

WEBINAR VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Office of Population Affairs

Youth Engagement Matters: The Power of Youth Voice in Teen Pregnancy Prevention

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INA RAMOS: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ina Ramos, and I'd like to welcome you to today's webinar, Youth Engagement Matters: The Power of Youth Voice in Teen Pregnancy Prevention. This webinar is brought to you by the Office of Population Affairs.

I will now turn things over to Tammy Bartasavich for an OPA welcome and introduction of today's presenter.

TAMMY BARTASAVICH: Good afternoon, everyone, and happy Monday. My name is Tammy Bartasavich, and I'm a project officer for the Office of Population Affairs. This is the third webinar in our group of webinars that we've been offering, and we're happy that you could attend. With that I would like to say a couple important things. We will not be answering any questions related to open funding opportunity announcements during these webinars.

Any questions about open FOAs should be directed to OPA and/or OASH Office of Grant's Management. Today's webinar is Youth Engagement Matters. And our presenter today is Nicole Pokorney, and Nicole is from the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth development since 2006.

She has a Master's in Education in School Counseling and has been involved with youth work for over 25 years. In her time with the Extension, she has been a member of the state's Civic Engagement Team, in which she has researched, developed, and taught education workshops in service learning and youth leadership experiences.

She now serves as the Minnesota 4H Outdoors Adventures State Coordinator and supervises 15 staff within extension youth development. Her passions include youth engagement and leadership, outdoor recreation and teaching. So thank you, Nicole, for being available to for us. And I'll turn it over to you.

NICOLE POKORNEY: Thank you so much. This is a really new format of not being able to be super interactive with everyone. So as they mentioned, if you have questions or comments, please chat those in and we have a designated question and answer time at the end. My office is in Rochester, Minnesota, so I'm coming to you from snowy Minnesota. But we're getting some beautiful weather here.

So at the Center for Youth Development and Extension at the University of Minnesota, we've been working in the area of youth engagement both intentionally and specifically since the early 2000s. And we've been learning about youth engagement by doing it ourselves in all of our programming across the state and some nationally, learning from others who are doing it, our partners, our stakeholders, other youth serving organizations, and facilitating dialogue amongst practitioners about what youth engagement is and how to do it well.

With specifically to teen pregnancy prevention programs, we want to help the system to function in a better and more sustainable way for your youth, communities, and the populations. And so in our time together, our short hour, we're going to do the overview and objectives, we're going to look into quality youth programs and get a shared understanding there of what that means, we're going to dive right into the Rings of Engagement, and then look at those organizational strategies to implement youth engagement into your programs. And then, as I mentioned, we're going to leave some time at the end for some questions and answers.

For today, our objectives of the training is to define quality youth program and youth engagement overall, learn about and how to recognize the Rings of Engagement in your programming, analyze your current program with the lens of youth engagement-- we won't have a lot of time for you to do that, but hopefully giving you the tools and resources to be able to walk away from this webinar and information to be doing that-- and then, how to apply the youth voice for system change.

First, I would like you to a moment-- this is where that interactive piece is-- I would like you to think about a time where you saw good youth engagement. And it could be in a program. It could be in an after school activity. It does not have to be where you are serving right now.

So I'm going to give you a few seconds to think about what do you see, what do you hear, what do you feel, or what do you smell? Or all of the above. So please take a few moments and just envision youth engagement.

So many times, youth professionals that have served young people can share numerous stories of what good youth engagement is. And more often than not when I have taught this curriculum, people already know what it looks like or smells like or what you hear. In this webinar, we're going to really tackle that organizational structure and some of the components of what true youth engagement is.

When I've done this before, answers such as a real shared youth adult partnership. People hear children laughing. See children smiling. You see youth discovering new interests. You see youth really having an input in programming, their youth voice.

Time may go very fast during programming, even if it's real challenging programming. And the fun ones are like, even the sweaty smell of young kids playing outside where time just goes by

really fast. And so we all can really picture youth engagement, and we will continue to go back to those objectives that we are going to focus on today.

