



Youth Listening Session Toolkit



Office of
Population Affairs

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Between 2017 and 2019, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Office of Population Affairs (OPA) led a Youth Listening Session (YLS) collaborative pilot with 13 Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program grantees to test different youth engagement strategies and develop resources to support organizations in more meaningfully and systematically engaging youth in their projects. This toolkit is the product of that collaboration and would not have been possible without the commitment and enthusiasm of countless staff, youth, and adult allies associated with the following grantee organizations:

2018 YLS Grantee Participants

Grant Organization

Baltimore City Health Department
Community Action Partnership of San Luis
Obispo
New York City Teens Connection

2019 YLS Grantee Participants

Grant Organization

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
City of Hartford
City of Rochester
Delta Health Alliance
Hennepin County
Maricopa County
Mary Black Foundation
Project Ntarupt (Dallas Foundation)
UNM Health Sciences Center
SHIFT NC

OPA would also like to thank the 2019-2020 Grantee Learning Collaborative for reviewing this toolkit and co-leading its dissemination.

INTRODUCTION

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

In recent years, a growing recognition of meaningful youth engagement and of the power of user-driven programs has fueled efforts to identify best practices for engaging youth in health initiatives. Studies have suggested that involving the target group and using formative research to ensure that both the content and delivery of the intervention is acceptable can increase the likelihood of uptake.² More importantly, youth value being included in decision-making as well as having opportunities to develop and implement their own projects. They want to and should be equal partners – not just recipients or advisors – in the programs that impact them.

Involving the target group, especially for youth-oriented programs aimed at addressing health disparities, requires that engagement be undertaken equitably. Equitable engagement means that youth

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) defines youth engagement as “an inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people’s ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programs, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms and organizations that affect their lives and their communities, countries and globally.”¹

“I believe the YLS normalized the importance of garnering youth voice, so that it no longer feels like a project an individual would have to talk on, on their own, but something the organization should, and can, incorporate regularly.”
–YLS Grantee

of all backgrounds and lived experiences, particularly those who are the most vulnerable, have opportunities to participate, be empowered, and have their voices heard along with other youth in decisions that affect their lives.

Youth engagement can take many different forms – every program will have different goals and populations, and different models will be necessary to meet those needs. No matter what youth engagement looks like, it is important that the emphasis is on the youth experience and avoids tokenism, where youth are engaged solely in a symbolic way without real power. Youth should be at the forefront, and their experiences should be highlighted no matter the method. Youth Listening Sessions (YLSs) offer an opportunity to meaningfully engage youth, signaling that their opinions are valuable, and incorporating their voices into program discovery, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

¹U.S. Agency for International Development. Youth Power Community of Practice – Youth Engagement. Available at <https://www.youthpower.org/youth-engagement-cop>.

²Brown, T., and Wyatt, J. Design Thinking for Social Innovation. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Winter, 2010. Available at http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/design_thinking_for_social_innovation.

A YLS is just one promising strategy to gather youth input and create meaningful action based on their perspectives. It is important to note that humility and empathetic listening increase the likelihood of success for any youth engagement strategy, and therefore the lessons shared in this resource have wide applicability for any organization seeking to more meaningfully and equitably collaborate with young people.

Mary Black Foundation



YLS PROJECT OVERVIEW

In late 2017, the Office of Population Affairs (OPA) began designing the first iteration of the Youth Listening Session Special Project. At the time, OPA-funded grantees were expected to engage users of their programs through Youth Leadership Councils. To further explore and encourage meaningful youth engagement, OPA leveraged an opportunity to interact directly with youth and create a mutually beneficial learning experience for OPA and participating grantee organizations. Their aim was to identify promising strategies for soliciting youth voices and incorporating them into programs. The project was structured so that

grantees led their own sessions with OPA guidance and support, allowing grantees ultimate creativity and flexibility regarding the session format, youth participants, facilitators, and questions. OPA partnered with three Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) grantee organizations to conduct these first youth listening sessions: Baltimore City Health Department, New York City Teens Connection, and Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County in California.

OPA assessed project implementation and recognized the benefit of expanding the project to: (1) increase OPA grantees' intent and capacity for systematically soliciting and incorporating youth feedback; (2) strengthen OPA's understanding of various strategies for encouraging youth voice; and (3) apply lessons learned to inform OPA initiatives and educate and empower partners in meaningful youth engagement. OPA simultaneously conducted a literature review to identify best practices for youth engagement, focusing on fair compensation and equitable engagement.

Beginning in January 2019, the office collaborated with 10 more TPP grantees on an expanded YLS Special Project.

Between January and September 2019, grantees received targeted technical assistance and intensive staff support from OPA to plan, conduct, process, and act on insights from their YLS.

Figure 1 – YLS Special Project

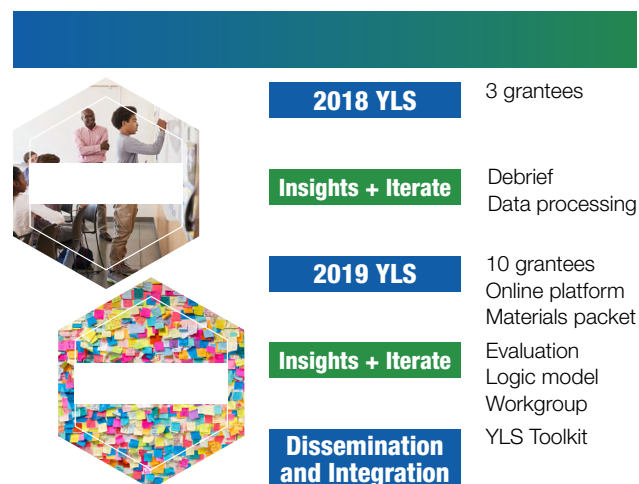


Figure 2 –YLS Special Project 2019 Grantees

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	YOUTH INPUT STRATEGY
Maricopa County	Phoenix, AZ	Writing workshop and performance
Hennepin County	Minneapolis, MN	Consensus building workshop with youth in the Juvenile Justice system
Mary Black Foundation	Spartanburg, SC	Day of Celebration and Reflection with discussion and group activities
SHIFT NC	Durham, NC	Photovoice project with youth involved in both the Juvenile Justice and Foster Care systems
UNM Health Sciences Center	Albuquerque, NM	Accelerated Experience-based Co-Design (AEBOD)
Project Ntarupt (Dallas Foundation)	Dallas, TX	Focus groups and activities with two single-sex groups of youth in detention
City of Hartford	Hartford, CT	Youth theater and audience engagement
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	Hugo, OK	Workshop with games and discussion groups with Native American youth
Delta Health Alliance	Clarksdale, MS	Two focus groups with conversation and activities
City of Rochester	Rochester, NY	Focus group and activities

Figure 3 – YLS Special Project Desired Outcomes

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES	MID TERM OUTCOMES	LONG TERM OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Grantees identify and develop a plan to incorporate lessons learned and insights from YLS project into grant program » Grantees self-report more confidence and are more likely to duplicate YLS or other mechanism for soliciting youth input » OPA completes and supports grantees in the use of the YLSToolkit » OPA YLS Team assesses YLS project following cumulative final debrief and YLS reverse site visit in order to propose youth engagement recommendations for adoption at OPA » OPA educates grantees, partners, and other youth-serving professionals on use of YLSs to improve programs through presentations and dissemination of lessons learned and insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Grantees incorporate lessons learned and insights from YLS project into grant program » Grantees demonstrate a commitment to meaningfully and systematically soliciting and incorporating youth feedback on programs » Increase number of OPA programs/initiatives that require meaningful youth engagement as a core component » OPA team identifies further insights into action steps for meaningful youth engagement at the federal and grantee level » YLS grantees and OPA publish and present findings from YLS Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increase number of grantees that demonstrate standard practice for meaningful youth engagement » Programs/initiatives supported by OPA include meaningful youth engagement as a core component or focus area » OPA advances research on youth engagement as a core component in TPP programming

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit and its accompanying Workbook with 18 ready-to-use templates, forms, and sample documents is the culmination of the YLS Special Project and is informed by the lessons learned, insights gained, and successful approaches used by the 2018 and 2019 YLS special project grantees. It reflects tools and resources utilized by the YLS grantees, as well as from a variety of other sources, including those generated by federal and nonfederal entities involved in youth engagement.

The toolkit is designed for organizations that want to conduct a youth listening session within their own community with the following purposes:

- » Guide users through all stages of conducting a youth listening session, including planning, implementation, extrapolating insights, and making program improvements;
- » Promote inclusive practices to support safe and supportive environments that accommodate equitable opportunities for youth participation;
- » Inspire innovative approaches and creative problem-solving when soliciting youth input and ideas; and
- » Enhance the motivation and capacity of youth-serving professionals and organizations to meaningfully and authentically engage youth as equal partners in the discovery, planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of youth-serving programs.

The toolkit is organized to correspond to the three stages of a youth listening session:

- » Planning a YLS
- » Conducting a YLS
- » Acting on YLS Insights and Lessons Learned

The modules are autonomous and can be reviewed independently or sequentially depending on the organization's YLS implementation stage. In addition to the modules, the toolkit includes a Workbook whose documents are referenced and hyperlinked in the relevant sections of the toolkit. The toolkit also includes several callout boxes. These represent lessons learned from the YLS Special Project, quotations from participating youth, as well as other important tips and considerations.

It is important to note that one limitation of this toolkit is that it does not fully address how to engage youth voices with technology. For more information on how technology influences youth engagement, refer to [USAID's Youth Engagement in Development: Effective Approaches and Action Recommendations for the Field](#).³

³U.S. Agency for International Development. (2014). *Youth engagement in development: Effective approaches and action-oriented recommendations for the field*. Washington, DC: USAID, Office of Education in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and the Environment.

PLAN YOUR YOUTH LISTENING SESSION

The first, and largest, section of this toolkit addresses all the necessary steps to take when planning a youth listening session. The key to a well-executed YLS lies in preparation.

The following pages will walk you through each of these steps and offer guidance, suggestions, examples, and lessons learned. This section will also describe and link to several tools included in the **Workbook** at the end of the toolkit specifically designed to help you plan for your YLS. See complete list to the right.

GET STARTED

Start by assembling a small team from your organization. Team members may vary in their level of involvement throughout the process, but it is important to be inclusive in the beginning when defining your purpose. Take concrete steps to engage youth at this stage, and all stages, in your process. If youth are involved, take additional steps to ensure language used and planning activities are youth friendly.

Your first task is to identify your organization's intentions and capacity for conducting a YLS to ensure you start off on the right track. Work through the questions below together as a group.

