for participation’s sake or for a photo opportunity” (Apathy is Boring, pg. 6).*

It extends to participation that is of low impact in the organization and of little consequence in accomplishing its mandate.

## Evaluating Your Youth Engagement Efforts

How did your organization fare in attempting to engage and partner with youth? The best way to find out is to *ask them* – check in with the youth you worked with as to how they think you did. Remember that direct, authentic participation should include this feedback loop.

Ideally, to keep the responses unbiased, someone outside your organization who has not had extended contact with the youth should conduct the inquiries (i.e. don't have the actual youth program staff person ask how they did, as obviously it would be difficult for the youth to respond in a frank and candid way). If possible, have an outside evaluator interview the youth individually, or have them fill out an anonymous survey asking for their input. Once again, make sure you recognize their contributions and let them know how you'll use their suggestions.



*“Youth often do not see the need for evaluation and, depending on the format, do not initially like it. As children, they were rarely asked for their opinion or critical assessment of what they have been told to do, and as youth that often continues in many other aspects of their life. However, they do like to have their voices heard, and they like to make a difference. If you can teach youth how to evaluate a program and show them why it is necessary by creating a special time and importance for the evaluation process, and by making visible changes based on their feedback, they will offer great feedback and help your program grow.”*

Emily Menzies, Sierra Youth Coalition

## **The Importance of Giving Feedback**

Understanding the relevancy of the work youth do for an organization or cause, and the impacts or changes that they may make happen, is important. ‘Agency’, the power to have influence and make decisions, is a critical piece of engagement: one wants to know that one’s efforts will have an impact. When youth participants are asked to work on projects or review materials, it is critical that they receive feedback on how their comments were utilized.

{ *“...I’ve been saying some of these things (to Green Street) now for 2 years – we all have – and like, nothing really has changed. What happens to our ideas? I feel like they get put in a nice file somewhere, and that’s it.”*

GS Youth Committee member, 2005

{ *“The report concludes that ... when youth are consulted they must be informed about how their input will be used and also the outcomes of the decisions that are made”.*

*Youth Hands! Youth Voices! Youth Policy Engagement  
Through Local Action Projects. Groundworks Project*

There needs to be an established procedure to ensure that youth contributions are acknowledged and incorporated into programs, and to provide the participants with direct responses to their input. If there is something that youth identify as a weakness, acknowledge this feedback, and if you can, try to change it. Ask youth for suggested alternatives, and thank them for helping to make the project better.

Not all feedback can or necessarily will be incorporated into a program, but participants need to know what was incorporated, and a rationale for why. A structured system helps make sure that input is recognized, discussed and incorporated into program elements, and that a feedback loop is in place. By involving youth in a project from the beginning, you can then plan for space *throughout* the duration of the project for them to interject, comment on the process, evaluate their own participation or provide other important feedback. Don’t forget to ask them!



Support material for the Green Street *National Youth Engagement Program*. This material, among others, was created as a result of youth feedback detailing the need for youth-friendly program promotional materials for Green Street Providers.

## Summary

No barrier that arises when striving to achieve authentic youth engagement is insurmountable. And the fact that your organization is honestly committed to (and recognizes the distinct benefits of!) youth engagement is an excellent beginning (you are, after all, reading this manual – which is a good first step!)

We hope that this section has provided you with some helpful advice on how to identify and overcome common barriers to working with you, and how to effectively integrate youth into your organization. In the next section – **Project Ideas**, we'll explore some concrete projects that your organization can directly engage youth in.

Before we go there, we'd like to leave you with some closing advice from the Green Street Youth Steering Committee: some “dos and don'ts” when working with youth. Valuable advice from the experts themselves!



**Some Key Do's and Don'ts When Working With Youth**  
*From the Green Street YSC*

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Avoid stereotypes:</b> A lot of adults develop stereotypes around what they think teenagers are but we're all different, we've all got our own opinions, and if you eliminate those stereotypes, you eliminate those expectations you have.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Devalue Opinions:</b> Don't not value our opinion, just because of our age or experience (or our lack of experience).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Avoid Preaching:</b> Avoid forcing your own values on an issue. Leave space for everyone to contribute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Don't Talk Down:</b> Don't talk down to us because we can be equal to you. We can be just as helpful. Treat us the age we are, don't treat us like little kids.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Balance Jargon:</b> Don't use too much jargon but don't take it all out either, because then you are going back to talking to us like we are elementary kids.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Don't be Fake:</b> If you're an adult and you're trying to appeal to youth and you're not acting like yourself, we pick up on that and it makes us really uncomfortable.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be Open Minded:</b> Approach and learn about youth, &amp; be open-minded to their differences and similarities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use A "One Size Fit's All" Model:</b> Don't assume all strategies that work for engaging children or adults will work: some will, some won't, and some are unique to youth</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be More Youth Friendly:</b> Work to create a youth-friendly space, communication strategy, organizational culture, and outreach materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Limit Youth Participation:</b> Don't create a constrained, limited role for youth participation, especially if youth had no say in the formation of that role.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meet In a Common Place:</b> Avoid running long meetings with complicated agendas, using a lot of acronyms and jargon, or holding meetings at times and in places inaccessible for youth, like the local pub.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote Tokenism:</b> create opportunities for youth engagement that are supportive AND challenging.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Help Youth Be Prepared:</b> Ensure youth have equal background information and understanding before asking them to make a decision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be Inflexible:</b> Avoid being inflexible. ...a lot of the time adults have set views and there might be an alternative but they are like "oh no we have done this forever this way and we want to do it this way again". That's inflexible – stay open to new ideas!</li> </ul>



## SECTION THREE: PROJECT IDEAS



### Introduction

There are a lot of great project ideas and strategies that involve youth, and many great resources and examples to draw on. For example, Groundwork's *Youth Hands! Youth Voices! Guidebook* identifies four ways in which youth voices can be inserted into decision making and policy development in adult-oriented organizations:

1. Through involvement in the formal processes.
2. Through artistic expression.
3. Through protest or challenging the system.
4. Through local action projects.

In developing this manual, we decided to take a slightly different tack, and have identified tangible projects that Green Street Providers and others could directly engage youth in. This section contains suggestions for engaging youth on a programmatic or planning level. Each project area includes a note on key logistical suggestions, advice from our Youth Steering Committee, and recommendations for further resources to check out.

We realize that different Providers have different needs and capacities, so we've used a **'menu-based approach'** that ranges from the least time consuming suggestions to more involved projects. Remember that regardless of which level or project you choose, when it's developed with careful consideration towards authentic youth engagement, it will be very rewarding for you and your organization. Whether short-term/one-off events or a long-term, relationship-building project, all can have positive and authentic youth engagement results.

Before we get to the actual project descriptions, we've provided a quick review of what makes a good youth engagement project. Special thanks to our GSYouth Steering Committee for this!

## Remembering the Elements of a Good Youth Project

*When youth are involved in the beginning of the whole process of visioning and planning a project or program, the chance of it being both effective and authentically youth-driven are significantly higher..*

Emily Menzies, Sierra Youth Coalition

It's important to remember that youth are more likely to get involved in projects if they meet one or more of the following elements:

- Youth are **interested** in or care about the issue
- Youth are **directly impacted** by it
- Youth feel the desire to '**right a wrong**' they see
- It makes them **feel good** to participate
- Their involvement makes them feel like they are **making a difference**
- It allows them to be taken **seriously**
- It allow them to have fun and **meet new people**
- They get to learn **new skills** or try new things

An effective project combines the participants' concerns (things they want to change) with passions (what they enjoy doing). This can be done by creating a project and then finding youth who share the projects' concerns and passions, or by bringing youth together, supporting them in identifying their shared interests, and creating a project. An effective project can also be a blend of these strategies, but all projects should engage youth in roles of real commitment and responsibility.