When we begin to work closely and look at our programs, it is most effective when we have a shared understanding of youth work, quality youth programming, and what youth serving professional roles are. And the research does not discriminate between the types of youth organizations and the programs that serve young people. So for the purpose of this presentation, we're going to use this definition of youth work-- the interactive practice of shared teaching and learning that organizes around the needs, interests, aspirations, and well-being of young people.

When we look at youth serving professionals, we also want to have that shared understanding as we move forward into more intentional work, such as youth engagement. We recognize that learning happens through a partnership between the youth worker and the young person. We want to meet young people where they are and build from there.

And we are as youth serving professionals attentive to the identity, background, and everyday life of young people. And I think you're going to see this theme really resonate throughout the presentation. For the last few years, the research associated with Youth Program Quality Assessment, or YPQA, has been a driving force in how we look at experiences for youth within youth serving organizations.

So we have a shared understanding of what youth are. We have a shared understanding of youth professionals. We also need to really look at what the quality programs are. We look at the top of this pyramid, where you see the word engagement. When we really offer quality interaction and engagement in our program experiences, youth gain that greater sense of themselves and their relationship to the greater whole. And that's where we're starting to talk about youth voice in making a difference in our programming, such as teen pregnancy prevention.

Looking through the YPQA, we unveil that quality programs must obviously have physical and emotional safety, supportive relationships. They offer opportunities to belong. We offer positive social norms.

We offer support for efficacy and mattering. The youth matter. We give opportunities to build skills in whatever context what we're talking about. And naturally, we have an integration of family, school, and community efforts. We know that it is a multi-level and multifaceted approach when we're working with youth.

Other characteristics of quality programs is that we have an intentional focus on a range of youth development outcome. Many of our programs may feel focused on a certain programmatic piece, but what are those overall youth development outcomes? We also offer building connections and relationship within and outside of those organizations and programs.

We have a deliberate program structure design and delivery. We have an intensity of contact, not just a one and done type of deal but intensity of those contact hours, could be moments, those experiences. And then, a support for continuous reflection and data driven change. And again, throughout this presentation I think you'll see where the youth adult partnerships, the youth voice, working with that data, that evaluation, that feedback to really make systematic changes.

So now that we've quickly explored a shared view on youth serving professionals and quality programming, I want to start diving into what true youth engagement is and focusing on what overall youth engagement is. It tends to be experiential and project based learning. And when I say project based learning, it could definitely be any context of the youth.

As I said in the beginning, it does not discriminate. So we could be working with teen pregnancy prevention programs. I could be working with my outdoor adventure. But that project in identifying what that context is. It attends to their interests and developmental needs.

We have organizational goals. We have shared engagement goals. And we'll dive into that, but how do we make sure that the youth is in the center of that? And we recognize young people's unique strengths as leaders, as a voice, as change agents. But we also need to be giving those opportunities for youth to make a difference.

We also want to talk a little bit about what youth engagement is not. Working with youth for over 25 years, I've seen just the whole gamut of what people believe is youth engagement when it's done more damage to either an organization, or to a committee, or to the youth and adults that are on those committees or programs. And so one of the myths is youth engagement is accomplished by placing one youth on a board or committee.

And as we dive into participation, you'll see where Roger Hart really talks about tokenism, that just because there's a youth in the room doesn't mean that it's a true youth engagement. Youth engagement means that adults surrender their roles as guides and educators. We're all hired to be youth serving professionals for a reason, for our expertise, for our experience, for maybe what we went to school or our research is on. And it does not mean that we surrender our roles.

We are guides and educators still. One of my favorite myths is that adults are ready for youth engagement. Many, many stories on adults not knowing how to listen, how to engage-- there's that word again, but how to engage youth for really effective systematic change agents and listening. The other part of that is youth are not ready for adult engagement.

So much of the youth and their lives are spent listening to adults, to educators, to being taught at instead of with. And so some of the training around is really looking at that youth adult partnership and what does shared leadership mean. And so those are some of the myths that we like to-- when we're talking with our organizations and start getting out more is that these

are some of the myths that sometimes you really have to point blank address and provide additional training for youth and adults to work through this.