Workbook Resources

- » YLS PLAN AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE
- » GOAL SETTING WORKSHEET
- » ICEBREAKERS
- » SAMPLE AGENDAS
- » SAMPLE QUESTIONS BANK
- » SAMPLE PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
- » SAMPLE YOUTH ASSENT FORM
- » SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE FORM
- » SAMPLE ANONYMOUS DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY FORM
- » SAMPLE YOUTH FEEDBACK FORM
- » SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER
- » SAMPLE OBSERVATION TEMPLATE
- » SAMPLE SUPPLY LIST

"I am my own person. I am not something you can put in a box."

–YLS Youth Participant

Questions:

- » Why do you want to meaningfully engage youth in your program?
- » What supports exist in your program to enable you to solicit, incorporate, and act on youth input? Note: “Supports” can refer to the conditions, policies, norms, structures, funding, people, etc. that empower you to solicit and incorporate youth voices.
- » How can current support be enhanced or improved or what additional supports are needed to more effectively solicit, incorporate, and act on youth input?
- » What aspects of your program are you hoping to strengthen with youth input and engagement?
- » Why might a YLS be the right youth engagement strategy for your organization?
- » Have you previously considered conducting a YLS? If so, what prevented you from doing it?
- » Who will lead your YLS effort? Who else will be involved? Who needs to be informed?
- » Should other community partners (and/or stakeholders) be involved? If so, who? How will you engage them as part of this effort?

Tips for Making Your Planning Process Youth-Friendly

- » Ensure adult and youth participants understand that youth contributions are equally valued
- » Engage more than one youth in the process
- » Be flexible, humble, and positive
- » Lean toward providing extra context and encourage questions
- » Consider alternative methods of providing feedback if group conversation is overwhelming to youth
- » Set meeting times that accommodate youth schedules
- » Meet in safe and convenient locations and consider going to the youth
- » Coordinate and subsidize travel
- » Use straightforward language; avoid jargon
- » Provide stipends, paid internships, or staff roles for youth team members, and/or coordinate school credit
- » Provide meals and snacks
- » Ask the youth regularly for feedback on how they think the planning process itself is going
- » Commit to the youth’s development throughout the process by providing training and networking opportunities and take steps to acknowledge their leadership status as part of your community
- » Stay connected with youth so they see the impact of their work
- » Assign mentor(s) on the team so youth with varying levels of experience in professional settings feel comfortable and confident

Another important step is to consider the coordination required to effectively plan your YLS. Will you have a workgroup or planning committee that meets regularly? How frequently will these meetings take place? In planning their YLS, Delta Health Alliance had a YLS committee consisting of several staff members who had existing relationships with the youth. The committee met monthly, and then twice a month as the date got closer, over a period of three months. Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma held weekly meetings, 30-60 minutes in length, over the course of two months.

SET GOALS

It is critical for your YLS team to clearly define your goals prior to initiating session planning in order to establish a structure which will help keep your session on track.

As a team, use the **Goal Setting Worksheet** (Workbook page A2) to identify 1-2 overall goal(s) for the youth listening session. Ensure that these goals are beneficial to your organization or program, as well as the participating youth and/or community of youth at large.

**“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence;
it is self-preservation.”**
—YLS Youth Participant

Within these goals, identify 3-5 specific objectives. Remember to make your objectives SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Specific) and consider developing metrics that will help you measure your progress in meeting these objectives. Set your goals and objectives early but revisit and retool as often as needed throughout your project.

After determining your project goals, the YLS planning team should begin to discuss, fill out, and assign tasks from the **YLS Plan and Project Management Tool** (Workbook page A3).

YLS grantees identified various goals, including to:

- » Improve parental consent forms and increase their rate of return
- » Understand youth experiences with accessing health services in detention facilities
- » Collect and share best practices for soliciting tribal youth input
- » Get feedback on how to better inform youth on how and where to get tested for STDs
- » Refine innovative program and packaging prior to dissemination
- » Raise young people's consciousness regarding the systemic and environmental factors that shape their health

DESIGN YOUR SESSION

Now that you have clear goals and objectives for your YLS, it is time to design the session. This will include both (1) identifying the format for your session and (2) working through logistics.

YLS FORMAT

Start by deciding on the format for the session, or how you will structure the event to solicit youth input and ideas for your program. There are many different methods for soliciting youth input, and individual youth will respond differently to each method.

You may have a sole focus or may integrate multiple strategies in your YLS to meet your goals. You may also consider using a focus group to determine which structure your youth prefer.

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
Consensus building workshop	A focused conversation meant to help a group develop shared awareness on a topic in order to reach a consensus on a question.
“Design your own ____”	Split youth into small teams to draw out their own ideal health program (e.g., What would it look like? Where would it be? How would you get kids in the door? What would it not be? Who would come there?)
Focus group(s)	Invite small groups of youth to share their experiences in their programs and communities. Give them the floor to speak openly and honestly.
Gallery walk	This discussion technique allows participants to actively engage with one another. During the gallery walk, participants explore meaningful questions, documents, images, problem-solving situations, or texts displayed throughout a room. Participants then work together in small groups to share ideas in response to what they’ve read or seen.
Interview	Might be youth-to-youth, facilitator-to-youth, or youth-to-facilitator. Find more information from Learning for Action . ⁴
Photovoice	Provide youth with cameras in advance or during a session so they can take photos that will answer the facilitator’s questions (e.g., where do you go when you have questions about sex?); facilitator can have youth discuss or more confidentially share their visions, and have youth explore and respond to each other’s work. Photovoice can empower youth that may have been omitted from “traditional” research and offer an increased sense of community. Find more information on Photovoice from Rutgers . ⁵

⁴Learning for Action. Preparing to Conduct an Interview or Focus Group. Available at <http://learningforaction.com/preparing-to-conduct-an-interview-or-focus-group>

⁵Rutgers. PhotoVoice Facilitator’s Guide. Available at http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/PhotoVoice_Manual_18042016.pdf

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
Sketch-your-answers	Provide youth with papers, markers, and other crafting tools to draw responses to questions or prompts.
Storytelling	Stories can be powerful and useful tools; they can be compelling, moving, and empowering to the listener and, more importantly, the storyteller. Find more information Khan Academy . ⁶
Theater/audience engagement	Allow youth to create and perform their own stories via theater productions or skits.
Think-Pair-Share	Provide youth time to think through a question on their own, then team up with a neighbor, then report back to the group.
Writing workshop and performance	Youth are provided assistance and practice in writing their stories in response to questions or prompts you have identified. Youth practice sharing their stories in front of a safe audience and receive supportive feedback and are then invited to share their experiences on stage in front of an intimate audience.

Experiment with different approaches. You may want to consider combining different ways for connecting with youth to ensure they feel both comfortable and inspired to engage. [Creative Ways to Solicit Stakeholder Feedback](#), created by Public Profit, not OPA, provides a hands-on guide for implementing different methods of youth engagement.⁷ It may help you identify a YLS format, materials/supplies needed, and pros/cons to each approach. The document is illustrative, but not comprehensive, so explore alternative methods that best serve the unique needs, personalities, and dynamics of your youth, the space, and your facilitator.

When designing your session, it is important to identify the target audience – youth, youth and parents, a specific subpopulation

– determine the number of participants, consider group demographics (age, race, special populations, etc.), and be sure to include youth that are not typically heard from in your program. Do not always rely on the same 1-2 voices. Take attrition of youth into account when planning recruitment of participants.

Tip:

Don't waste time reinventing the wheel. What strategies have you identified in the past that best engaged the youth you serve? Group chats? Open dialogue? Workshops? Contests?

⁶Khan Academy. The Art of Storytelling. Available at <https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/pixar/storytelling>

⁷Public Profit. Creative Ways to Solicit Stakeholder Feedback. Available at <https://www.publicprofit.net/Creative-Ways-To-Solicit-Stakeholder-Feedback>

From Maricopa County: “Because we recruited 10 youth rather quickly, I didn’t feel I needed to push for more. Now that I know about the attrition issue, I would have continued. We also thought about making it more open to the public. But then we decided that we wanted to create a safe space, and this meant having fewer adults. We didn’t want the youth to get nervous or censor themselves.”

LOGISTICS

Your team’s next step is to develop your YLS Plan. You can use the **YLS Plan and Project Management Template** (Workbook page A3) as a living document to plan and carry out activities related to YLS. During this process, you will need to assign a person who will be responsible for implementing each task identified in your YLS plan. For example, who will develop the agenda, lead check-ins, take photos, collect media release forms, or facilitate the YLS session. Having two facilitators when working with a group allows for conversation, facilitation, and group management and may stimulate additional questions and comments to help guide the conversation. Additional roles include observers, official notetaker, photographer, person responsible for supplies, person responsible for scheduling the planning and debriefing meetings, etc.

YLS Insight: Adult allies should reflect the population they serve and be humble, flexible, positive, and inspiring.

Tip:

Youth want a safe space to “hang out” and just be kids, so your YLS shouldn’t be all about “work.” Ensure that there is an opportunity for socialization regardless of your YLS format.

City of Hartford



When planning the logistics of your YLS, you will need to consider the specific needs of underrepresented groups, including the steps necessary for proactively and intentionally planning the session to recruit, retain, and engage them. To fully understand their needs, you should talk directly to both the youth and the on-site staff whenever possible. Input should be incorporated throughout the planning and execution and be reflected in both the agenda and logistical portions of the YLS.

YLS CASE STUDY: Site-Specific Special Considerations

When working with youth in a specific setting, such as a detention center or group home, you will need to coordinate with the site to fully understand both the unique opportunities and the limitations.

Some examples of limitations include: the extent to which youth are allowed to participate in more physically engaging group activities, regulations regarding presence of additional adults in the room, size of the space, the potential need for gender separation, and the incentives allowed. Once these limitations are understood and considered, implementation of a YLS in a setting such as a detention center can be conducted with relative ease.

“We thought a YLS in detention would be a lot harder than it was.”

–YLS Grantee

In the 2019 YLS project, Project Ntarupt (Dallas Foundation) opted to conduct focus groups with youth in a juvenile detention center to understand the sexual health needs of youth within the juvenile justice system. The grantee faced challenges planning and implementing the focus group. To begin with, what was supposed to be one focus group turned into two, due to the requirement, by the site, to keep groups separated by gender. Additional challenges included having focus group questions obtain several layers of approval as well as lack of control logistically, such as the number of youth participating in the focus group, presence of other adults (i.e., juvenile security officer), and youth being pulled out and re-entering the group throughout the session. Due to the nature of the site with its policies and rules related to safety, the grantee had to be creative in how they engaged youth throughout the session. The grantee was limited in options for interactive activities and therefore used drawing exercises and finger scale activities, which ask participants to rate things on a scale of 1-5, to help break up the questions being asked. There was also the issue of collecting sensitive questions in the presence of other adult staff. The grantee

overcame this challenge by using index cards to collect responses to potentially sensitive questions. The grantee was also fortunate to get buy-in and interest from leadership with the Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) to include questions to understand youth's perspective on accessing and satisfaction with health care services within the JDC. However, this posed an additional challenge of having to share negative feedback with JDC leadership. Thankfully, the grantee had an already well-established relationship with this site, having partnered throughout the year to offer sexual health education classes, and was able to have an honest conversation with the site, which was well-received.