### **A good project should:**

- ☑ Address real needs.
- ☑ Make connections:  
*“A successful project involves connecting to people as well as actual task work”.*
- ☑ Provide guidance:  
*‘Have a point person who understands what needs to be accomplished and knows who is working on which aspect of the project’*
- ☑ Be properly planned:  
*“Have a plan that is clearly laid out, leaving no room for misunderstandings... pick goals that can be attained...have timelines”*
- ☑ Be inclusive:  
*“There’s a role for everyone”*
- ☑ Have a series of sub-goals and measure success enroute:  
*“There should be a sense of accomplishment and closure, not necessarily completion, at the end of your project.*

One concern raised is the challenge of **meeting youth interests and implementing their chosen projects**, while still being true to the organization’s mandate. For example, social justice and fair trade issues are of interest to many young people, but may not fit directly into the mandate of a watershed protection group. One way to focus youth interests is to identify which part of the organization’s mandate is most relevant to the youth you are trying to engage. Identifying youth passions is important! Work together to collaboratively design a project that resonates with the passions of the youth while still fulfilling your program goals.

### **Samples of popular youth interests are:**

- **The arts:** film, photography, graphic design, cartooning, theatre, music, dance, writing, sewing, etc.
- **Athletics and outdoors:** specific games and sports, kayaking, hiking, camping, biking, gardening, building, etc.
- **Socializing and networking:** meeting people, making/eating food, parties, conversations, friends, playing, etc.
- **Education:** reading, learning, teaching, writing, skills building, etc.

Incorporate youth interests and energy into your project, and identify opportunities for youth to be responsible for project elements that meet their passions. It’s a win-win situation: organizations can re-energize their capacity to achieve their mandate while creating opportunities for youth to follow their passions and develop their skills, experience and involvement.



# Youth Engagement Project Ideas

## Youth As Consultants

### Overview

Youth can provide amazing insights and ideas for your programs and activities, from brainstorming new ways to tackle issues to acting as ad-hoc or project-specific resource specialists. A few of the ways in which youth voices can be used include:

- Providing general feedback on program themes and activities.
- For visioning and evaluating the need, relevance, and effectiveness of a potential or current youth program.
- For getting buy-in from target demographic of youth for a program, plan, or direction.
- For examining specific program impacts.

Gaining youth feedback is best done in person, either as a one-on-one interaction, or in a group that knows each other. It can also be done through surveys, phone interviews, focus groups, conference calls, and evaluation forms. See *Section Two: How You Choose To Communicate* for effective youth communications tools.

### Helpful Hints

- Ask the youth what they think, and actively listen! Repeat back what you think they are saying, give positive/supportive body language, and focus on the youth speaker exclusively.
- Make sure you are asking something that the youth conceivably have some experience with or opinion on.
- It is best to make a brief proposal, say a statement, give an example, and then invite feedback as opposed to just throwing out a one-word topic.
- Make sure you implement feedback loops so that youth know how their ideas, opinions and advice was used and made a difference.

### Advice from the YSC

*The best way to use youth as consultants is to talk to them. It shows that you respect and value their opinions. Learning how to deal with youth from an adult is not going to teach you anything. It is best to talk to youth and really take what they have to say into consideration.*

Joey, YSC Member

## Youth as Ambassadors/Representatives

### Overview

Youth can bring an attractive, vibrant face to an organization, and when trained and confident, can be especially good at engaging and recruiting their peers as well as adults. Having youth as Ambassadors or representatives at conferences and events is an excellent way to not only invest in youth themselves (through public speaking, organizing, time management, and knowledge/awareness skills development) but also to connect with new people. Other youth will be more likely to relate to a peer staffing a table, and teachers, parents and other community members often find youth approachable, energetic and engaging.



### Key Points

- Provide training, practice, and all the necessary materials. What would you need if you were representing your program at a conference or an event? Youth that are super keen on being a representative will take their role seriously – give them lots of support!
- Consider logistics – who will set up the event, contact the event organizer, fill in the application forms, arrange the table materials to be shipped to the site, pay the registration fee, etc.? Who will arrange the site clean up and tear down of the display? Be clear on everyone's tasks and responsibilities, make checklists for who needs to do what, and have a contact number (and cell phone if possible) for youth to use if they need more information or assistance.

See the  **References and Resources** section for more key points and conference checklists.

### Helpful Hints

- Provide training! Don't throw a youth who isn't prepared "to the lions" – they will never want to do it again!
- Keep your messaging and goals simple and easy to remember, and give the youth a hand-out activity to do as a demonstration.
- Practice!! Role play different one-on-one situations that are likely to come up for the youth representative, and give them tips for when they get stuck.
- Make sure they have attractive materials (preferably ones the youth rep has had a hand in making), like t-shirts, nametags, table display, buttons, stickers, and post cards. If the youth rep is excited about and proud of them, they will help attract others. Consider making up 'kits' for the youth: Tupperware boxes full of all the materials they'll need plus other helpful supplies (i.e. tape, string, push pins, pens, markers, etc.).

### Feedback from the YSC

*I was a youth ambassador was at my community's Living Green Fair – an event helping to spread the news about environmentally-conscious actions. It was great to be able to spread the word about Green Street and to receive such a positive response. I had adults and youth coming up to me... one person even looked me in the eye and said that she was so happy that youth were attending these types of events to spread the word about important organizations, and she also said that she feels better knowing that the future will be in good hands.*

Kelsi, YSC Member

## **Youth Steering Committees**



### **Overview**


Youth steering or advisory committees give consensus-based direction and youth decision-making to a project, program, or organization. They are useful in bringing together diverse or representative youth for projects with regional, national, or multi-sectoral focuses.

### **Key Points**

- Youth actively participate in making decisions, and give direction that will be followed by staff/volunteers/other youth, etc.
- Youth committees can be self-managed to some degree, although there usually is some adult involvement and mentorship. Ensure that positions of responsibility and trust are set up by the committee members.

### **Helpful Hints**

- For formal committees, consider an application form.  
See the  **Appendixes** for a sample.
- Also consider having terms of reference (TOR) or other guidelines that lay out specific roles and responsibilities. It's important that the youth are actively involved in developing the TOR that governs them!  
See the  **Appendixes** for a sample TOR from the Green Street Youth Steering Committee.
- Be clear on group and individual roles and responsibilities. What kind of decisions will members be making? What kind of commitment is needed? It's one thing to have a TOR, but another to ensure that individuals know how it relates to them, and what their individual tasks are.
- Try to bring together a diverse group with a variety of skills and experience. Have youth self-select specific roles based on their individual strengths and interests.
- Effective communication, leadership, coordination strategies and structures must be in place and followed for a youth committee to be an effective body.
- If you can, create opportunities for skills-building, buddying, and mentorship between more and less experienced members.
- Remember to recognize your youth committee – on your website, in your annual reports, and with representatives on any larger organizational committees.

- Consider the logistics behind having a youth steering committee:
  - » Do you need consent forms, waivers, etc?  
See the  **Appendixes** for samples forms.
  - » How will you recruit a diversity of youth?  
See **Section Two** for recruiting ideas.
- Don't forget to assess your capacity. How many youth can you effectively work with (and how many do you need to work with)? Will there be a committee coordinator? If so, who will it be – you, a volunteer, an 'older' youth/peer/mentor, etc? How and how often will you meet? How will the committee provide its feedback: in a written form, verbally or other ways (art murals!)?
- Consider the time frame, and plan your youth committee for the long run. You want these youth to be involved for a longer duration of time – sometimes years. Therefore a lot of energy needs to be invested in building relationships, establishing lines of communication, getting the committee comfortable with one another, and taking on issues and addressing questions.