We're going to dive right into the Rings of Engagement, and this was coming out of the context of our youth engagement for many years, our research, our curriculum development is this. The four types of the engagement in this are the participation, as you can see, the colored rings, passion, voice, and collective action.

And research supports all these types of engagement as opportunities for youth and adults to learn and grow while connecting with each other-- as you can see that line across-- and within their communities. While youth engagement is often thought of as a process of adults engaging youth, each of these rings involves youth and adults engaging each other. And as such, they are linked at their core by ongoing, authentic youth adult relationships required to make each of these engagements happen.

And know that these Rings of Engagement are not depicted as hierarchical with one form of engagement being more important than the other. And nor are they depicted as a developmental continuum, where as you get older, mature, that one builds on the other. They each are critical in offering unique benefits within youth engagement. They're interdependent.

And expanding and deepening opportunity in one ring can always help further the development of the other. So we're going to dive in, but this is the overall model of the Rings of Engagement for true youth engagement. We're going to start with participation as the one ring that is depicted first on that model.

The participation ring represents opportunities for young people to participate in a range of formal, informal, non formal activity through which they connect with positive people and places. they experience a variety of changes and supports that further their growth and development. And it might include participating in school, after school, unique programs such as yours, community service, youth groups. It could be at a community center.

And an important lens which to look at this Ring of Engagement is developmental. And we need to think about that. As the youth we serve come to us as our programs, or we go to them with our programs, who decides with, as they do changes as they get older? An example is that as sometimes youth get their driver's license, they tend to have a broader scope of what they decide or who's deciding will change as they get that little bit more freedom.

They mature and develop into new roles. They are interested in different things as they get older. I always ask a group of teenagers what they wanted to be when they were three, four, or five years old. And they giggle sometimes at the things that they really were interested in, and as they get older and change, we want that to happen.

And sometimes, there's nuances in each of those careers that they wanted to do when they were a little that they're still interested in. And they've had opportunities to really develop that

into a true career and passion. Developmentally, we have a couple of models that we can look at. The Ladders of Leadership, which gives us the opportunities to practice leadership and voice, which is what participation in youth engagement is.

And I'm going to share with you real quick about Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation. Roger Hart developed this in '94, and it really has not changed over the years since then. But as you can see, the Ladder of Student Involvement in School, this model is meant for all youth serving organizations. And you can see starting down at the bottom of participation, where one, a manipulation of not-- the bottom three really are non participation.

That tokenism I mentioned of placing one youth on a board and just telling them, good luck, just interact with adults and say what you need to say, is really a non participation degree of involvement and can be very detrimental to everyone. But as we move up the Degrees of Participation, they're informed. They're consulted.

Adult initiated. They're share decisions. And then, you get into the student initiated and directed action. And then, that true student or youth adult partnership happens at the top of that ladder. And this really coincides back to that slide, where YPQA, that interaction and true engagement, is initiated, shared decision making with adults and working on that true partnership and shared-- some people call it shared power.

Shared leadership. Shared decision making. When we have this true participation, youth engagement makes so much sense. And those benefits of participation in our programs are connections. Having that authentic adult in their life. It also-- positive psychosocial development. They've shown even in out of school activities, if we have that true engagement as participation, it relates back to enhance academic achievement.

Making good choices. Reduction in those risk taking behaviors. Positive identity in a safe place where youth can cope with stress, a sense of belonging, and have social trust. And so youth engagement with participation just makes sense.

The second Ring of Engagement is passion. And a lot of good youth workers recognize that everyone has untapped and perhaps unknown passions and strengths and that part of our job as youth serving professionals in no matter what program is to really expose young people to as many different experiences, relationships, ideas, opportunities as possible and really help them find their spark, something that they are willing voluntarily to work at and that they're committed to.

And it could be sports, arts, political action, break dancing, any kind of dancing, skateboarding, whatever. And as you can see, when they're participating, we can then expose them to all of these opportunities. It could be leadership as a passion.