In response to her experience with the clinic, one girl said "They rush you. They don't take their time. They don't listen to you. They rush you through. What's wrong with you? You tell them. Okay. I'll prescribe you this and this and this. They don't sit there and talk to you like, "how did you get it?" Sometimes you can see the doctor but, you know, you [are only able to] see the doctor two weeks later, like I'm done being sick by then."

—YLS Youth Participant

During their reflection, they noted that they could have piloted the questions and activities with the youth and spent more time with the group overall. This

is an example of how the needs and settings of a specific group could be further considered in order to maximize the effectiveness of the session. In the future, programs that work with youth in the juvenile justice system, might consider using reflective writing sessions in addition to an open forum that would provide opportunities for more intimate and personal space for the youth to share how they feel without external pressures.

Project Ntarupt (Dallas Foundation)



DEVELOP MATERIALS

This section describes the various materials you may consider developing for your session. The types of materials you will need may differ depending on the format and activities of your session. Although it may seem like a daunting task, we have got you covered. You will find samples and/or templates for all the materials in the Workbook at the end of this toolkit.

YLS Agenda

Create a brief overarching agenda to share with the youth, but also dedicate significant time to building, testing, and refining your own annotated agenda. Your annotated agenda should include timing, assignments, and goals for each agenda item. It will also include the specific questions and prompts you will pose to youth. Be sure to include time at the beginning to describe the purpose of the YLS, read and collect signed youth assent forms, answer questions, collect photo release forms if necessary (note: minors will require parent/guardian signatures), and create and agree to community norms. You should also consider building in time for youth socializing and fun. Solicit partner and

Tip: Make sure that all questions are youth friendly. We recommend starting with a 6th grade reading level, including pictures, and always using the youth's language of choice.

youth feedback on your annotated agenda in advance. Refer to the **Sample Agendas** (Workbook page A12) from three of our YLS grantees and the **Sample Questions Bank** (Workbook page A18) for examples of questions that may be included.

"Some questions might be worked on to be more age and literacy appropriate. ...'What is sexual health?' might be an example of that. It may be too abstract for youth. Perhaps there is a way to navigate to that question indirectly in order to get the answers being sought."

—YLS Grantee

Tip: Reach out to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you plan to ask youth questions regarding their knowledge, attitudes, and intentions about sex to determine whether such research is (1) exempt or (2) requires a full IRB review. In some instances, you may already have IRB approval or exemption for research related to your grant program under which the YLS activities may be covered. For more information on regulations for protecting human subjects in research please review [HHS guidance on Regulations, Policy, & Posting](#).

Always be sure to review relevant state laws, organizational policies, and other administrative procedures of participating sites or partner organizations regarding the collection of data and obtain any necessary permissions to collect such data.

Facilitator Guide

You may want to develop a document geared directly to the facilitators of the YLS if an annotated agenda does not seem to offer enough direction. A facilitator guide provides a road map to keep the facilitator on track during the process. With the aid of a facilitator experienced in working with youth, a good facilitator guide can be the difference between smooth sailing and choppy waters for your YLS. You can find tips for developing guides from Harvard University⁸ and the World Health Organization⁹.

Parental Consent Form

As you may already know through your youth-serving programs, a parental consent form is required for any child under the age of 18 and must be obtained prior to youth participating in any aspect of the YLS process. If your youth-serving program has already received parental consent for youth participation, you may want to find out whether you need any further consent for youth to participate in the YLS. You may use the **Sample Parental Consent Form** (Workbook page A21) as a guide.

Youth Assent Form

In addition to obtaining consent from a parent or guardian, it is critical that youth are given the opportunity to affirmatively agree to participate as well and that they have the information they need to understand what it is they are agreeing to. Youth should be able to understand the purpose of the session,

who you are, what to expect will happen during the session, and what will happen with the input they provide. Youth should have the opportunity to ask questions before the session begins, and you should clearly communicate that it is okay if they choose not to participate at the beginning, or at any point in the session. You may want to provide different methods for asking questions, such as raising hands or turning in notes. Be clear about whether their responses will be kept confidential. Establish community agreements about whether youth should also keep confidential what their peers share. It's also good practice to make copies and share the assent form with the youth before they leave. The **Sample Youth Assent Form** (Workbook page A22) can be used to develop your own.

Tip: To increase the likelihood of receiving signed parental consent forms, consider offering incentives for returned forms (whether consent is received or not) and allow students to text you a photograph of their signed form.

⁸Harvard University Department of Sociology. Strategies for Qualitative Interviews. Available at https://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/interview_strategies.pdf

⁹World Health Organization. Instructions for Using Focus Groups Discussion. Available at http://www.who.int/patientsafety/implementation/checklists/instructions_focus_group.doc

Media Release Form

During your planning period, discuss with your team whether it is appropriate and important to you to take photos, videos, or otherwise visually document the event. If you decide that it is important to have visual documentation, make sure you assign a team member to serve as photographer/videographer and give this person a few objectives and directions for which kind of images you prefer. Then before grabbing your camera or smart phone to capture the moment, you also want to ensure that you have documented permission to take a participant's picture. A **Sample Media Release Form** (Workbook page A24) grants authorization for your organization to use the participants' likeness, photograph, video, and audio recording; establishes ownership of the media; outlines the unlimited rights to record, license, distribute, broadcast, and exhibit this material; and releases you from any liability for any legal action. Be sure to incorporate a process for obtaining a media release form from the parent/guardian of each participating youth, as well as the youth themselves. Clearly explain how you plan to use the images and what purpose they will serve. Keep these forms on file in case you decide to include any visuals to promote or otherwise disseminate within a broader community.

Anonymous Demographic Survey

Demographic questions are important because they collect information about the population participating in the YLS and will offer critical insights as you later assess the

results of the YLS. The data will support a more complete story of who you heard from during the YLS. It can also provide insight as to whether particular groups of youth have similar or differing views on a particular topic. When planning your YLS, be sure to identify a staff member who will be responsible for the introduction, dissemination, and collection of the demographic survey. One 2019 YLS grantee assigned a staff person to sit outside the door, personally welcome and introduce themselves to each youth, ask them to fill out the brief **Sample Anonymous Demographic Survey** (Workbook page A25), and then showed them where they could grab snacks prior to the start of the session. Note that you should tailor the questions in the demographic survey to capture data on matters that are important to your specific program.

Youth Feedback Form

Consider asking youth for their feedback on the session immediately upon completion of the YLS. This will provide honest feedback directly from participants while the experience is still fresh in their memories. You may want to collect the completed forms from the participating youth before handing out any stipends, as incentive to collect this data. The responses to this form should be reviewed and discussed during the YLS debrief. The **Sample Youth Feedback Form** (Workbook page A26) offers suggested questions to include.

Thank You Letters

Provide thank you letters to all youth to remind them that their participation was the most important part of the YLS. This formally acknowledges the youth for their efforts and reinforces the importance of youth voices and meaningful youth engagement. You may also draft thank you letters to your staff and any partners or parents who assisted. Refer to the **Sample Thank You Letter** (Workbook page A27).

Observation Form/Notetaker Guidance

Assign an official observer for your session. This person is different from your notetaker. The observer(s) will be responsible for taking it all in and documenting their general reflections. They will note the energy and engagement in the room, the look and feel of the environment, how many adults and youth were present, and whether the event proceeded as planned. They will jot down any quotations that stuck out as well as initial impressions. When combined with the official notes, the observation notes help paint a more complete, nuanced, and emotional picture of the day. Observers should also pick up on nonverbal communications and moods not picked up through a transcription or notetaker. Often, the quotations or little moments they pick out are the ones that stay with the team beyond the session. Refer to the **Sample Observation Template** (Workbook page A28).

It is also important to assign an official notetaker during the YLS. These notes are important because they will help you to process data afterward, to know precisely what people said, and how their statements connect to the questions you are interested in. It is important to provide clear guidance to the notetaker about what information should be captured. Do you want them to be paraphrasing and summarizing, or do you want more direct quotations and detailed minutes? If you plan to record the session, be sure that youth know and assent to being recorded and that they understand how the recording will be used. After receiving the transcription of your recorded conversation, you can fill in any gaps in your notes.

COORDINATE YOUTH

In your effort to secure participating youth for the youth listening session, it's important to consider various factors that might impact their willingness or ability to participate.

There is a myriad of obstacles that youth, particularly vulnerable youth, face in their day-to-day lives. To fully engage them and provide effective programming, you will have to plan for those factors and be clear about how you will provide solutions.

"We found that it was important to have a number of follow-ups with the youth and texting seemed to be the best mode of communication."

–YLS Grantee

"...we were able to accept permission slips by text."

–YLS Grantee

City of Hartford

HARTFORD TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION INITIATIVE FEAT. THE LOOKING IN THEATER

YOUTH LISTENING SESSION

REAL TALK ON STI/HIV PREVENTION

GIFTCARD\$\$\$

FOOD PROVIDED

APRIL 18TH

5-7 PM

MUST REGISTER TO ATTEND

RSVP BY APRIL 16TH
TO RSVP & REGISTER CONTACT:
DENESE SMITH
Denese.Smith@hartford.gov
860-757-4798

LOCATED @
iHEART MEDIA'S
DUNKIN MUSIC LOUNGE
10 COLUMBUS BLVD. HARTFORD

Tip: Consider engaging youth via text messages or social media as a means of recruitment, reminders, and follow-ups.