### **Communicating with your Youth Steering Committee**

- Schedule to meet regularly – have a schedule, and stick to it!
- Nothing replaces the face to face meeting. Remember to include fun things and a youth-friendly environment, and provide refreshments and an agenda (pre-circulated is best).
- If your committee is made up of **local** youth, where will you meet? How will youth get there? Will their transportation be subsidized? How often, and at what time of day will you meet?
- If your committee is **national**, or covers a wider area, and you rely more on conference calls and email, remember to consider things like:
  - » Time zones – remember that a 4:30pm or after school call in Vancouver is 8:30 pm in Halifax!
  - » Listserv and email – how will they be used? Does everyone have internet/computer access?
  - » Circulate bios and pictures so that conference calls feel more personal, creating a better connection between individuals.

### Good Examples to Model

- Youth In Philanthropy Canada  
[www.yipcanada.org](http://www.yipcanada.org)
- Sierra Youth Coalition  
[www.syc-cjs.org](http://www.syc-cjs.org)
- Green Street Youth Engagement Program's Youth Steering Committee  
[www.youthactioncentre.ca](http://www.youthactioncentre.ca)
- Amnesty International's Youth Activist Committee  
[www.amnesty.ca/youth](http://www.amnesty.ca/youth)

#### **Recommendations from the Youth Advisory Committee of the Community Foundations of Canada include:**

- The youth committee is adopted by the board as one of the permanent standing committees of the community foundation
- The youth committee meets a minimum of six times per year
- A trained adult advisor works with the youth
- There is an annual orientation process for youth committee members
- Youth committee members should be invited to participate in leadership training opportunities

*Vancouver Foundation's Youth In Philanthropy Council.  
L. Chen, D. Sadler and B. Oates. (pg. 17)*



## Youth as Board Members

### Overview

Organizations designed to serve youth should consider making a portion of their board seats youth-delegated. Having youth delegates as members of your organization's *Board of Directors* can be incredibly rewarding for both your agency and the youth involved. If possible, try to have more than one youth on your board so that they can support each other.



### Key Elements

- Disclose to your organization that you have youth on your board.
- Include provisions in your Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation that state that your organization can elect young people to your board.
- Generally it's best to prohibit youth board members from signing legal and financial documents such as leases and checks for the non-profit corporation or incorporating papers for the non-profit organization.
- Have at least two youth on your board, not just one (to avoid tokenism and isolation).
- Recruit youth who have experience and a real interest in the mandate and process of the organization.
- Ensure youth get to the meetings!
- Don't book meetings during school time, or late in the evening, especially on weeknights.
  - » Do offer rides/carpool/transit instructions and/or subsidies.
  - » Talk to parents and get their support.
- Give youth the information needed to effectively participate in decision-making in a format they can process easily.
  - » Don't load them with a billion documents and minutes from the past 2 years of meetings. Also don't send them a large document via email to read the day before (or even worse, the day of!) the meeting itself. Plan to send key information that has been summarized for them if necessary, at least a week in advance.
  - » Do provide basic documents, the agenda for the meeting, etc.
  - » Do buddy the youth with an adult or older youth mentor who will explain and summarize procedures, history, group dynamics, jargon, and be available to debrief before, during, and after meetings.

## Youth as Board Members cont'd.

- » Do expect and encourage youth to take on responsibilities as an equal member of the board, while providing support and training where they might have less experience or resources than adults. Youth can often offer strengths adults do not have; identify and take advantage of these together.
- Ensure board processes are youth friendly (these are often the same as people friendly, but adults/long time board members are often already acclimatized to non-people-friendly procedures and so do not notice them as much as youth). For example:
  - » Avoid lingo and explain acronyms.
  - » Avoid long, boring, detailed agendas.
  - » Have healthy food/drinks available.
  - » Have opportunities for physical movement, stretching, etc. Youth are thankfully not as sedentary as adults.
  - » Create a space for everyone to speak and participate, and show patience and encouragement for youth who are shy/not experienced in speaking in front of groups (small group discussion and go-arounds are good ways to encourage involvement).
  - » Have skills-building opportunities. Youth need to learn and gain mastery over skills needed to be a good adult board member. Once they are comfortable with the group, ask if they'd like to lead a session, build an agenda, make a presentation, or take minutes.

### Feedback from the YSC

*Being a youth board member has definitely been a positive experience for me. I have felt like I can contribute my opinions to the adults on the committee without being judged, and have felt comfortable asking questions at any time, when I do not understand. A person would think that being on a board with all adults would, at times, possibly be threatening, but I have felt completely comfortable since all of the adults show a keen interest in a youth perspective. I feel important and valued as a member of the committee because I have been told that my ideas, opinions and perspectives are as important as the other adults.*

YSC Member

### For More Information and Inspiration Check Out:

- City of Toronto's *Involve Youth :A Guide to Meaningful Youth Engagement*  
[www.toronto.ca/involveyouth/index2.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/involveyouth/index2.htm)
- Free The Children  
[www.freethechildren.com](http://www.freethechildren.com)



## Youth as Researchers and Evaluators

### Overview

Youth experiences around evaluation usually involves filling out a boring form at the end of a project or program, but there are lots of innovative ways to get youth engaged in evaluation. A participatory evaluation approach involves the end-user – *the student* – in the initial development and design of the evaluative tools, and in setting up and carrying out some or all of the actual research events. By involving primary users in the initial design and implementation of the evaluation, a deeper understanding of the process is enabled, more ownership of the evaluation is encouraged, actual utilization of the data is greatly improved, and organizational learning is enhanced (Cousins et al, 1992). So use those youth!

There are several ways to get youth input into your evaluation process, including having youth watch and evaluate your programs, having youth review your existing or draft materials (even better if they help you design them at the start!), and through youth hosting youth focus groups. Remember that if you have youth review your programs or materials,

it's important to provide them with some guidance on what they should be looking for (checklists or pre-identified topics/thematic areas are good) and some sort of a template or standardized form for them to capture data on.



A Green Street Youth Intern involved in wetland research in summer 2005.

### Youth-Led Focus Groups

Getting youth together to discuss their experiences with a program is an excellent way to explore a program's strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of the end user. During the focus group session, key questions are raised in a



conversational style, allowing for flexibility as well as opportunities for personalizing questions, clarification, probing and greater depth of investigation. Getting a group of young people together also captures a range of opinions and experiences more efficiently than individual interviews. Focus group sessions stimulate deeper exploration and synergy around issues and concerns, as responses and dialogue act as a catalyst for their further exploration.

See the  **References and Resources** section for some focus group guidelines and sample questions.

Having youth facilitate youth focus groups adds a peer aspect to the research, which enables the delivery of questions and responses that are more indicative of student realities than what an external, adult evaluator might get. Student-led focus group sessions can serve to:

- Collect valuable peer-to-peer, student-centered data on the quality and effectiveness of programs.
- Offer beneficial skills training, experience and credible involvement to the student facilitators.
- Engage students (facilitators and those participating in the focus groups) more actively and directly in the development and improvement of programs.
- Raise the profile of programs directly with students, through the student facilitators.

### Case Study

For several years, the Green Street youth steering committee (YSC) members were trained in focus group facilitation, including facilitator skills training in group process, focus group question development, tape recorder practice, peer teaching and role-playing. (Training workshop packages are included in the **References and Resources** section). When students returned to their respective schools, a sponsor teacher was contacted to help with logistics, tape recorders, and room booking. To alleviate some variables, the focus groups all used the same question series co-developed by the students and workshop facilitators, and the audiotapes were all transcribed by the same specialist. The resulting data was enormously valuable in providing youth driven insights into programs.

**What to do with all that great data? Use it & make sure you tell us how!**

Evaluation data from youth participants is valuable stuff – findings can greatly inform program and activity ideas, improve pilot programs, activities, and materials, and make them more appealing and relevant to a youth audience. The data also provides input into future program ideas and direction.

As we have said, an important element in working with youth in evaluation is **providing a feedback loop** so participants know how their input has been used and what changes occurred as a result of their work. Remember – the feedback needs to be in a form that is accessible to the youth audience... formal evaluation reports usually don't cut it. Summarize the findings and their implementation in a language and format that is comprehensible and approachable – don't "dumb it down", but *do* make it appealing and easy to access. Make sure you address specific concerns or suggestions directly, and detail the process you and others went through to settle on changes you made, providing a rationale for each change.