And lots of different people talk about this human need to feel engaged. The Search Institute, the research shows the importance of sparks, the hidden flames in our youth that light their

fire, get them excited, and tap into those true passions about what they're interested in. And this is where some of-- we get them to change what they're interested in, or they discover what they're interested in.

Sparks come from the gut. They motivate and inspire. They're authentic talents, skills, dreams. And then when they're accessed, they lead to many positive outcomes and thriving behaviors. So many times, the clientele-- I can call them clientele-- our youth that we serve are not in those thriving behaviors. And how do we determine and give them those opportunities to find their spark and their passions?

Really all of the passions and sparks, it's really different ways of talking about similar things, things that give meanings to one life, bring energy for you, for you to feel focused, happy. Something that brings you satisfaction no matter the reason the youth have come to our programs. And we want this to as adults in our work and in our line of professionalism.

So that's youth passion, that's that next ring. Our third ring is voice. And voice ring represents opportunities for young people to voice their ideas and have input into program policies and practices that affect them. And this could include expressing their views through youth media.

Most of the youth that we serve may have better technical skills than we do. I know they do for me. When I need something on Facebook with some of our programs, I get youth to do that. And then, they also can give me some of that input of what they think people really need to know.

Participating on an advisory board as we were mentioning on participation. Political advocacy, doing research to gather the ideas of many youth to inform policy and program. We know youth listen to youth sometimes more than they will listen to us as adults, and so giving them those opportunities for input into decisions and to changing systems. And sometimes, their own voice and just their own life.

Many of the youth that come to us don't have that or feel like they don't have that power. And this voice piece or voice ring really talks about that. These opportunities-- and you're going to see how these rings are building on each other. They're authentic.

Opportunities to voice ideas must be ongoing, inclusive, visible. And with that as I mentioned again at the bottom of that Rogers Hart ladder, tokenism or just placing somebody on there-- the youth engagement myth that adults are ready for this type of work is that we need to develop capacities for youth and adults to really share youth voice.

And on the screen is inviting and responding to opportunities for informal conversation, dropping that formality and being able to just talk to each other. Then, there's also input through formal structures. It could be a participatory evaluation process. We need to have those capacities for effectively facilitating dialogue.

How do we draw voices out? Active listening, how to apply new learning, and understanding and appreciating each other's strengths and perspectives. And that's been some of the work that I've been working with too is, the adults that I work with really want the youth there, but they're not to the point of really understanding sometimes how that youth development is.

And so we're working with some of that and developing their capacities with some training and some dialogue. And we're going to talk a little bit more about youth voice. I'm going to jump to that last ring of collective action. Collective action ring represents opportunities for youth and adults to work together to achieve common goals, sharing power and authority to make decisions along the way.

It includes two distinct types of youth adult partnerships. In the first, young people have clearly defined authority to shape policy and make decisions within the current systems, so they already have that authority. The second, the youth and adults share the power to change systems. And that one happens when youth and adults share decision making authority for overall governance of an organization, or when they come together organized to effect social and political change in a broader community.

And so this one tends to seem harder to do. But as we move through the next half hour, I will share with you how these organizational changes happen when we are talking about collective action and adding all of the rings together. So how do we create this collective action?

Again, you'll see some of these same capacities. Openness to new ideas and getting the skills to facilitate that and really having the transparency about power. And that really has to be one of those pieces that makes us vulnerable. When we're working within our own programs and even larger organizations, larger stakeholders, is transparency about power?

Because you know, those of you who have worked with youth long enough, they already know what's going on or not going on without us saying it. But when it's authentic and we can talk to them about that power and shared decision making and the policy is, the transparency really brings it to a more trusting relationship.

And then in collective action, too, as we're changing-- and this is really setting us up for the implementing-- is identifying issues of deep concern. And again, this can go back to that individual youth in your program, identifying those issues of deep concern. It does not always have to be this world national perspective of where is that in your community? And we're going to dive into that and learn about those root causes.