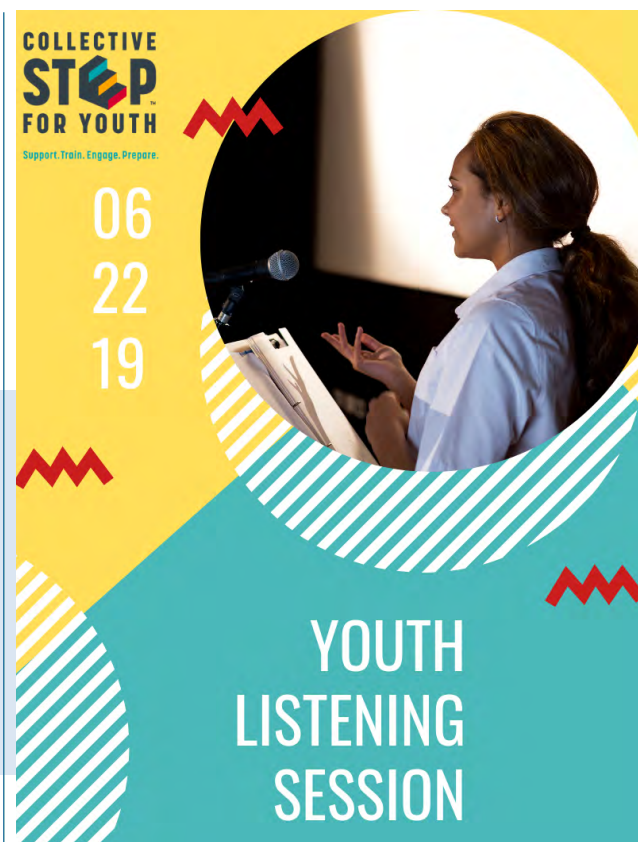
BUS PASSES AVAILABLE FOR RIDE HOME

Some strategies for increasing outreach and participation include:

- » Coordinate with key partner organizations or people, such as coaches, teachers, mentors, case workers, probation officers, and youth advocates, for assistance with
 - ◊ Identifying and inviting youth
 - ◊ Sending text reminders leading up to the event
 - ◊ Transporting youth to the event location and helping them find the event room
 - ◊ Co-facilitation
 - ◊ Transporting youth home
 - ◊ Observing and debriefing
- » Host at an accessible and safe location
- » Partner with youth to conduct outreach including sharing your invitation on

social media or telling friends about the YLS purpose and incentives

- » Use texting (and group texts, when appropriate) to send youth reminders for the event, collect images of signed consent forms, and help them find your space on the day-of
- » Accommodate the needs of pregnant or parenting teens
 - ◊ Provide on-site childcare
 - ◊ Offer vouchers to pay appropriate childcare providers
- » Use posters and flyers
 - ◊ Advertise your event with an emphasis on what youth will gain from their experience
 - ◊ Clearly state what incentives will be offered
 - ◊ Effective flyers will draw youth in and make them excited about the event



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
SMART Program

Youth Listening Workshop

We Want to Hear from YOU!

Information Brief

March 27, 2019
10:00 am 2:00 pm

Choctaw Outreach Services
403 Chahta Circle
Hugo, OK

SMART: Set
Morals
And
Resist
Temptations

Objectives for the workshop:

1. Gather youth input on the successes and barriers of the SMART Program
2. Gather youth input on how to better engage high school students in programming
3. Utilize youth insights to improve programming

→ We are inviting a select number of Native American 9th and 10th graders who have completed the SMART Program to participate in an important activity that will help the program gather youth input about how the program is going and how it could improve.

→ The SMART Program is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health. This Office is helping to organize the workshop and also hopes to learn from young people's experiences and input about the program.

→ Lunch and transportation will be provided

→ Each participant will receive a \$75 gift card

→ A pre-workshop lunch will be held on March 13, 12:30 pm, at the Firehouse Grill in Wright City, OK

→ Your experience is vital and will help shape teen pregnancy prevention programming in our community! Please join us!

→ For more program info:
www.ChoctawSMART.com

→ For more info about the workshop:
 Christi Hammons, (580)326-8304 x 6058

INCENTIVIZE PARTICIPATION

Consider what other life circumstances might inhibit young people from participating in programming. Many youths have competing demands for their time, as well as extenuating circumstances such as a disability, lack of money for out-of-pocket expenses, jobs, transportation barriers, or parenting responsibilities.

Beyond clearly explaining the impact and purpose of their contributions, how will you convince youth that participation is worth their time? Here are a few example incentives from the 2019 grantees:

- » Provide incentives and stipends to fairly compensate YLS participants for their time (YLS grantees offered between \$75 and \$150)
- » Provide additional gift cards for participation or as prizes
- » Hire and pay youth in staff and internship positions
- » Partner with and incentivize youth to conduct their own outreach and recruitment

Hennepin County



- » Provide youth with official thank you letters they can show to their families, social workers, probation officers, and other supportive adults in their lives
- » Print certificates for participation
- » Share swag tote bags filled with resources and goodies

It is also important that you acknowledge the contributions of your partners and adult volunteers. In addition to a thank you letter, consider providing them with incentives or tokens of appreciation, such as gift cards or gas cards for those volunteers that transported youth to and from the event.

FIND SUPPLIES

It is now time to figure out supplies. What can you provide to make the event fun, convenient, and comfortable for everyone involved? What technology will you need? How can you make the space warm and welcoming? Refer to Workbook page A31 for a **Sample Supply List**.

YLS Insight: Programs need to fairly compensate youth to demonstrate their value and facilitate equitable participation.

PILOT AND GET FEEDBACK

It is important to schedule a pilot session or run-through before you host your YLS. Schedule this with a group of youth separate from the YLS group that will be recruited. These youth can be part of an existing Youth Leadership Council, youth that have received programming, or any youth that would be comfortable providing initial feedback on your session. The pilot or run-through should go through the entire agenda and test technology along the way. Follow the same guidelines you would for the real YLS, such as explaining the purpose of the day's session, giving youth opportunities to opt out, and providing the same incentives and perks. Finally, consider using this run-through as an opportunity to identify youth you could train and partner with to co-facilitate the upcoming YLS.

Before you wrap-up, dedicate some time to soliciting the youth's feedback on how they think the session went. You can ask the youth as a group, when relevant and appropriate, or ask youth to individually fill out a paper survey or put their ideas on sticky notes/notecards. Immediately following the run-through and collection of youth feedback, convene your team to reflect on both the experience and the youth's feedback. Take the time to identify needed changes, assign a lead in making them, and alert any key partners, such as facilitators, on updates made to the session. Some sample questions you can ask youth and/or the YLS team include:

(To the Youth Participants)

- » How easy was it to get here today?
- » Which questions and/or activities were the most interesting?
- » Which questions and/or activities were confusing? What are some better ways we could ask that question?
- » Would you want to do this again with us?
- » What did you think of the incentives we gave you?

(To our Planning Team)

- » Did we get answers that would help us reach your goals? If not, do we need to rework our structure or questions?
- » How did logistics work? What needs to change? Who will be responsible for making those changes?
- » Do we want to invite any of today's youth to co-facilitate the YLS?

Tip:

Use the rose, bud, thorn method for rapidly debriefing the run-through with your team. Everyone spends a few quiet minutes creating sticky notes for each rose (what went well), bud (opportunities or new ideas to try), and thorn (what didn't go well). Then the group shares with each other, clusters similar ones, and identifies key themes to act on.

CONDUCT YOUR YOUTH LISTENING SESSION

Now that you have spent countless hours planning your session, thinking of every little detail, and practicing, it is time for the real thing. Review these materials the week, day, and even hour before your session to ensure that you have covered your bases. Your preparation and comfort level will directly impact the tone and participation of your youth. You've thought of everything – now it's time to give them the floor. To ensure that you have the best outcome possible and get the most out of your youth listening session review the **Day-of Checklist** (Workbook page A33).

“We were struck by the amount of cultural insensitivity and racism youth experience at school, which should be a safe space to grow, understand, identify, connect.”

–YLS Grantee

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Workbook Resources

- » DAY-OF CHECKLIST
- » SAMPLE RAPID CHECK-IN AGENDA

RAPID CHECK-IN

Within one hour of the YLS, all staff and partners who facilitated, observed, or supported the session should gather to reflect and memorialize immediate reactions before they are forgotten. This should not be an extensive debrief. Consider meeting for about 30 minutes and identifying a notetaker to capture the discussion and send follow-up notes. Refer to Workbook page A34 for a **Sample Rapid Check-In Agenda**.

Lessons Learned from 2018/2019 YLS

- » Make the space warm and inviting with bright lights and music
- » Have food out and ready from the beginning
- » Establish ground rules or community norms in collaboration with the youth and post them clearly in the room
- » Clearly explain activity instructions
- » During activities, make sure the youth can always see and refer to the question(s) (e.g., written on whiteboard, handout). Have adults or trained peers walk around the room to reframe questions if needed
- » Consider using a theme and/or a color scheme to bring everything together

Tips:

- » Introduce yourself individually to each youth as they arrive
- » Model high-quality engagement and limit cellphone use to emergency circumstances
- » Participate in the icebreaker and be silly if that's what's called for
- » Play music as youth arrive
- » Consider matching shirts so youth and volunteers can more easily recognize you and find the YLS location
- » Use language the youth can understand
- » Invite a staff member that is well known by youth so they feel at ease prior to the session beginning
- » Decorate the room with motivational quotes
- » Give youth the opportunity to share their personal gender pronouns if they wish, and always use those pronouns

ACT ON YLS INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

With key insights and lessons learned in hand, it is time to act by using the information learned in the YLS. By acting on the insights and lessons learned, you demonstrate to the YLS participants that they were not only heard, but valued and worthy of a response. The following section will walk you through the debrief process, as well as provide guidance on processing the data collected, prioritizing action steps, and following through on those actions. Links are included to tools in the Workbook specific to this stage of the YLS.

DEBRIEF

Following the YLS and rapid check-in, schedule a formal debriefing with the entire YLS team. The formal debriefing should take place within one to two weeks of the YLS. Ensure that a notetaker is identified for the debriefing, because the notes taken will be critical for the next steps in the process: acting on YLS insights and lessons learned. Identify any supplies needed to make this an interactive session, such as a whiteboard, colorful sticky notes, and markers.

“[The YLS] was very...like with this, it was very just like tell us your story. There’s no judgement. Like we just want, you know, your truth and your experience because this could help people.”

–YLS Grantee

Workbook Resources

- » HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN PROCESSING WORKSHEET
- » HOW MIGHT WE TEMPLATE
- » ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

The following are suggested questions to respond to in the formal debriefing. Given your tailored objectives for your session, you may choose to focus on specific questions or goals for this debrief.

» General YLS Reflections

- ◇ What worked well?
- ◇ What are you looking forward to?
What did you see as opportunities?
- ◇ What didn’t work so well?

» Discussion: Content – What did we learn about our youth?

- ◇ What were your initial takeaways based on what the youth shared? (share and add to list from rapid check-in)
- ◇ What were you surprised to learn?
- ◇ Where would you have liked to probe more deeply? Do you have an opportunity to do so?
- ◇ How do you feel your program meets the needs that the youth identified? Where are there gaps? Where were there opportunities?