This recognition is critical for youth to feel that their work, ideas and input are valued and acknowledged, and it can spell the difference between sustained youth participation and youth dropping out of your partnership programs. Sharing the research and end results with the youth participants also builds their research skills and experiences.

**Some Ground Rules for Youth Focus Groups**

- One voice at a time
- Listen to everyone
- Respect everyone's ideas
- Don't use leading questions
- Keep on topic
- Keep eye contact with the people you're talking to
- Be objective/ not judgemental
- Give everyone a chance to speak, but don't put people on the spot
- Stay on topic, but be ready for new ideas
- Explain your ideas
- Give yourself time to have fun







### Setting up a focus group – advice for adults and youth

- Talk to the school or club council
- Call the environmental club
- Try to get about 5 or 6 people, with 8 as a maximum number.
- Give an incentive to participants – bonus marks (but this sometimes only brings in keeners), volunteer credits, PIZZA!
- Bring your friends
- Give a couple of options for times to meet
- Do it during class time if possible, or lunch break.
- Put it in a familiar classroom/space, where people are comfortable
- Put people in a circle and keep eye contact
- Make everyone comfortable – it's not a test, and there aren't any judgements
- Let people know where the information is going – who's getting it, what they're going to do with it
- Let them know you're using a tape recorder, and only first names will be used for anything (but try to use names, because it gets really confusing for the Transcriber if no one is named)
- Don't take more than about ½ hour
- Test your tape recorder before you start!!

### Helpful Hints

- Have well-thought-out questions to provide to your youth focus group leaders. Take time to prepare these questions collaboratively and then run through them with the youth prior to the focus group.
- Provide training for youth focus group leaders.
- Provide templates for data collection, letters to teachers/school administrators, checklists for event holding, etc. See the  **Appendixes** for examples.
- Provide resources – snacks, bus/transport money, tapes, tape recorders, etc.
- Provide checklists for your youth focus group facilitators, including *Setting Ground Rules* and *Setting Up A Focus Group* (see the  **Appendixes**).

## **Youth Internships**

### **Overview**

Youth internships are first-time work or volunteer placement where youth gain on-the-job skills, training, and experience in a field they want to explore as a potential career. When done well, a successful internship can be a highly-rewarding, deep impact program that has proven to generate significant impact on the youth involved. Youth internships can vary greatly in scope, from a few regular weeks to less frequent but longer-term involvement (e.g. one day per month for a year, etc.).

### **Key Elements**

- Payment (including honorariums), arranging course/school credit, and/or providing letters of reference for school requirements or higher level employment are important elements of attracting and/or retaining youth interns.
- Equally important is the need for active training and mentorship for the youth interns. Will there be regular, consistent, and sufficient training, on-going support, and skills-building opportunities?
- Make sure your agency has the correct insurance in place before the intern begins work. Consider doing a risk management assessment of the internship project. Will the intern work alone? With machinery? In the field/remotely? What safety precautions and procedures are required?
- Is the internship project meaningful? Exciting? Achievable? Youth-friendly?

### **Helpful Hints**

- Do an assessment of the youth's skills, experience, interest, strength, and challenges at the beginning of the placement, a mid-way evaluation and a final evaluation/debrief at the end of the internship.
- Create learning opportunities – have youth identify what skills they are most interested in building.
- Give opportunity to do tasks that the youth is strong and experienced in, as well as active mentorship in ones they are challenged by.

### **Advice from the YSC**

*I enjoyed everything! I consider myself lucky to be given this opportunity, at 15 years old, to learn and promote the importance of the environment, while working at the same time! I like the fact that I am working with people who are motivated.*

YSC Member

## Summary

Different Providers will have different needs and capacities surrounding youth engagement. We hope that **Section Three** has provided you with some inspiration, ideas, and helpful hints surrounding how to achieve this. Regardless of the project that you choose to pursue – developing a youth committee, engaging youth as organizational ambassadors, or something else altogether – remembering those key elements of authentic youth engagement (ensuring youth are taken seriously, they're having fun, etc. Please see Pages 9-12) will greatly help you achieve success.

In **Sections Two** and **Three** we looked at the strategies surrounding, and suggested project ideas for youth engagement. We'd like to close out this manual with two final sections designed to help you easily implement youth engagement activities into your organization. In **Section Four** we've provided you with a series of templates and checklist that Green Street has adopted or developed for use in its *Youth Engagement Program*. Please feel free to use or modify these – the point of providing them is to help save you time and effort when planning your youth engagement projects. And in **Section Five** we've provided a short list of key organizations and website that offer youth engagement inspiration, resources and project recommendations.

Perhaps one of the most inspirational and motivating things about being involved in the Green Street program over time has been the opportunity to be part of a national program that has wholeheartedly embraced the idea of authentic youth engagement. Interacting with the Youth Steering Committee been a powerful learning experience and being able to benefit from the leading research and evaluation that Green Street has conducted on youth engagement has been terrific. And best of all, I've been able to directly transfer so much of what I've learned about effective youth engagement to the programs we deliver here at Sierra Club BC as a Green Street Provider.

Jenn Hoffman, Sierra Club of BC Chapter

**Good luck!**



## **SECTION FOUR: APPENDIXES**



### **Consent Forms/Waivers**

- ★ **General Volunteering Parent/Guardian Consent Forms**
- ★ **Green Street Photo Waiver Form**
- ★ **Green Street Day Travel Waiver**
- ★ **Green Street Multi-Day Event Attendance Form**

### **Evaluation: Focus Groups**

- ★ **Checklist for Hosting A Focus Group**
- ★ **Consent Form For Participating in a Green Street Focus Group**
- ★ **Data Recording Form for Green Street Focus Groups**

### **Youth Steering Committee Forms**

- ★ **Youth Steering Committee Terms of Reference**
- ★ **Youth Steering Committee Application**

### **Communications Guidelines**

- ★ **Conference Call Guide for Youth Facilitators**





## **Sample Photo Waiver**

### **Green Street Photo Waiver Form**



Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you may be aware of, your child has been elected as a member of the Green Street Youth Engagement Program (YEP) *Youth Steering Committee (YSC)*. Green Street is a national organization that supports the development and delivery of accredited environmental education programs across Canada. Green Street programs range from web-based sites to programs that offer active mentoring by professional naturalists and hands-on stewardship activities for students. The YEP effectively engages youth in on-going environmental stewardship initiatives through a diversity of initiatives, such as summer camps and **Internships**, and through online support (website, e-newsletters, etc.). For more information visit [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca).

During your child's participation in the Youth Steering Committee there is the potential that his/her image may be electronically recorded (primarily digital photography). This may happen during attendance at our Annual Meetings, Youth Forums or attendance at youth conferences, or by special request. We are requesting your permission for the current or future use of any images obtained. Images are primarily used for public information and/or education and may appear in newsletters, on our Youth Action Centre website, on promotional brochures, or in exhibits. While image use may vary, or not occur at all, it is customary that all **Youth Steering Committee** members have a personal biography and accompanying picture on our *Youth Action Centre* website.

**We take your child's privacy very seriously.** Green Street does not share or sell the information or images we gather in the course of our work. We also do not collect any personally identifiable information from children through school or event staff, administration, or children themselves.

**We are asking you to please sign this waiver to allow Green Street to use images of your child in the above-mentioned information materials. Please check EACH of the following two boxes to indicate that you understand the contents of this waiver and sign below.**

- I represent that that I am the parent or duly authorized representative of the youth and that I have read the foregoing and fully and completely understand the contents hereof.
- I hereby forever release and discharge Green Street from any and all claims, actions, demands and liability arising out of or in connection with the publication, reproduction, or other use of these images.