And then staying with it for the long haul, not only the youth but the youth serving professional. I've been in different positions where the average stay for a youth serving professional was two years. And we had to back up and really look at, again, the issue of deep concern was retention of our youth serving professionals, because we were not even getting to the points of any of this other true engagement, because we had a rotating door.

And so for us, we had to pause and really talk about staff engagement and really change some of our organizational process for hiring and for onboarding and really getting that so professionals were staying for the long haul, which then they can in turn have this youth engagement philosophy. So sometimes, it feels like it's just about the youth, when the collective action, we realize it's a staff thing. It's an organizational issue. And we can get youth from the beginning to really help us with that.

So benefits of collective action. I wanted to make a separate slide for this, just because there's so much words. And I'll have you look through those. But when we have that true collective action, part of true engagement, we have youth that are helping create a community that they want to be engaged.

Redevelop critical social consciousness. And this piece, youth are already there. They can teach us as adults so much about this piece. But again, do they have the voice or feel like they have the voice to discuss those things? Collaboration, collective identity, trying out new roles in a community. Learn to negotiate balance and build those relationships, again, based on mutual respect.

That is a super, super quick rundown of youth engagement. I'm really glad that this is being recorded, even for the sake of some of the models that are on the slides. If you feel that to go back and look at these. The question is, how do we get there? How do we get there with especially our teen pregnancy prevention programs?

How do we get there when we're serving youth in some maybe dire straits, or preventive type of youth programming? We're going to look at each of these. Looking at your organization that you work at, is the awareness of the public value of youth?

We've dove into that a little bit, but I'll give you some more things to think about. We're going to talk about your organizational history and goals, and how does that relate to this? Conducting a SOAR analysis. Or if you have-- some are familiar with that YPQA, and that's across the nation, and it's not just extension where I work with. It's across youth serving organizations, that you can have somebody come in and actually do that type of evaluation.

And then, we're going to talk about shared youth engagement goals and having maybe some of those hard discussions with employers' organizational stakeholders. In any organization, we need to ensure that we have a shared definition of youth. Us on this webinar did a quick thing at the beginning. But as we start diving into working into our programmatic vision and mission and all of that, we really need to step back and-- does our organization or program really have a shared definition of youth?

What does that mean? Participation versus engagement. What do we really mean as a program? Does everybody sitting at a table for a staff meeting really understand what youth engagement means? We had talked for years and years about they're future leaders, or they're future citizens. Youth leaders.

But really, they are now. They are youth leaders now. Untapped sometimes and many times in programs. But how can we get them as youth to come to our programs, offer voice, offers shared decision making, and then the last bullet is that youth decision making. Getting to a point in our programs where they are making those decisions.

And like I said, sometimes it's just for themselves, and that's where that person is. Back in the beginning, we talked about good youth work is meeting where the youth are and making those decisions and untapped, and knowing that they are leaders right now. So thinking about norms and practices in your programs-- and this is not something that we definitely can do in an hour, but these are notes to take and think about, does my program and does my organization really have the same shared norms and practices around youth?

The other piece to this one is our organizational mission and goals. Not being able to see everyone or know everyone, we could have youth serving professionals that are maybe less than a year on the position and some of us who have been around 25 some years. Do you really know the organizational history mission and vision? Diving into that and really looking at, does that support this youth engagement research and work?

Does everybody, again, at the table really understand the organizational history, mission, and vision? And how has it changed over the years? Is it a newer program? A newer organization? Or is it one that's been around, again, up to 50 years, and that mission and vision and history, it really has changed, or really it hasn't.

So that's another piece to look at when we're trying to implement youth engagement. Assessing our organization is very, very important, and that's kind of what we're doing already right now. We're looking at shared definitions. We're looking at our organizational history, mission, and vision surrounding youth and youth engagement.

There's some intentional program evaluation, such as the YPQA. I used to work with a SWOT analysis. It's very similar to this. That was strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. And I started out as a self reflection of my programs.

But I want to introduce-- if you have not seen what a SOAR evaluation is, it tends to be much more positive. It's action oriented, strength focused, innovative focus. And you focus on the planning and moving forward, whereas SWOT analyses sometimes worked with a lot of threats and barriers and not as future oriented as a SOAR.