» **Discussion: Process – How did the YLS happen and where could we do better?**

- ◊ How would you describe your planning process for this session (e.g., who was involved, how often did you meet, how much time did you put in)?
- ◊ Did you feel like you had adequate time to plan prior to implementing the YLS?
- ◊ How do you think the format of the session went (e.g., Photovoice, focus group)? Knowing what you know now, would you use the same format?
- ◊ Did youth share feedback about the session? What did they say?
- ◊ If you were to implement another youth listening session, what changes/improvements would you make?

» **Discussion: Organization Goals and Action Plan**

- ◊ Revisit the goals you set for your YLS. Did you meet them? Why or why not?
- ◊ Did you feel that holding a YLS enabled you to collect feedback or ideas for program improvements that you would not otherwise have known about?
- ◊ Did your YLS experience impact your motivation to do something like this more regularly in the future?
- ◊ What do you feel like you would need to make that happen?

- ◊ Who will you be briefing inside and outside of your organization about your YLS? What is the purpose of these briefings?
- ◊ Do you plan to use insights, photos, or other findings from the YLS for purposes other than program improvement, such as communications and PR? Can you give examples?

» **Next Steps**

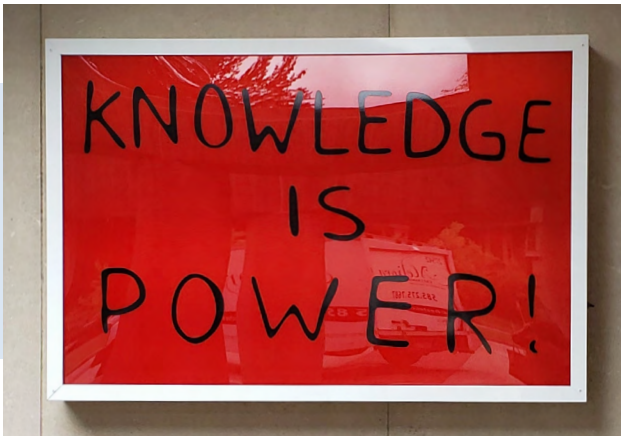
- ◊ Schedule your YLS processing workshop

“The only medical services at my school are Band-Aids, Advil, and ice packs.”
–YLS Youth Participant

PROCESS YOUR YLS EXPERIENCE AND IDENTIFY ACTION STEPS

Now that you have conducted your YLS, you have a wealth of data to consider. Your next step is to convene relevant staff members to thoroughly process, digest, and extract insights. Data sources may include the YLS plan and project management tool, agenda, YLS notes, observation form, youth feedback on YLS, rapid check-in notes, and formal debriefing notes. At the meeting, consider how to use the experience and results to improve your program. Also be sure to consider how you will continue to center youth voice now and in the future.

City of Rochester



One possible approach for data processing is human-centered design (HCD), which is a framework for understanding problems and imagining possible solutions that involves, at every step, the perspective of the people who are close to the issue. This framework can help you understand both process findings and content findings. However, to stay focused, keep your content findings (what you heard from youth/participants) separate from your process findings (how you might run things differently in the future).

Tips:

- » Get visual, messy, and use actual quotes, real stories, and pictures – don't correct grammar or change slang terminology
- » Synthesize and organize your findings – don't stop at the raw data
- » Prioritize your findings – don't try to do everything all at once

Processing the content of your YLS data will help you to:

- » Identify insights and lessons learned to improve your program and apply to future projects
- » Share understanding of findings
- » Prioritize responses
- » Develop action plans
- » Inform how the results of the YLS are communicated

“(I think we often) just assume the problem at face-value. It would be good to do a deeper dive when an issue is expressed by one of our youths, such as community safety.”

–YLS Grantee

FOLLOW THROUGH ON WHAT YOU LEARNED

To successfully incorporate the ideas generated from the debriefing and processing session, you must develop and implement an action plan that provides a clear picture of the entire improvement effort, its goals, and how all activities fit together to achieve those goals. Using an action plan makes it easy to track and update the implementation of all your YLS program

improvement activities. Consider continued engagement with youth by including them when developing your action plan.

An important action step to include is the development and presentation of your YLS summary report to participants and stakeholders detailing the next steps. You want to ensure that you've clearly heard and interpreted the desired improvements that will be incorporated into your program. You will also want to think through how you will share the insights and action steps you identified with the community at large. Consider key stakeholders to inform this step, including organizational leadership, partners, youth, local government, and others. For more information on developing an action plan, visit [Penn State Extension's The Seven Steps of Action Planning](#) site¹⁰ and refer to Workbook page A40 for an **Action Plan Template**.

In addition to your action plan, you should also create a timeline to keep your team on track. While the action plan includes completion dates for all your action steps, an overall timeline can help provide a larger picture of the time needed from start (planning) to finish (program improvement). Key elements of a timeline include tasks to be accomplished, dates of tasks, duration of tasks, and dependencies between tasks.

Once you've developed your action plan and timeline you'll want to reflect on the original goals of your YLS sessions and consider the following:

- » What were your original YLS goals?

Tips:

- » Use your findings to improve programming – don't forget what you heard!
- » Share and communicate your findings – don't keep it to yourself!
- » Tie lessons learned to already existing strategies and work plan – don't feel like findings are separate from your everyday work!
- » Keep all notes even if they do not appear relevant at the time – don't discard any notes because they may be useful later!

“(We discovered) it would be beneficial to have funding designated to implement program activities and ideas offered by the youth. It would also be beneficial to have staff time allocated to youth engagement.”

–YLS Grantee

- » Did you find your actions steps to be aligned with your original goals?
 - ◇ If not, how was this influenced by youth voices?
- » What Insights did you identify during your “processing activity”?
- » Which action steps did you identify and prioritize?

¹⁰Penn State Extension. The Seven Steps of Action Planning. Available at <https://extension.psu.edu/the-seven-steps-of-action-planning>.

Humility is essential when engaging youth, and that means not just being open to their feedback, but celebrating it. Constructive input is a sign that youth feel comfortable sharing ideas, opinions, and stories that will only better your program. Your next step is to process your youth's input and act on what you've heard. Below are example insights and resulting actions illustrating how YLS grantees learned and grew as a result of centering youth voice.

Figure 4: YLS Grantee Insights and Actions

YOUTH INSIGHTS	RESULTING ACTIONS
School should be a safe place to grow, explore identity, and make connections, but youth frequently encounter racial and cultural insensitivities from other students and teachers (e.g., school dress codes are enforced inconsistently across racial and ethnic groups).	Engage school districts' Chief Diversity Officers to improve teacher training on cultural humility and propose its integration into teacher certification process.
Young men don't like the stereotype that they are all sexually active and have multiple partners. They want to know how to be a good partner and what makes a good relationship.	Explore messaging that combats harmful stereotypes about masculinity and boys.
Young people are concerned about how society's expectations based on gender can give one partner more power than another. Traditional ideas of what a man or woman should do can impact who feels like they can request or give consent.	Create public awareness campaign about sexual consent that highlights these and other youth perspectives on the topic.
Youth's biggest concerns with access to and experience with health care in detention facilities was the lack of privacy, prolonged amount of time it took to get an appointment ("weeks"), and frustration that providers were unfriendly and unwilling to explain the care they were providing.	Meet with physician assistant overseeing youth at detention center to debrief and brainstorm new ideas to incorporate feedback from youth.
Youth felt as if most teachers didn't care about them and only cared about getting paid. Youth identified a few teachers who demonstrated behavior that inspired them and made them feel cared about	Share insights with school counselors and nurses during annual year-end review and planning session for the upcoming year. Tap students' favorite teachers as program champions in the school.
Asking for income on parental consent forms is distasteful to caregivers, and this may contribute to a lower rate of return.	Change parental consent forms and explore innovative methods for incentivizing their return.
Adults need to be more proactive and talk to kids when they are younger so that they can be prepared for life.	Coordinate brown bag lunch talks at workplaces to educate parents on sex education and talking with their kids.
Youth feel "forgotten" and believe their stories are minimized by adults.	Incorporate youth listening as a regular practice, launch annual youth voice celebrations, and train youth to serve as "listeners."

CONCLUSION

This toolkit has offered a road map through the stages needed to conduct a youth listening session. Now the fun part begins! Gather your team and let the planning begin. Once you've successfully implemented your youth listening session(s), don't stop there. You can use the information gathered beyond program improvement. Step up to the challenge of ensuring that more meaningful and authentic ways of engaging youth are systematically incorporated into planning, implementing, and evaluating programs. May this process be the next step in our collective journey toward positioning the youth voice at the center of the programs aimed at serving them.

RESOURCES

Interviews: [Talking to Humans](#) (free digital copy) | [Techniques for Empathy Interviews](#) | [Human-Centered Design Discovery Stage](#) | [How to Run a Design Research Interview](#)

Listening Session Examples: [Working Group on Youth Programs](#) | [National Girls Institute](#) | [4H](#)

[Youth Engagement Toolkit](#)

[Creative Ways to Solicit Stakeholder Feedback](#)

[Six Tips for Increasing Meaningful Youth Engagement in Programs](#)

[Guide for Conducting Focus Groups with Youth and Families](#)

[14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making](#)

[Engaging Youth in Participatory Research and Evaluation](#)

[Measuring Youth Engagement](#)

[Making the Pitch for Youth Engagement](#)

[Youth-Centered Design Toolkit](#)

[Game Plan for Engaging Youth](#)

WORKBOOK

PLAN YOUR YOUTH LISTENING SESSION

GOAL SETTING WORKSHEETA2

YLS PLAN AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEMPLATEA3

ICEBREAKERS.....A10

SAMPLE AGENDASA12

SAMPLE QUESTIONS BANKA18

SAMPLE PARENTAL CONSENT FORM.....A21

SAMPLE YOUTH ASSENT FORMA22

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CONDUCTING A YOUTH LISTENING SESSION

DAY-OF CHECKLIST A33

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ACTING ON YLS INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN PROCESSING WORKSHEET A35

HOW MIGHT WE TEMPLATE A38

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE A40

GOAL SETTING WORKSHEET

Convene the YLS Team to detail your overall YLS goals and related objectives, as well as how you plan to measure progress. These goals will help guide the development of your YLS, can be revisited throughout the experience, and will play a central role in your debrief. Goals should be thoughtful, inspiring, and specific to your program. When thinking about your goals, ask “What will a successful YLS look like to you?”

Goal:

Objectives:

Metrics:

Goal:

Objectives:

Metrics:

Goal:

Objectives:

Metrics:

YLS PLAN AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE

Now that you have convened your team and clearly defined the goals and objectives of your YLS, the next step will be to plan and design the session and follow-up activities. As a team, use the YLS Plan and Project Management Template to walk through the entire YLS process from start to finish. The template also includes important logistical considerations and questions to discuss as you are developing your plan. The YLS plan will be a living document to plan and carry out activities related to your YLS. Remember to be as detailed as possible as you develop the plan for each section and assign a person who will be responsible for implementing each task identified in your YLS plan.