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions, or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am most happy to speak with you regarding this, or any other Youth Engagement Program activity. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Youth Engagement Program Manager

## **Sample Day Travel Waiver**

### **Green Street Day Travel Waiver**



Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you may be aware, your child is involved with the Green Street *Youth Engagement Program*. Green Street is a national organization that supports the delivery of accredited environmental education programs across Canada. Green Street programs range from web-based sites to programs that offer active mentoring by professional naturalists and hands-on stewardship activities for students. The *Youth Engagement Program* engages youth in on-going environmental stewardship initiatives through a diversity of initiatives, such as summer camps and Internships, and through online support. For more information on Green Street visit [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca); the *Youth Engagement Program* [www.youthactioncentre.ca](http://www.youthactioncentre.ca).

During your child's participation in the *Youth Engagement Program* there is the potential that she/he may have the opportunity to travel. Depending on the event, this may include unsupervised travel to **NON-Green Street sponsored events**. (Note: all **Green Street-sponsored events** will require a parental/guardian completion of a **separate Green Street Event Attendance Form**; Green Street-sponsored events will be clearly identified). We are requesting your permission for:

(Child's Name here) \_\_\_\_\_ to attend (Event Here) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ to be held in (Venue/  
City/Province) \_\_\_\_\_.

We are asking you to please sign this waiver to allow your child to attend the above mentioned event. Please initial EACH of the following two boxes to indicate that you understand the contents of this waiver and sign below. We ask that you also fill out the following contact information.

- I represent that that I am the parent or duly authorized representative of the youth and that I have read the foregoing and fully and completely understand the contents hereof. I understand that this is a non-Green Street sponsored event, and that a Green Street adult chaperon may not be present.
- I hereby forever release and discharge Green Street from any and all claims, actions, demands and liability arising out of traveling to, from and attending the above mentioned event.

### **Contact Information**

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian  
Name: (PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions, or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am most happy to speak with you regarding this, or any other *Youth Engagement Program* activity. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Youth Engagement Program Manager

## **Sample Multi-Day Event Waiver**

### **Green Street Multi-Day Event Attendance Form**



Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you may be aware, your child is involved with the Green Street *Youth Engagement Program*. Green Street is a national organization that supports the delivery of accredited environmental education programs across Canada. Green Street programs range from web-based sites to programs that offer active mentoring by professional naturalists and hands-on stewardship activities for students. The *Youth Engagement Program* engages youth in on-going environmental stewardship initiatives through a diversity of initiatives, such as summer camps and Internships, and through online support. For more information on Green Street visit [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca); the *Youth Engagement Program* [www.youthactioncentre.ca](http://www.youthactioncentre.ca).

Your child has been invited to attend a Green-Street sponsored event. Completion and submission of this form is **required** prior to their participation. **Please fill out all FIVE sections of this form.**

**\*Note: Sections Four and Five of this form requires a parental/guardian signature**

#### **Section One: Participant Information**

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Section Two: Emergency Contact Information**

**Emergency Contact Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Language Spoken At Home: \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternative Contact Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Language Spoken At Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Medical Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Doctor's Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Section Three: Health Concerns and Medical Information**

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This information will be **maintained confidentially**. It will only be shared with gathering representatives who need to know this information in order to do their jobs properly. If there is other information that you consider pertinent to your child's well-being please attach it to this form.

**Allergies:** \_\_\_\_\_

Food: \_\_\_\_\_

Drugs: \_\_\_\_\_

Insect Stings/Bites: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

The Participant carries an EPI Pen, knows how it works, and can use it him/herself:

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Is any medication being sent to along with the student?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If yes, please specify what it is, and how/and when the medication is to be administered, and whether the Participant can administer the medication to himself or herself:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Medical Conditions/Disabilities:** Please use the following space to detail any medical condition(s) or disabilities that your child have:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My child needs assistance with the following: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Meeting organizers should be concerned if they see the following signs or symptoms:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dietary Restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Section Four: Medical Authorization**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby give my permission for Green Street and its authorized representatives to act in the event of a medical emergency and to seek medical treatment for my child. I hereby give consent for any medical assistance or treatment or procedure deemed necessary by a qualified doctor or other qualified health professional, in the event that I cannot be reached to give such consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of parent/guardian**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Section Five: Parental/Guardian Consent Form To Attend**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ (CHILD'S NAME), agree to grant permission for him/her to participate in the Green Street Event (**name of event**) \_\_\_\_\_ to be held in (**City/Location**) \_\_\_\_\_, from (**full date(s) of events**) \_\_\_\_\_. I understand and accept the measures that Green Street has taken to ensure safety and provide a program of good quality, and I accept that my child will be expected to behave according to the event's *Code of Conduct*. I understand that Green Street will not assume any liability for injury and accidents that may happen to my child while traveling to or from the meeting. I understand the potential risks involved in any travel and agree to hold Green Street harmless for injury or accident to my child while at the meeting. I agree to assume all financial responsibility in case of injury or accident arising out of the event. I understand the risks and the legal implications of signing this waiver.

**CODE OF CONDUCT**

In order to ensure that everyone has a safe and positive experience at the event, the following guidelines must be followed.

- No drugs or alcohol – There will be zero tolerance regarding this.
- No dangerous instruments
- No unsupervised trips off of meeting facility site.
- No smoking
- Event schedules, curfews, room assignments and other standards as identified by the designated youth chaperone will be complied by.

Failure to comply with these conditions may result in the offending participant being asked to leave the meeting at their own expense.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of parent/guardian**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of parent/guardian**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## **Sample Focus Group Checklist**

### **Checklist for Hosting A Focus Group**

#### **A WEEK Before the Focus Group**

- Arrange this with your teacher. Give them the letter from Green Street (i.e. Sue Staniforth) and ask them if they have any questions.
- Book a room.
- Make sure you have enough copies of the **Consent Form** for everyone.
- Get a tape recorder. Make sure you have tapes, batteries and all the right cords. Test it to make sure it works!

#### **RIGHT Before the Focus Group**

- Order the pizza and have the room number of where it's being delivered to ready.
- Make sure you have a watch, a pen and a notepad to take notes.
- Test your tape recorder! Have a few people 'pretend' to answer questions and then play them back. Can you understand what they're saying? Will the person who transcribes it understand?
- Arrange the furniture in the room so that it's comfortable for everyone.

#### **At the START the Focus Group**

- Hand out the Consent Forms and have everyone sign them. Gather them back and send in to Green Street along with the tapes to be transcribed.
- If needed, ask everyone to introduce themselves.
- Thank everyone for coming and then review WHY you're holding a focus group:

*"I've asked you to take part in this focus group because you've all participated in a Green Street sponsored program. Green Street is a national program that pays for environmental education (EE) programs for youth across Canada. They paid for the EE program your class received (\_\_\_\_\_). Now they want to know how good the programs are. They want your perspectives on how the whole process worked for students, and how it could be improved. The goal of this session is to explore the experiences you had with the environmental education program to make it better."*

- Explain YOUR role – to 'guide' the process, not to dictate answers. Remember to tell them that all of their answers are confidential and will only be used by the Green Street Evaluator to get a better understanding of how well Green Street programs are working.
- Next, go over the Focus Group Questions.
- Review the Ground Rules with everyone.
- Tell them how long they're going to be meeting for (no more than 1.5 hours!).
- Keep notes! Try to write down key ideas. Appoint a secretary to help you.
- Remember to smile and be friendly, but also to be real!

#### **Right AFTER the Focus Group**

- Thank everyone for coming.
- Courier the tapes along with PHOTOCOPIES of your notes and the ORIGINAL Consent Forms to Sue Staniforth.

## Sample Focus Group Consent Form

### Consent Form for Participating in a Green Street Focus Group



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

You are being invited to participate in a focus group meeting that is being conducted for by Green Street. Green Street is a national organization that sponsors the delivery of environmental and sustainability-focused school programs to students across Canada. Over 17 organizations currently belong to Green Street – groups like the Sierra Club, Ducks Unlimited, and Earth Day Canada. This year you participated in a Green Street-sponsored program – your Focus Group Facilitator can tell you exactly which program this was!