So a SOAR analysis looks at the strengths in your programs, the opportunities, the aspirations. What do we want to move forward with? In five years, what do we want to look at? And then what are the results we want to have?

So this can happen in many ways. And I have simply-- when I've taught this before, everybody gets a blank sheet of paper, divides it in four quadrants, and we took a half hour to an hour of people just looking at each of these components for a program evaluation.

Once we've taken that time to look at that-- and some of this might have already been done in different-- like I said, there's many ways that assessing our organizations can happen. And maybe you've had a formal one, and that information is out there. And so that's another step is just to go find that.

But also where you are as a youth serving professional is to do that program evaluation in your lens, in your eyes, in your position, and then moving to shared youth engagement goals. Do other people, again, at that table, in that office, on the board for your organization, do they also support and understand the SOAR analysis that you've done and developing shared youth engagement goals?

So building and assessing the infrastructure is where we're going to be moving to. Ensures that there are shared goals around youth engagement. Is your program really able to commit to these goals and efforts to create an environment for the audience that you serve?

And so some of those shared youth engagement goals that have been researched and developed for moving forward is that you can provide a full range of youth engagement opportunities in the community, in your program. Creating shared mechanisms to recruit youth and adult participants. Is there an intentional plan to recruit those adults and the youth?

Can your organization or program commit to training and coaching for youth and adult? We've said already in our '39 minutes, 40 minutes, that we need to build capacities. And sometimes, it's within staff, sometimes it's the youth, and sometimes it's the adults.

Are they engaged for research and evaluation? Is their funding sources? We're all working with the non-profit world. Is there money and funding sources, which is one reason why you're on this call, I understand. But are there additional funding sources that can identify and create these shared youth engagement goals and the work?

And then, the communication efforts to expand and deepen support for youth engagement in the community. And that's where our stakeholders, and-- it could be the grantees, which we're all here on the same reason. Other stakeholders that you would have in your organization.

It could be just the building next door that you work next to. And who are they? And would they help deepen that support for youth engagement and the youth that we have coming to our programs? Looking at how do we get there, I wanted to include this slide, because many of us are working with populations that are under served, underrepresented, marginalized.

And bringing it back home to your individual community-- these are just some things that are in addition to start thinking about before we jump into the operational pieces-- is that, are we providing a safe space for identity exploration? Exploring our neighborhood as a backdrop for cultural identity. Addressing barriers in urban settings.

Not all of us are in urban settings, but that would be us a significant component to really look at if you're sitting in an urban setting. Recognize and respect survival strategies of the youth. Our youth are coming to us at different stages. Are we in survival strategies?

The way we work with them will look different. Elders' perspectives. Are we working with a community and population that we really need to get the elders of that population, their perspectives, and they need to be at that table with us. And then, the ecological levels. We need to understand the youth that we are serving at different ecological levels.

And so I wanted to add this slide just to give some more perspective of the context that you work with, and then one of my favorite slides-- and I know this is out there, but when I was introduced to equity, I only was introduced to the first three boxes on the left. Equality, what equality looks like, what equity looks like, and then reality. That's what I was.

And just recently, I was introduced to what true liberation is. And equity and reality, it means that equity intentions often do not translate into culturally sustaining and equitable impact. Equity through liberation means that systems are put in place that empower everyone based on need to thrive from a stance of self empowerment.

I just found that to be not only powerful but very relevant when we're looking at youth engagement is that we are looking at that-- again, if you want it to be a SWOT analysis or a SOAR analysis-- but what are those barriers to each of the Rings of Engagement? What are the barriers in your program for participation?

What are the barriers for youth exploring their passions? What do we need to have in place so youth are truly liberated to have youth voice and participate in collective action? So again, I really wanted to add this slide as we're bringing this back to our community, and what are those-- where are the fences depicted in this picture?

Where are the fences in our programs that we really need to remove, address using that collective action and getting youth at the table from the beginning, because they can probably tell us right away what some of this is. Meaningful and equitable engagement of youth is a very important component, and creating those equitable opportunities for youth to express themselves, and again, like I said, voice their ideas and provide that true input.