Following this template, we have also provided a **RACI matrix**. RACI is an acronym for four key responsibilities: Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed. A RACI matrix is a simple chart that can be used to assign roles and responsibilities for each task, milestone, or decision on a project. It provides a clear map of the roles involved in a project task and at what level, which can eliminate confusion and ensure all team members and stakeholders understand their role, and that of others, in the process. You can use a RACI matrix to help clarify and track of all the required steps and responsible parties.

	LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS	ORGANIZATION PLAN
YLS TEAM LEAD		
YLS TEAM MEMBERS		
YLS DATE	<div>» Will this YLS be a one-time event or a series of events?</div> <div>» What time of the year, month, or week will the youth be most available? Consider prom, spring break, mid and end of year testing, graduation, summer travel, etc. February, March, and April tend to be more flexible.</div> <div>» Do you want this YLS to come at the beginning, end, or somewhere in the middle of your grant project?</div> <div>» What time of day will youth be available to participate?</div>	

	LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS	ORGANIZATION PLAN
YLS TIME + DURATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How long will your session take? Try to limit your session to 1-2 hours, but include additional time for socializing, food, and fun. If your session is too long, you risk losing youth's interest; if it is too short, you may miss out on opportunities to ask probing follow-up questions. A run through will help you identify whether this is the right amount of time. 	
LOCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Is the location accessible to youth, especially marginalized youth? Is it near public transit? Is it walkable? Can youth drive their or get rides? » Do youth know how to get there? Once at the location, will youth know how to find your meeting room? » Is it safe for youth to arrive and leave here at the proposed time of day? » Is the space large enough for the group? For movement and activities? » Is the environment welcoming and youth friendly? » Is the location accessible to people of all abilities? 	
FACILITATOR(S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Are all facilitators, including youth facilitators, receiving adequate training and prep? » Are they experienced in facilitation and have they worked with this population of youth? 	
YOUTH PARTICIPANTS	<p>Youth, youth and parents, another specific group – determine the number of participants, consider group demographics (age, race, special populations, etc.), and be sure to include youth that are not typically heard from in your program.</p>	
YLS DESCRIPTION		

	LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS	ORGANIZATION PLAN
YLS GOALS		
IRB RESPONSE	<p>You may need additional IRB approval, especially if you plan to include vulnerable youth. Reach out to your IRB for guidance. If relevant, ask if your evaluator can help secure an addendum to the IRB approval received for your grant project.</p>	
TECH NEEDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What technology will you need to help facilitate your session? Examples might include a conference call line, phone(s), recording device, music speakers, and projector screen. » What technology will youth need, if any? (e.g., certain apps, phones) » Do you have a tech assistant/support staff who will help you day-of? 	
MATERIALS/SUPPLIES		
YOUTH INCENTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What is your budget for youth engagement or this YLS specifically? » If you have no budget, where can you pull funds from to provide participation incentives? » What can partners contribute? » What amount would be “worth it” for youth? (Tip: Ask them!) » What steps can you take now to ensure sufficient youth engagement funding is allocated in future budgets? 	

	LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS	ORGANIZATION PLAN
TRANSPORTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How will the youth get to the location? » How long will it take them to get there? » Who will coordinate and track transportation for all youth? » What transportation support can you provide: adult volunteers transporting youth, paying for, and coordinating ridesharing, providing bus tokens, etc.? » What kind of reminders and communication will youth need about day-of transportation (e.g., sending photos of the ride-sharing car in route, reminding youth when volunteer driver will pick them up)? 	
FOOD + DRINK	Don't forget to account for food and drinks for adult volunteers!	
PREP	<p>It will be helpful for you to take notes on your YLS planning and implementation process, since that will be a large focus of the debrief following your YLS. Use the space here to track your planning process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Who is participating in planning? » What kind of resources and time are you investing in planning? » What specific steps will you take to prepare for the YLS? » Who will be responsible for each step? 	

RACI MATRIX

The RACI matrix is meant to make your life easier as a project manager. A RACI matrix is not always needed. If your project team is small, roles are already very clearly defined, or a similar structure has been used successfully previously, then consider just assigning tasks to people. However, on larger projects with multiple stakeholders, a RACI matrix is a great way to streamline communication, avoid people overload, avoid work overload and silos, and set clear expectations. Use the information collected above to create your own RACI matrix. Below you will find a template to complete, as well as an example.

Definitions and Best Practices

ABBREVIATION STANDS FOR	DEFINITION	BEST PRACTICE	TIPS
R = Responsible	The people who actually do the work.	One or more people need to be responsible.	If one person has many R's, they may have more workload than they can handle. If one deliverable has many R's, can tasks be more specific, so team members have more autonomy?
A = Accountable (Approver)	The person who approves the work.	Only one person is accountable, but there should always be one A for each deliverable or work item.	If any single deliverable or work item does not have an A, then item is at risk of not meeting project goals. If a deliverable has more than one A, confusion and inefficiency is likely to occur during the approval stage.
C = Consulted	The subject matter expert who is consulted and may contribute.	Several team members may be consulted. Ensure two-way communication.	Too many C's can lead to swirl and slow down the process. Too few C's can result in poor quality through lack of accuracy or not meeting business goals.
I = Informed	The people who will be informed when a deliverable is complete.	Several team members may be informed. Communication only goes one way.	If there are lots of I's, find ways to inform people in batches, in logical project intervals, rather than as you go. Develop a system (preferably automated) to inform people.

RACI Template

Responsible Party and/or Role on the Project					
ACTION STEPS					
DEVELOP CONTENT					
LOGISTICS					

Responsible Party and/or Role on the Project					
ACTION STEPS					
DAY OF YLS					
DEBRIEF					

RACI Example

Responsible Party and/or Role on the Project					
ACTION STEPS	PERSON A	PERSON B	PERSON C	PERSON D	PERSON E
DEVELOP CONTENT					
YLS Overview Presentation	R	R		I	A
Minor Assent Form	I	I	R		A
Parental Consent Form	I	I	R		A
Media Release Form	C	C	R		A
Demographic Survey	C	C	R		A
Focus Group/Interview Guides	C	I		R	A
Notetaker/Observation Form	C	I		R	A
LOGISTICS					
Planning Meetings	R	I	I	C	
Secure Location	R	C	I	C	
Purchase Lunch	R	I	I		A
Purchase Incentives	I	I	R		A

Responsible Party and/or Role on the Project

ACTION STEPS	PERSON A	PERSON B	PERSON C	PERSON D	PERSON E
DAY OF YLS					
Arrival and Set Up	A	C	R	I	
Welcome	R	C	I	I	
Ice Breaker	C	R	I	I	A
YLS Overview	R	R	I	I	
Completion of Consent Forms	C	I	R	I	
YLS (Focus group/ Interviews)	I	I	I	R	
Observer(s)	R	R	I	I	
Debrief and Wrap Up	R	R	I	I	
Completion of Demographic Survey	I	I	R	I	
Distribute Certificates or Incentives	R	I	I		
Official Notetaker	I	I	R	R	
Complete Observation Form	A	I	R	I	
Clean up and Breakdown	A	R	C	I	
DEBRIEF					
Debrief Meetings	R	I	I	C	
Summary Report	R	C	C	R	A

ICEBREAKERS

(Adapted from Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County [CAPSLO])

Socialization and fun are critical to adolescent well-being, and your YLS will benefit from incorporating an interactive getting-to-know-you game. When designing the right icebreaker, ask yourself: Do the youth know each other? Will they be comfortable being silly? Will the game make any youth feel too “on-the-spot”? Which questions or games are insensitive, inappropriate, unresponsive to lived experiences, or unlikely to spark a connection with the youth you serve? How much time do you want to spend? Should adults in the room be expected to join? What expectations will you set for the adults in advance?

Below are some sample icebreakers and energizers to consider:

Finger Scale (Show me using your fingers, 1 being the lowest/worst, 5 being the highest/best)

- » How comfortable you are talking with your friends about sex? Dating? Relationships with your family?
- » How comfortable you are talking with your family about sex? Dating? Relationships with your friends?
- » How was your weekend?

Shorter Icebreakers

- » If you could hang out with a celebrity for a day/grab lunch with a celebrity, who would it be?
- » What song do you have on repeat?
- » If they made a movie about your life, who would you want to play you? Who would play your best friend?
- » If you could be a professional athlete, which sport would you choose?
- » If you could have any animal as a sidekick, which one would you choose?
- » If you could only have one meal (or certain kind of food) for the next 12 months, what would it be?
- » If you got a day off school, what would you do?

Longer Icebreakers

- » What are three things on your bucket list?
- » What would a book about yourself be titled? What would be the title of three of the chapters?
- » What is your theme song? If you could have a song play whenever you walked into the room, what would it be?

-
- » What is one thing that you can do that you could quickly teach everyone in the group right now?
 - » If you could go back in time and tell yourself one thing before you started high school, what would it be?
 - » If you could change one thing about your high school, what would it be?

Either/Or - (Have them go to the side/or corner of the room they most prefer)

- » Cats or dogs
- » Salty or sweet
- » Inside or outside
- » Summer or winter
- » Morning or night
- » How do you like your potatoes: French fry, potato chip, mashed, hash browns
- » How do you like your eggs: scrambled, fried, sunny side up, hard boiled

SAMPLE AGENDAS

When developing your agenda, it's helpful to consider the following:

- » How will you accommodate possible delayed arrivals, what time will you suggest youth arrive so that there is a buffer? How might you start things off with a soft start in your agenda to better absorb later arrivals? (e.g., snacks, games)
- » Include time to describe the purpose of the YLS. Provide youth an opportunity for asking questions about the session, to assent or to opt out, and collect forms if necessary
- » Build in time for youth to socialize and have fun
- » **Icebreakers** are important to create a positive group atmosphere, help people to relax, break down social barriers, energize and motivate, help people to “think outside the box,” and help people to get to know one another.
- » Have you incorporated accommodations for participants who might require additional breaks or have less mobility (e.g. pregnant youth)?

The following is an example of an agenda that can be shared with YLS participants. Following the participant agenda are two examples of annotated agendas with more in-depth details. These are actual agendas that were used in youth listening sessions by Hennepin County and SHIFT NC [note: slight modifications that do not impact the content of the agenda may have been made].