Green Street is now evaluating the effectiveness of the programs that they sponsor. One way in which Green Street is hoping to gain greater insights into their programs is through asking students about their experiences in the program. They want your perspectives on how it worked for you, and how it could be improved. The goal of the Focus Group session is to explore the experience you had with the environmental education program to make it better.

Green Street has endorsed this evaluative study, and it is being lead by a professional evaluator, Sue Staniforth. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Sue by email (sstan@shaw.ca). If you have any questions about Green Street, you can contact Green Street Secretariat at 1-877-250-8201.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include participating in a 1- to 2 hour Focus Group Session. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. But there are potential benefits of your participating in this research. You will have the opportunity to share your voice with Green Street as to what you think is important for youth to learn during environmental education programs. Your input is important!

Your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed. During the research, you will remain anonymous. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be also be protected. Any personal information that you share will not be shared with others.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Thanks for participating!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Sample Focus Group Data Recording Form**

### **Data Recording Form for Green Street Focus Groups**

Fill out this form and return it along with the tape(s) of your focus group(s), the Consent Forms and the notes that you took. Use a separate Data Recording Form for **EACH** focus group you host.

Facilitator (i.e. Your) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Teacher Who Booked the Green Street Program You're Evaluating:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/School Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **About Your Focus Group:** \_\_\_\_\_

Which Green Street Program Are You Evaluating: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Focus Group Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Focus Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Males: \_\_\_\_\_ Females: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade level of Participants (list all): \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Finally,** \_\_\_\_\_

Did you include in the return envelope to Sue:

- the focus group **TAPE**?
- all of the **CONSENT FORMS**?
- your **NOTES** from the focus group session?
- This **DATA RECORDING FORM**?

Return everything to Sue Staniforth.



## **Sample Youth Committee Terms of Reference**

### **Youth Steering Committee Terms of Reference**

#### ***Background: The Green Street and Youth Engagement Program***

Green Street is a national program that supports environmental and sustainability education programs across Canada. Under Green Street, select Canadian environmental groups deliver high-quality environmental and sustainability learning-focused school programs to youth. Through these programs students are actively engaged in learning about the environment and are motivated and supported in taking action. For more information on Green Street, please visit [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca).

The Green Street **Youth Engagement Program (YEP)** was created to link students from across Canada who have participated in Green Street sponsored events, such as Provider-delivered in-class school programs, Green Street-supported youth conferences and Green Street Interns with other on-going environmental and sustainability opportunities. For more information on the **YEP** visit [www.youthactioncentre.ca](http://www.youthactioncentre.ca).

The YEP is a busy program! We engage youth in on-going environmental stewardship initiatives through different opportunities such as Internships, summer camps, youth leadership opportunities, and our Youth Steering Committee. We also reach out to and connect with youth through our *Youth Action Centre* website, monthly e-newsletters and other marketing materials.

The YEP has four **objectives** (things we want to achieve or see happen):

1. To provide **information and opportunities for youth** across Canada to deepen their level of engagement in becoming environmental stewards;
2. To **recognize and reward student leaders** by providing them with opportunities to interact, learn and build skills outside of the classroom;
3. To **enable students to participate** in the promotion, evaluation, and setting of strategic directions for Green Street; and
4. To **identify, develop and pilot student engagement approaches** that complement core Green Street programs and further empower the students to be environmental stewards.

#### ***About the Youth Steering Committee***

##### **Background**

The Youth Steering Committee (YSC) is a group of very cool, very inspiring youth who come from across Canada to help guide Green Street with their ideas and goals. Some have been Green Street interns, some have attended Green Street workshops, and others have heard about the program through youth networks and wanted to get involved.

*Sample Youth Committee Terms of Reference cont'd.*

The YSC is the youth **VOICE** of Green Street. It helps make decisions like:

- What kind of school programs or youth engagement opportunities should Green Street support?
- What's missing? Who would be a good person to contact for workshops or ideas?
- What environmental issues are REALLY important to youth, and what do they want to do to help?
- What's the best way to connect with youth and connect them to taking action for the environment?

The **GOAL** of the YSC:

**“We are the youth representatives for Green Street. Collectively, we help to identify youth-friendly environmental and sustainability learning programs, opportunities and materials.”**

The YSC also has identified a number of **objectives** – things we want to achieve:

- Through using our youth voices we want to increase youth interaction and engagement with Green Street;
- We want to help provide information and opportunities for youth across Canada to deepen their level of engagement in becoming environmental stewards;
- We want to participate in the promotion, evaluation, and setting of strategic directions for Green Street;
- We want to be recognized and rewarded as student leaders by participating in opportunities to interact, learn and build skills outside of the classroom;
- We want to create networking opportunities for youth and youth organizations across Canada.

***Our Values***

Our values reflect the behaviour that we want to embrace and support. We've identified the following values we want to operate under:

- Respect each other
- Trust each other
- Be supportive
- Have fun
- Have passion and be enthusiastic
- Be patient
- Share ideas
- Be open to different perspectives; not agreeing on everything is okay as long as we do it in a respectful manner and we listen to each other perspectives.

### *Sample Youth Committee Terms of Reference cont'd.*

- Keep an open mind.
- Be willing to speak your mind.
- Regularly communicate with each other.
- Constructively add or comment on other's ideas; avoid negative criticism or put-downs.
- "Walk the Talk" when it comes to acting in an environmentally-friendly manner. All of our actions should reflect our commitment to being low-impact and sustainable.

#### ***YSC Commitments***

We know that as members of a committee we need to **step up** and **take action** because being passive doesn't bring about positive change! As YSC members we will:

- Provide input into general Green Street Youth Engagement Program opportunities and activities.
- Provide advice on how to engage youth in learning about the environment, and help Green Street identify environmentally-related areas of interest and concern that pertain to youth as a whole.
- Fulfill the role of 'Ambassadors' to the Green Street program, representing Green Street (where possible) at youth forums, youth conferences, public events and Green Street Annual Meetings.
- Help host a youth-led focus group session in late spring so that Green Street can get feedback from other youth involved in its programs.
- Where applicable, fulfill the role of 'mentors' to incoming Green Street YSC members.
- Commit to reviewing on a regular basis materials such as e-newsletter text; website and new Provider proposals when submitted (usually once a year).
- Give input on youth-targeted outreach materials and marketing strategies (like print, supplies (buttons, postcards, etc.) and electronic materials).
- Be a resource for Green Street Program Providers (the YSC will help teach the adults how to better teach other youth about environmental and sustainability topics!).
- Take on a special project for Green Street, like:
  - » Write 'zines for youth.
  - » Contribute to the **Youth Action Centre** web page.
  - » Train Green Street Providers on how to run Youth FOCUS GROUPS
  - » Help write a "How To" Manual on youth integration into program planning for Providers
  - » Do a hands-on project for Green Street (decided with the YEP Manager)
  - » Other stuff as we discuss, decide, and make happen!

***How We Will Meet Our Commitments***

In order to meet our commitments we will do the following:

- **Participate!**
  - » We will participate in a two-year term.
  - » We'll help mentor new YSC members as required.
  - » We'll commit to attending the Green Street Annual Meeting and/or an in-person get-together once a year (when scheduled).
  - » We'll participate in a monthly conference calls (approx. 1.5 hours long) and email conversations (see Communicate! next).
- **Communicate!**
  - » Use active listening, good communication and critical thinking skills.
  - » Commit to the monthly conference calls. At the end of each call we'll set dates for the next call.
  - » Use email as the primary means of communicating with each other. We'll regularly check email, and will respond to email requests and dialogue on topics.
- **Look Around and Speak Up!**
  - » We will identify appropriate youth engagement opportunities within our own community and bring those to the YEP for discussion, consideration and potentially action.
  - » Remember that our voices are important. We will provide input into general Green Street Youth Engagement Program opportunities and activities on a regular and on-going basis.