So I just have a few more slides, and I see that there are chat questions, so I wanted to leave 10 minutes, and we're right on track. So wanting to look at building that organizational infrastructure is our next step into this true engagement. And we want to make sure that it's strategic.

We already talked about knowing the culture of our organization. That's where that history, mission, and vision comes from. Looking at our values, our youth engagement goals, and making sure that others are creating and enhancing that youth engagement culture. And many of us are working with programs.

And then, that next step is really applying the ideas within our organizations beyond our programs. Not everybody is thinking that same way. We might not be positioned in our role to be thinking that way. But we really want that language of engagement to be practiced in our organization.

And again, a lot of different definitions of youth engagement and that within an organization, we really need to build our organizational structure. That philosophy needs to be across the board and needs to be on the same page. And that could be agreeing to different opinions.

I also want to challenge you to start thinking strategically about integrating youth engagement beyond organizational level, again, if you're in that position. Who could help you? Who might be a barrier? What connections do you need to make?

And the good thing with us is we are networking. Youth serving organizations are good at networking. What other organizations are you aware of that have done this well? So as we gather here towards the end, we're really building that foundation, developing that shared philosophy, and putting it in place.

Involving youth from the start is pivotal in developing this structure. And then, looking at the sustainability. So here are some of those key things to be working on for the philosophy across our organizations, is that we have small groups collaborating, creating, coming together around the opportunities and developing processes and tools for that engagement. Again, looking for evaluation, training, opportunities.

And then, sustaining this. I've been here in youth work long enough that we get going on something, a philosophy, changing systems, but somebody leaves. Funding source is gone. The youth change. The mission changes.

How do we sustain with all of that? And this ongoing recruitment and development, those opportunities are built in. There's a range of roles for youth to grow into and shape. We work with youth.

They at some point graduate, whatever that looks like, out of our programs. How do we continue those roles and that work of youth voice so there is not this-- because maybe one of our youth is gone, and that voice is no longer there. How do we continue that sustainability?

And near-peer mentors. Having youth work with those that could be younger, could be less experienced, could be newer to the program. How do we have youth mentor youth for that sustainability?

As we finish more the instructional pieces, I want to get to the questions. But as you can see, this work is more than 50 minutes of a webinar. There are many avenues to receive more information. I am always available to talk about it.

But we just really want to be meaningful and significant as a program, as a youth serving professional. We want to be that significant role in youth's lives, and including parents and caregivers and community stakeholders. We really want to create that environment for optimal health in the teen pregnancy prevention programs.

And true engagement. Because as you saw, all of the benefits of true engagement should and could be applied, could and should be applied to their life otherwise. Academic citizens now, citizens later. Careers. Passions. All of that pieces, that that's our role. And true youth engagement is how we do that.

So I'm going to take one second to look through all of these chats. And I even want to read-- because I know not everybody is seeing these-- I also want to read some of the comments to others. One person said, I see students actively engaging with lessons, and it sounds like students asking meaningful questions.

Absolutely. Good you youth engagement example. So a question was, wondering if the assessment that was mentioned, is this an actual assessment that an organization could take to determine where they are as it relates to youth engagement? And at the time that was posted, I believe you're asking about the YPQA, that Youth Program Quality Assessment.

And what I will do for that is you can look online, first of all, but I can also send some of this information and questions and answers for the good of the group back to the hosts of this. The YPQA, if you go to the Center for Youth Program Quality, that is the organization that really developed that.

I know with Minnesota Extension, we trained every one of our staff to be able to be a facilitator in that and to also do those assessments across our state. But yes, the Center for Youth Program Quality is that organization that has developed that, and that's maybe where you can. But I will look into that and send that to the hosts.

Other questions? How do you help adults get over, but youth don't know what's good for them? And that is a great, great question. Much of my work is working with the volunteers that work with our youth programming. And we have some really good resources on developing positive youth and adult partnerships.