PARTICIPANT AGENDA*

Title - Youth Listening Session #1

Location

Date

Time

1:00-1:15 pm	Participant Arrival (lunch offered)
1:15-1:30 pm	Welcome and Ice Breaker
1:30- 1:45 pm	Purpose of YLS and Q&A
1:45-2:00 pm	Completion of Consent Forms <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Youth Assent» Media Release
2:00-3:00 pm	Youth Listening Session topic
3:00-3:30 pm	Wrap-Up and Debrief

*Print agenda on organization letterhead

ANNOTATED AGENDAS

From Hennepin County:

1. Welcome by facilitators
2. Introductions of organization, facilitators, notetakers, staff and participants, name one celebrity you'd like to have lunch with.
3. Energizer – Improv activity
4. Overview of the session purpose and process, highlighting how the information gathered will be used
5. Group agreements using Positive Prevention PLUS format
6. Consensus Workshop

Context Setting: (20 minutes)

- » State the purpose of the workshop
 - i. Introduce key question: *What do young people like you need in order to have sexual health? (May need to define sexual health)*
- » Briefly outline process and timeframe
- » Short focused conversation: (have a visual for each question)
 - i. Facilitator 1: (go around circle) Say one thing that helps young people like you to be sexually healthy and one thing that gets in the way of young people like you being sexually healthy.
 - ii. Facilitator 2: Imagine we have a magic wand and put a spell on everyone you interact with outside your family who is in a helping role (teachers, coaches, probation officers, case managers, school counselor, social workers, spiritual leader [faith community], etc.) and they are able to be super helpful to all young people in order for the young people they work with to be super sexually healthy. What would that look like? What specific things would they do? How would you feel if they did that? (Snowball fight – participants write down answers on the created form and crinkle them up and throw “snowballs.” They take someone else’s answers and share them. Allow anonymity of answers. Facilitators will be available to help youth fill out forms if needed.)
 - iii. Facilitator 1: How does personal identity, like race, age, gender, sexuality, ability/disability (mental, physical, and learning) and other (Could include anything – justice/system involvement, suburban/urban, language) influence sexual health? Will have large post its with these headings, and will have students walk around (gallery walk) to answer questions.
 - iv. Facilitator 2: As you think about our workshop question, “What do young people like you need in order to have sexual health?”, Please write down 10-15 practical things that young people need to have sexual health. (Provide form with room for 15 ideas.) Be as specific as possible, you can mention things that have already been stated, and wild and crazy ideas are welcome. Use paper and pens provided on the table.

Brainstorm: (20 minutes)

- a. Give them time to make their lists. Ask them to work individually and quietly. Have individuals star ideas that are most important to them.
- b. Work in table groups. Each table writes ____ (total of 35 to 45 from whole group) ideas, eliminating overlap but ensuring diversity of perspective. Have them write one idea on each half sheet. Give them directions on how to write on half sheets.
- c. Ask each table to send up their **clearest** cards/ideas. Collect 12-15 cards total (2-3 from each group, probably).
- d. Collect cards and get the group's attention. Read each card as you place it randomly on the wall, spreading them out. (See instructions for sharing ideas in consensus workshop directions.)

Cluster: (30 minutes)

- a. Form pairs with the cards. Look for patterns, new relationships. Ask what links them together. You are pushing the group's intuition and imagination.
- b. Ask for another round of about 12-15 cards (2-3 each table) with different ideas.
- c. Form any new pairs and begin to tag as the group adds a pair, forming a cluster.
- d. A tag is a simple label with a symbol to help with organizing ideas. Tags should be smaller vertical cards – different than the half sheets.
- e. Ask the tables to mark any remaining half-sheets with either the symbol of the cluster it relates to and pass them up. They can also pass up unmarked cards that don't seem to fit with any of the current groupings. Quickly read and sort the cards and add to the appropriate cluster, leaving the unmarked cards for last.
- f. When all cards are up, ask individuals to take a look at their original brainstorm list and see if there is an important idea that is not yet on the wall. Add these if needed.

Name: (30 minutes)

- a. Start with the largest cluster. Explain that we are looking for our collective wisdom about this group of ideas. Ask questions like:
 - ◇ What 3-7 words describes ALL of the cards in this cluster?
 - ◇ What title will be inclusive of all of the ideas and insights in the group?
 - ◇ How does this group of cards answer our workshop question?
 - ◇ Try to use a noun, and descriptive adjective or action word in each title.
- b. Get consensus on a name.
- c. Repeat with each of the clusters.

Resolve: (20 minutes)

a. Focused conversation:

- ◊ Facilitator 1: Read titles of each cluster
- ◊ Facilitator 2: What makes you most excited or interested? What makes you uncomfortable or uneasy?
- ◊ Facilitator 1: What new ideas or insights did we have? What's the most important thing we learned or discovered today?

b. Have each table take a cluster and create something to represent it – skit, poster, poem, etc. No rules. Give 7 minutes to create and then have each table share it back.

7. Closure activity: Heart, feet, ears8. Sign out gift cards to all participants using Hennepin County gift card procedures*From SHIFT NC:**Setting it Up & Group Agreements'*

We'd like to take the next 30 minutes for you all to share your responses to these questions. We want your honest thoughts and opinions because you are the experts on your lives and experiences! As we begin this discussion we want you to know that:

- » <in-person notetaker's name> and the people on the phone are going to be taking notes on the discussion so that we can summarize what you all have shared. This will also help us when we talk about the project at the conference next month.
- » All of your answers are confidential. This means that your names will not be recorded or linked to your responses. The things you say will be put into a summary.
- » The only time we will have to break confidentiality is if you inform us that you're harming or hurting yourself, someone is hurting or harming you or if you are harming or hurting someone else. This includes witnessing or experiencing any kind of violence.
- » We have given each of you a note pad and a pencil. If there is something you want to say but you're not comfortable sharing it out loud with the group, write it down on the note pad and we'll collect these from you. Don't write your name on your paper.
- » The discussion may bring up emotions related to your experiences with sex and sexuality. We are going to talk about some sensitive topics and we want you to take care of yourselves. If at any time you need to take a moment to yourself, feel free to step outside, go to the bathroom, or do what you need to take care of yourself.

I'd like to suggest a few group agreements for our discussion (pre-labeled flip chart paper). When I'm done with my suggestions, you can tell me what you want to add or change:

- » It is very important that we maintain confidentiality for our discussion today. This means that we will not discuss anything we hear today with anyone outside of this group. Please be aware, however, that I cannot guarantee that other participants will uphold this pledge of confidentiality.
- » Second, we need to give everyone an equal chance to speak—no one should dominate the conversation. We also want to make sure no one interrupts and that everyone feels respected for their viewpoints.
- » We welcome and respect different points of view. Please answer what you truly think, regardless of the opinions of the other group members. There are no right or wrong answers. You can disagree with each other, and you can change your mind. I want you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel.
- » I want to hear the opinion of everyone in the room, and I may ask some questions to you directly.
- » If there are any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, you don't have to. You have the right to pass for any questions.

What or changes would you like to make to these group agreements? Can we all agree to this?

During our discussion, there are a lot of things we want to talk about. At times, we may need to stop the discussion in order to move on. Remember that you have a notepad so that you can write down anything that you want to share but don't want to say out loud and anything that you want to share but we don't have time to cover. Please make sure that you do not write your name on the note pad.

Any questions about anything I've said so far?

Discussion

Ok, let's start with the first question-

- » **“What is sexual health?”** How would you explain what sexual health is to a friend?

If you feel comfortable, tell us what is happening in the photo you selected for this question and read us your prose. (Facilitator pulls up corresponding photos as participants share.)

◇ How could these photos help us educate others about what sexual health means?

- » **“How does your personal identity, like your race, age, gender, sexuality, ability/disability influence your ideas about sexual health?”**

Tell us what is happening in the photo you selected for this question and read us your prose.

◇ Why is it important to think about how your personal identity influences your sexual health?

◇ How could these photos help us educate adults in your lives about your personal identity and your sexual health?

» **“How does your mental health influence your decisions about sex and sexual health?”**

Tell us what is happening in the photo you selected for this question and read us your prose.

- ◊ Why is it important to think about how mental health influences sexual health?
- ◊ How could these photos help us educate others or improve health in your community?

» **“Where do you get information about sex and resources for sexual health?”**

Tell us what is happening in the photo you selected for this question and read us your prose.

- ◊ What makes it possible to get these information and resources?
- ◊ Barriers are things that keep you from accessing something you need. What are the barriers in your life or community that keep you or your friends from getting what you need?
- ◊ How would your community be different without this type of information, these resources, and barriers?
- ◊ How could these photos help us educate others or improve access to things like condoms and birth control?

Themes

That was a really interesting discussion, thank you all for participating. Based on our conversation, what would you all say are some common topics or similar things everyone in the group said about sexual health? What things are similar about all your photos? *(Facilitator records responses on flip chart paper.)*

Project Debrief

One last set of questions-

- » What was your experience like doing this project?
- » What did you like?
- » What would you go back and change if you could?
- » What did you dislike?
- » What are you taking away from it?

Okay, I think that is it for our questions today. Thank you so much for sharing all your thoughts with us. Remember you can still write things down on the notepads if there were things you didn't want to or get to share with the group. *[Collect note pads and pencils from each participant.]*

SAMPLE QUESTIONS BANK

The following general questions are provided as a sample of questions that can be included as part of your YLS. Please tailor your YLS questions to the specific format (e.g., focus group, workshop, etc.) and purpose of your YLS. In drafting your questions list, it is critical that you be realistic about the amount of time you have and how many questions you can cover. Sessions will have to find a balance between asking enough questions and probing the responses that result in helpful feedback, while not running so long that youth engagement drops. Past grantees have found it helpful to conduct test runs with other youth, in order to seek youth input on questions, tweak framing or order of questions, and double check timing. This also provides an opportunity to ensure that the language used in the questions and the way the questions are framed are age appropriate and youth friendly. This may be an excellent opportunity to engage your Youth Leadership Council/Advisory Board to provide input on this project.

Note: It is advisable to ask the same question in different ways to account for comprehension, ensure reliability, and capture diverse youth voices.

Youth

- » I really look forward to learning more about you today: your likes, your talents, and where you want to be.
 - ◇ What do you like / what are you passionate about? Why?
 - ◇ What do you dislike? Why?
 - ◇ Tell us one thing that makes you happy and one thing that makes you sad.
 - ◇ What is your family like?
 - ◇ What are your friends like?
 - ◇ Who do you look up to as a role model?
 - ◇ To what extent do you feel like you have control over your decisions?
 - ◇ To what extent do you feel like you have control over your life?
- » What is one goal that you have for yourself? Who (if anyone) have you told about your goal?
- » What do you think impacts your ability to reach your goal?
- » What would it mean to you to be a healthy and happy young adult? What would that look like?
- » Think about other young people you know. What makes them happy? What are they worried about?
- » What was the best day in school you ever had?

-
- » What is the single most important thing that youth such as you and your peers need to be successful?
 - » How do you define success?
 - » What would be the most important thing that could happen in school/your community/in the (insert specific name of the project/program) that could make things better for young people (i.e., someone like you)?