***Representation***

We know that diversity is important and we want our committee to reflect the diverseness of youth across Canada. We also know that the YSC needs to directly relate to, and understand the culture of the youth that Green Street attempts to work with. To meet this need, we will:

- Be composed of secondary level student (aged 14 to 18) with preference to those who have participated in a Green Street program and/or Internship in the current school year and/or previous school year;
- Be bilingual, with representation of Francophone and Anglophone members;
- Reflect diversity, including cultural, ethnic, gender, geographic, urban/rural and ability diversity;
- Include at least 4 members that will sit for two consecutive years so as to ensure continuity;
- Not exceed 10 members in size.

## **Sample Youth Committee Application Form**

### **Youth Steering Committee Application Overview**

#### ***What's the Green Street Youth Engagement Program?***

The **Youth Engagement Program (YEP)** links students from across Canada that have participated in Green Street sponsored events, such as in-class school programs and youth forums, with other on-going environmental and sustainability opportunities. (See *What's Green Street?*, below to learn more).

The **YEP** is a busy program! We do tons of stuff – like host a youth-driven, on-line *Youth Action Centre* website, send out monthly *Youth Action E-newsletters*, and support youth-friendly events like summer camps, internships and youth conferences. We also have an awesome Youth Steering Committee. Check out [www.youthactioncentre.ca](http://www.youthactioncentre.ca) to learn more about the YEP.

#### ***What is the Youth Steering Committee (YSC)?***

##### **About The YSC**

A key feature of the YEP is the **Youth Steering Committee (YSC)**. The YSC is a group of very cool, very inspiring youth who come together from across Canada to help Green Street reach it's goal of having youth participate in environmental learning. Some YSC members are former Green Street interns, some have participated in Green Street school programs, and others have heard about the program through youth networks and wanted to get involved.

##### **So What Does The YSC Do?**

The YSC is the **YOUTH VOICE** of Green Street. It helps make decisions, like: What kind of school programs should Green Street offer? What should our youth-outreach materials, like our website and e-newsletters, look like? And, what environmental issues are **REALLY** important to youth, and what do they want to do to help? The YSC has great ideas for new programs, resources and other stuff students need to help them be a serious force of change!

##### **And Who Is The YSC?**

The YSC is a team of 8-10 secondary-level youth from across Canada. We generally meet via conference call once a month during the school year, email each other 1-2 times a month, and get together every spring in person during the Green Street Annual Meeting. It's a dynamic group of environmentally-aware, passionate youth - and we're taking applications for it new members.

### **Want To Apply?**

Fill out the **Application Form** on the next page and submit it by October 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **What Do I Have To Do If I Get Accepted?**

Participate! We want to hear your voice. If you get accepted, here's some of the stuff that will be expected of you:

- Commit to a 2 year term, where you participate in calls and email dialogue during the school year;
- Provide advice on how to engage youth in learning about the environment, and help us identify environmentally-related areas of interest and concern that pertain to youth as a whole;
- Give input on youth-targeted outreach materials and marketing strategies (like print and web materials);
- Fulfill the role of 'Ambassadors' to the Green Street program, representing Green Street at select youth conferences, public events and annual meetings across Canada;
- Be a resource for Green Street Program Providers (yep – the YSC will help teach the adults how to better teach other youth about environmental and sustainability topics!);
- Fulfill the role of 'mentors' to incoming Green Street YSC members; and
- Take on a special project for Green Street (maybe you like to write 'zines? Work on web pages? Do hands-on projects? There's lots of opportunities... get involved!

### ***So What's Green Street?***

Green Street is a national program that supports environmental and sustainability education programs across Canada. Under Green Street, Canadian environmental groups (for example, Earth Day, Club 2/3, Ducks Unlimited, etc.) deliver high quality school programs. Over 18 environmental groups are currently involved in Green Street! Through these programs students are actively engaged in learning about the environment and are motivated and supported in taking action. Want to learn more? Visit Green Street [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca).

## Youth Steering Committee Application Form

### Section One: About You (Contact Information)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time to Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade completed as of June (circle/bold one): Grade 7 8 9 10 11 12

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of High School (if currently attending): \_\_\_\_\_

Have you participated in a Green Street program? (\*\*Not sure? See box below)

No  Yes

If Yes, which one? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*This could be a Green Street Internship, a summer gathering (like a *Sierra Youth Coalition Gathering*), a Green Street-supported conference (like the *Youth Climate Change Conference*), or a Provider delivered school program. If you need to see what a Provider is, or what school programs Providers offer, go to [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca), click on *Teacher Zone*, then *Book A Program*. There you can look at what programs are offered in what provinces.

During 2004-2005 Green Street Providers included:

- |                                     |                    |   |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| * Clean Nova Scotia                 | * Ducks Unlimited  | * Club 2/3                                |
| * Earth Day Canada                  | * Green Group      | * CPAWS                                   |
| * Evergreen                         | * Museobus         | * Safe Drinking Water                     |
| * Pembina Institute                 | * SEEDS Foundation | * Environnement Jeunesse                  |
| * Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter |                    | * Sierra Club of Canada, Atlantic Chapter |
| * Établissements verts Brundtland   |                    | * Trout Unlimited                         |

How did you learn about the Green Street Youth Steering Committee? (Check all that apply):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green Street Provider     | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Action Centre E-Newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend /Former YSC member | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Action Centre website      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher/Advisor           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |

### Section Two: Tell Us About You – What You Think, What You Do...

I. Tell us about your non-academic activities, such as employment or volunteer service, clubs, youth groups or hobbies.

2. Pick one environmental and/or sustainability issue that is important to you. In 150-200 words tell us why you think this is an important issue, and how you think youth can be engaged to help address this problem.

3. Why do you want to sit on the **Green Street Steering Committee**? What do you expect to gain and contribute to the Youth Engagement Program?

4. Finally, tell us something interesting about yourself!

### Section Three: Your References

Your reference should be someone who can tell us about you. Your reference should **not** be a friend or a relative. **Good** references are teachers, advisors, employers, coaches, group leaders or other similar people.

#### Reference #1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ School (if teacher): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Reference #2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ School (if teacher): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

#### What Now?

Send your completed application form to the Green Street Youth Engagement Program Manager:

Email: [youthaction@green-street.ca](mailto:youthaction@green-street.ca)

**Application Deadline: October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2005.**

**And don't forget to check out our Youth Action Centre Website at**  
[www.youthactioncentre.ca](http://www.youthactioncentre.ca)



## **Sample Guide to Facilitating a Conference Call**

### **Conference Calls 101: How to Facilitate a Conference Call**

#### ***Facilitator, what's that?***

**fa cil i ta tor**

noun: someone who makes progress easier

The facilitator is the person who runs the meeting. Their purpose is to maintain order throughout the meeting. Facilitators are used to prevent interruptions, give everyone a chance to speak, keep the meeting running according to the agenda, and prevent frivolous discussions about unrelated topics. A good facilitator develops an atmosphere of freedom, safety and comfort. They should feel comfortable talking in front of others and not put everyone to sleep. It is also a good idea to rotate facilitators every meeting.

The basic skills of a facilitator are about following good meeting practices: timekeeping, following an agreed-upon agenda, and keeping a clear record. The higher-order skills involve watching the group, its individuals, and their process, and knowing the art of intervening in a way that adds to the group's creativity rather than taking away from it.

A facilitator is someone who helps a group achieve its objectives without personally taking sides. The facilitator assists the group in achieving consensus on any disagreements that pre-exist or emerge in the meeting so that it has a strong basis for future action. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached then the facilitator would assist the group in understanding the differences that divide it.