And again, that's some resources that I can send to the host. But there are some really good activities in this one curriculum that I use that you have youth really talking about what they think adults think and the adults talk about what they think youth think. And at the end of this activity, they're like, why were we even thinking that about each other?

So yes, it's a very hard situation. But that's that piece where we really build a capacity for adults to work with youth. And many of them I've seen still over the years, I've worked with them, they still don't get it. They're really good at what their role is, but they still think they're not serving youth, that they're teaching at youth.

So a very hard question, but I can send that information for youth adult partnerships. You can also Google that. Some really good activities.

Can you please talk about how to recruit, engage, and retain your target population? How often do you meet with them? So many youth are busy that it's hard to engage on a regular basis and keep them coming back. Yes, absolutely. And it's hard with a chat. I don't know if you mean specifically my target population or a person's target population.

I always think about going back to the participation ring, and that's really talking about this recruitment and retaining and taking a really hard core look at what are the barriers to participation in your program? So many times kids will come back and say that they weren't engaged, and so they're telling us right away, they're not engaged.

The activities, the information wasn't relevant. They did not see the value in that. And so like I mentioned, a SOAR analysis on your programs-- and you can take each ring separately and do that SOAR analysis. But for participation, it's really looking at those barriers of youth coming and again, getting youth from the start.

Do you have a group of youth that are coming that you can ask, what are some barriers for you to be here? What makes it hard for you to be there? The intensity of meeting with them really has to do with your individual program. With Extension, we work with 4H, so a national organization, and the research that we've done is that monthly meetings is some of the best practices.

But some of you might be working with programs that kids come in every week. So it really has to do with identifying the effectiveness of the program and what would suit the kids best. And yes, they are so busy. And I know of school programming, not only working in it for so many years but the research, things related to school will always come first.

And so we've been trying to be really creative of one, getting their passions. Working with Outdoor Adventures, we get kids that are open to that passion, and so they really look at that ring of engagement. And they come back because of passion. But then parts of it is, again, barriers.

School. Sports related. Transportation. In the research of youth engagement, transportation has been over and over the number one barrier for participating. And that has also been the number one barrier that's hard to address, because there's so many different things involved with that.

So really digging with that opportunity of ladders, of opportunities for participation and leadership. Are the older youth-- one of our problems is the older youth feel like they don't have always that opportunity for growth or opportunity for leadership. And so we have boards in place.

We have this near-peer mentorship, where they will take on younger kids and work with them in an area of passion. So they're sharing, they're teaching, but they're also gaining additional knowledge within their own passion. What are the core components of a good recruitment and retention plan? And again, I'm not sure if you're asking about volunteers or youth.

Volunteers, there's just so many tiers of that, that I can-- that's another thing, too. I'll just have this little menu, of-- we have a model that we use with Extension. I will send that back out. It's somewhat of a visual model, so I will send that also to the hosts.

And then the last question, be able to touch on this one just for a little bit before we're done. I would like to hear more about developing processes and tools for engagement and process based support. Are there resources for useful processes? I work with five teen health educators and am interested in operation... our approach and philosophy for longer term program and sustainability.

I would really-- for one minute, it's really hard for me to give you those. I do know that I am going to be working with somebody on a one to one basis for their structure and approaches and a philosophy. So if that is-- again, I can't see who this is. But if that is something that you're interested in, I would definitely be willing to work with you one on one.

I think my time is up. They are going to take this over to finish up before the top of the hour. I want to thank you. I have some things that I will send back to the host that we can share out to everybody that was registered for this and on the webinar. And like I said, I was asked to work with one organization on a one to one basis.

So if you're interested in that, being able to go back to the host and they can get that information to me. I would love to do that for anyone. So thank you for your time, and I wish we had more time.

TAMMY BARTASAVICH: Thank you, Nicole. I wish we had more time, too. You gave us some great information and many things to think about. So thank you. We really appreciate it at OPA.

If you're interested in the Open Funding Opportunities, visit the OPA website and also there, you will find the place to submit questions and the FAQs. So thank you all for dialing in and attending this great webinar. And about concludes the webinar. Thank you all.