#### ***The Secrets***

- Understands the goals of the meeting and the organization
- Keeps the group on the agenda and moving forward towards the goals
- Feel like they're in a good space where shy people are comfortable enough to speak and where people who tend to dominate a discussion feel compelled to defer to others
- Makes sure decisions are made democratically, with input from different voices



## *Sample Guide to Facilitating a Conference Call cont'd.*

### ***Helpful Tips***

- Speak so others can hear
- Know everyone's name!
- Don't forget shy or quiet people. Make sure everyone is given a chance to speak: Try to draw in more quiet members by saying things like "Emily, What do you think about..." or "Max, do you have anything to add on..."
- Don't dominate the conversation
- Use humour/icebreakers to ease tension or get going
- Ask, how, why, what for???????????
- Guide the group, don't lead the group
- Have a clear agenda and goals

### ***About Agenda and Goals***

- Preparation is KEY. Have an agenda with time limits on each item and one or two goals for the call. Without this calls can drag on forever.
- Ask people to comment on or add to the agenda
- The agenda should include a variety of perspectives. If nobody responds by email, make a couple calls. The more people who take responsibility for it the better

### ***At the Beginning***

- Welcome everyone – make sure everyone is on the call
- Assign a Note Taker
- Review the agenda and the objectives for the call (ask for changes, additions).
- Set a time limit
- Explain the ground rules. Two good ones are:
  - A) if you tend to talk often in group settings make an effort to speak less
  - B) if you tend to talk little in group settings make an effort to speak more
- Ask participants to "check in" – this can be done in a variety of ways (e.g. Rock Star Names, "If I Were the Weather..." etc.)

### ***At the End of the Call***

- See if anyone has anything else they want to add/discuss
- Confirm minutes will be sent to everyone.
- Summarize actions the group has said will be taken and who is going to do them.
- Set the time and date for the next meeting
- Confirm who will facilitate and who will take minutes at the next meeting

***After The Conference Call***

Following up on your meeting important!. Without effective follow up, all the decisions made at the meeting will be at least temporarily forgotten, and people's enthusiasm will fade.

- Make sure that the notes are sent out to group members.
- Phone or email anyone who missed the meeting to update them on decisions
- Make sure that the work you agreed to do is done before the next meeting!

***EXTRA: Some Tips on Taking Notes***

- The note-taker should be someone other than the facilitator (a person without a lot to say).
- Send the notes out to everyone as soon as possible after the call.
- Short and SWEET are best
- Your conference call notes should list:
  - » The name of the committee, date, place and time of the meeting
  - » Names of committee members present and absent
  - » Assignments/Tasks and deadlines (include peoples' names)
  - » Reports made
  - » Announcements made



## SECTION FIVE: REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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### References

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- United Nations Associations in Canada. *The Expedition Guide to Youth Agenda 2002*. (2002)
- Wright, S.E. *Starting right: Designing an effective, inclusive volunteer program*. Toronto, ON: Volunteer Centre of Toronto. (2003)

## Resources

### Guidebooks and Manuals

There are many great youth engagement resources that you can draw from, most available via the internet. Here are but a few to get you going.

City of Toronto's *Involve Youth: A guide to involving youth in decision-making* and *Involve Youth 2: A guide to meaningful youth engagement* which provides advice on youth engagement to organizations and staff who work with youth. Both are available at [www.toronto.ca/involveyouth](http://www.toronto.ca/involveyouth).

Groundwork's *Youth Hands! Youth Voices! Youth Policy Engagement Through Local Action Projects*. This manual looks at youth engagement in policy making at the local level. Designed for youth, youth organizations, and organizations that work with youth who want to learn more about how local government works, and how they can work with their local government to affect local decision making. [www.lifecyclesproject.ca/resources/youth\\_hands.php](http://www.lifecyclesproject.ca/resources/youth_hands.php).

*Leap Into Action: Simple Steps to Environmental Action*. BC Conservation Foundation and Wild BC. By Sue Staniforth. This guidebook reviews the current research on action education, including new techniques and ideas on how to lead students to action. Order from Wild BC at [www.hctf.ca/wild](http://www.hctf.ca/wild).

*The Expedition Guide to Youth Agenda 2002*. Prepared by the Youth Summit Team and the United Nations Association in Canada. This guidebook communicates some of the challenges, lessons learned and accomplishments learned by the Youth Summit Team, so that it may guide the development and coordination of future youth projects. Available on-line in French and English at [www.unac.org/youth\\_sd](http://www.unac.org/youth_sd).

*The Youth Friendly Guide to Intergenerational Decision Making Partnerships*. 2004. A guidebook produced by the *Apathy is Boring* organization, the Youth Friendly Guide is a great resource for organizations looking to form effective intergenerational partnerships. Available in English or French at [www.youthfriendly.com](http://www.youthfriendly.com).

*The Youth Volunteer Program Implementation Manual* by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Newfoundland and Labrador. Driven by their guiding principle of representing the issues, concerns, dreams and thoughts of young people, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Newfoundland and Labrador created this manual to help with the implementation of youth volunteer programs in communities. Developed based on input from interviews and focus groups with youth, this step-by-step manual describes how to plan, recruit, screen, train and support youth volunteers. [www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/pdf/CSC-YVPIM.pdf](http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/pdf/CSC-YVPIM.pdf).

## **Organizations and Online Resources**

**The Green Street Youth Action Centre:** The Youth Action Centre is the Green Street's Youth Engagement Program (YEP) home site. The YEP was created to link youth who had participated in a Green Street program with other environmental learning and action opportunities. [www.youthactioncentre.ca](http://www.youthactioncentre.ca)

**Centre for Excellence In Youth Engagement:** This website brings together the expertise of youth, youth service providers, academic researchers and policy makers to identify, build and implement models of effective practices for meaningfully engaging youth. [www.tgmag.ca/centres](http://www.tgmag.ca/centres)

**Dream Now!:** Dream Now! teaches youth to get involved with passion and to use their passions to create grassroots projects in their community and around the world. [www.dreamnow.org/home.cfm](http://www.dreamnow.org/home.cfm)

**Environmental Youth Alliance:** EYA works to create a better sustainable future through grassroots projects, especially building rooftop gardens, community gardens, environmental building projects and community mapping programs. [www.eya.ca](http://www.eya.ca)

**Green Street:** The Green Street community delivers credible, accessible and affordable programs that are relevant to students' concerns, curriculum-linked, encourage a sense of personal responsibility for the environment, foster a commitment to sustainable living, and promote an enduring dedication to environmental stewardship. [www.green-street.ca](http://www.green-street.ca)

**The Otesha Project:** Otesha means "reason to dream" in Swahili, and these human rights activists bring bicycles, theatre and good people to spread awareness and empowerment to a place near you! [www.otesha.ca](http://www.otesha.ca)

**Sierra Youth Coalition:** SYC is a national, youth driven, and diverse non-profit organization working in Canada. Through grassroots action, SYC works to address globalization, consumption, and climate change, especially in youth communities. SYC also has a great resource for new environmental groups called the Sierra Youth Coalition Group Toolkit. [www.syc-cjs.org](http://www.syc-cjs.org)

**Taking It Global:** An online community connecting 90,000 youth worldwide, and supporting you to help you action locally and globally. [www.takingitglobal.org](http://www.takingitglobal.org)

**Youth Action Network:** An initiative of the International Youth Foundation, YouthActionNet invests in the power and promise of young people to create positive change. It offers young change makers ideas, resources, and connections to like minds around the world. [www.youthactionnet.org/who](http://www.youthactionnet.org/who)

**Youth Environmental Network:** This group is working to bring together youth environmental groups, to build up their successes and to improve relationships between YENGOs and the government. This is a great place to start if you're looking for resources to start up your own group. [www.yen-rej.org](http://www.yen-rej.org)

**Youth Can!:** They're acting to provide youth with the tools to resolve conflicts without violence, and to work towards violence prevention in schools and healthy communities. [www.yci.org](http://www.yci.org)

**YouthFriendly.Com:** Designed to offer easily accessible information about what intergenerational partnerships are and the tools to make your organization youth friendly. [www.youthfriendly.com](http://www.youthfriendly.com)