Community

- » Can you tell us about your community and where you live?
 - ◇ What do you have in your community that you think helps or supports you in life?
 - ◇ What helps support young people in your community? Why?
 - ◇ What is one thing you really need in your community but don't have?
 - ◇ What are the big issues in your community for young people?
 - ◇ How would you like these big community issues to change? Do you feel like there is a way for you to help make that change? How?
- » What about accessing services for health and wellness? What is that like? Where do you go to meet your health needs?
- » What has been your experience in accessing services? What have you liked? What have you not liked?
- » Who helps you access services?
- » How do you think the (insert specific name of your program) could help you and your community improve health?

Programs

- » In general, what types of programs and service do you like? Why?
- » In general, what keeps you engaged and interested in programs? Why?
- » What community or school-based groups or programs are you a part of and really enjoy? (looking for connections to make across programs)
- » In what ways have you been involved in the (insert specific name of your program)? (Recipient, YLC member, both, etc.)
 - ◇ What has it been like for you? How do you feel when you're here?
 - ◇ What do you think the purpose of our program is?
 - ◇ Did you feel comfortable speaking with staff?
 - ◇ Did you feel comfortable speaking in front of other young people (if a group-based program)?
 - ◇ Can you tell us about a time when you used information from the program?
 - ◇ What advice would you give the people who run the program? Or what would you want to see changed? Why?

-
- ◇ What did you like about the program? What would you keep the same?
 - ◇ What advice would you give to the facilitators?
 - ◇ What do you wish facilitators knew about you before they began working with you?
 - ◇ Do you feel like your participation in this program has helped you work toward the goal you shared earlier? Helped you get closer to being as healthy and happy as you wanted to be? Why?
 - » What (insert specific name of your program) activity has benefitted you the most personally and how?
 - » How many of you have an adult you see as a mentor? Who is that person?
 - » How do you know that this program is making a positive impact if any?
 - » If you could tell us one critical/essential way to make life better for young people you know through programs/projects of this nature, what would it be (specifically people you know, not youth you see on TV, etc.)?
 - » If you could develop your own program, no limits, what would it look like?
 - » Today, who/where would you go to if you had a personal question about sexual health?

Youth Engagement

- » What do you think it means for a program to meaningfully engage youth? What does this look like?
- » How have young people been involved in shaping the TPP program? How could they be involved?
- » For Youth Leadership Council members:
 - ◇ What did you like or not like about the experience?
 - ◇ What do you think you got out of the experience?
 - ◇ What role do you think a YLC should have in this program?
 - ◇ What advice would you give new YLC members?
- » How should we go about getting input and feedback from youth who are and who are not involved in the (insert specific name of program/project)?
- » How should we go about more meaningfully engaging youth in the (insert specific name of program/project)?
- » How do you recommend we go about ensuring that we engage youth in programs in a way that empowers them?
- » How do we get the voice of youth who are [already] involved [in programs]?
- » How do you reach the youth that aren't involved? Is there a difference?
- » What do we need to know to make life better for young people?
- » What would more inclusion of all youth look like?

Other

- » Is there anything else you would like to share or discuss that I haven't yet asked you about?
- » What is one question I didn't ask, but next time, I should?

SAMPLE PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

A parental consent form is required of any child under the age of 18 and must be obtained prior to youth participating in any aspect of the YLS process. As a reminder, participation in the YLS may be covered by your standard programming consent form.

_____ is conducting a listening session to better understand the needs and circumstances of youth so that we can improve the programs and services we offer. Your child is invited to take part in this listening session.

How Will This Work?

If your child decides to be a part of this youth listening session, (s)he or they will

[Describe your session: how long will it last, how will it be structured, how many youth will participate, who will facilitate, etc.]

Someone from our organization will observe and record the listening session in order to help us fully capture the thoughts and ideas. We will not share the recording, the youths' names, or any other personal information about the participants.

Your child's participation in the listening session is completely voluntary and (s)he may choose to discontinue participation at any time. Participating in the listening session is unlikely to cause your child any harm. Should your child disclose personal information to [organization name] staff or a community member that indicates that (s)he or someone else is in imminent danger, the staff will make appropriate referrals.

Parent/Guardian: By signing the consent signature page, you indicate your consent for your child to participate in the recorded listening session.

Your child can bring the form in person or you can text a photo of your signed form to _____ [coordinator's email or phone number].

Name of Youth: _____

(Name of Parent / Guardian)

(Signature)

(Date)

SAMPLE YOUTH ASSENT FORM

It is very important that youth are given the opportunity to affirmatively agree to participate in the YLS and that they have a clear understanding of the purpose of the session, what to expect will happen during the session, and what will happen with the input they provide. In addition to providing youth with a hard copy of this form to sign, staff should go over this document verbally with the youth.

What is Going On?

_____ [Organization name] is conducting a listening session to better understand the needs and circumstances of you and youth like you so that we can improve the programs and services we offer. You are invited to take part in this listening session.

How Will This Work?

If you decide to be a part of this youth listening session, you will

[Describe your session: how long will it last, how will it be structured, how many youth will participate, who will facilitate, etc.]

Someone from our organization will observe and record the listening session in order to help us fully capture your thoughts and ideas. We will not share the recording, your name, or any other personal information about you.

The youth listening session is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to.

If you decide not to take part, it would not affect whether you can take part in any other agency activities. Each person who takes part would get a _____.
Not answering a question will not impact your stipend.

How Would This Help?

Youth who take part in the listening session may help improve programs designed to prevent unintended teen pregnancy and improve adolescent health. By providing your input, our agency will become much better at serving youth in your community. Additionally,

[Describe how the YLS will help your specific program].

Would Anybody Know My Answers?

The youth in your group would hear your answers. We will ask everyone not to talk about what people in the group said after our session is over. Your name would not be on the notes. Your responses would not be given to anyone at the agency. Your name would not be in any of our materials.

What If I Have Questions?

If you have questions about the youth listening session, you can ask the facilitators at any point during the session. You can also email us at _____.

How Do I Join the Youth Listening Session?

If you want to participate, please check the first box below and sign your name with today's date. [You will get a copy of this form.] If you DO NOT want to join, please check the second box and sign your name with today's date.

This form has been read aloud to me. I had an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions were answered. I understand the purpose of this youth listening session and how my input will be used.

Please select **one**:

Yes – I give my assent to participate in this youth listening session

No – I do not give my assent to participate in this youth listening session

Print Name

Signature

Date

SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE FORM

You may consider including the media release language in conjunction with the parental consent form. This section can be added to that document and could reduce the number of individual forms that require signature.

I, _____, [print name] understand and agree that all pictures, video and audio recording of me, my child, _____ [print child's name] and/or my property taken by _____ [Insert Organization name] staff or their designees may be shared with and used by _____ [Insert Organization name]. I authorize the use of this material and my/my child's name, likeness, photograph, video and audio recording for the purpose of producing, advertising, and promoting _____ [Insert Organization name], its mission, its initiatives, its services and future events.

I agree that _____ [Insert Organization name] owns the production in which said material is used and owns all results and proceeds of the use of my/ my child's name, likeness, photograph, video and audio recording. I also agree that _____ [Insert Organization name] has unlimited rights to record, license, distribute, broadcast, and exhibit this material or portions of this material and its results and proceeds or to cause others to do the same by means of any type of technology, either known or not yet known, in all territories without compensation to me. I also waive any right to inspect or approve any photo, video, or audio recording taken by _____ [Insert Organization name] or the person or entity designated to do so by _____ [Insert Organization name].

With respect to the use of the materials described above, I do not hold _____ [Insert Organization name] liable for any legal action that may result from my/my child's appearance in any _____ [Insert Organization name] production or publication.

In signing for a minor, I confirm that I am either over 18 or am the child's parent or legal guardian.

By signing below, I understand and agree that all the provisions of this document apply to me/the minor named below.

Printed Name: Parent/Guardian

Signature: Parent/Guardian

Date

SAMPLE ANONYMOUS DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY FORM

Demographic questions are important as they collect information about the population participating in the YLS and will offer critical insights as you later assess the results of the YLS. The following sample is from Hennepin County, which worked with system-involved youth and therefore some of the questions may not be relevant for your specific population. You are encouraged to tailor these questions to be most valuable for your program.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM - THIS INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT ANONYMOUS

Directions: Please complete this form to help us know a little more about the participants in this group. This information is completely confidential. Your personal information will not be shared with anyone else. Please ask your facilitator if you have any questions. *Thank you!*

How old are you? _____

For the questions below, mark the box that or write in what best represents how you identify.

Do you identify as....?

Female Male Trans*

I describe my sex/gender differently: _____

Do you identify as LGBTQ+?

Yes No I identify differently: _____

Are you Hispanic or Latinx?

Yes No

What is your race? (Choose as many as apply)

American Indian/Alaskan Native Asian Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
White Black/African American African
Another: _____

Do you have or have you ever had a:

1. [City/County] Social Worker
Yes No
2. [City/County] Case Manager
Yes No
3. [City/County] Probation Officer
Yes No

SAMPLE YOUTH FEEDBACK FORM

The following are sample questions that you may ask of the YLS participants in order to collect data on their experiences with the session.

1. How would you rate your overall experience at today's YLS?

1 Poor

2 OK

3 Good

4 Excellent

2. What was the single best thing about the YLS?

3. What kind of follow up on today's YLS do you think would be helpful?

4. Do you have any feedback for our organization that you did not have an opportunity to share today?

5. What specific topics do you think should be considered for a future YLS?

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

After you have completed your youth listening sessions, it is important to acknowledge the work and support of those who assisted during the process by providing a Thank You letter. When writing a thank you letter, be sure to tailor the letter to the circumstances. You should have different messages for youth participants versus partners, so be sure to choose a phrase that fits the reasons why you're sending your message. A sample participant thank you letter to youth is included below.

Dear _____,

Thank you for participating in the Youth Listening Session hosted on _____ [Date] by _____ [Insert Organization name].

[Description of Organization, its mission, who it serves, and how it thinks about meaningful youth engagement.] Youth empowerment and leadership are at the core of who we are. We strive to live by the motto "Nothing about us, without us," and are working to ensure that our youth programs are driven and inspired by the young people they serve.

We launched our Youth Listening Session to better understand who you are and what you need to be healthy and happy.

[Description of your YLS]

You took us through the biggest issues youth face in your communities, discussed the gaps and opportunities for improving health, and shared your own experiences in youth leadership. You explored what meaningful youth engagement looks like in your program, and provided recommendations that will help our organization chart its course for years to come. Finally, as a partner in this effort, you have also further refined your own skills in critical thinking and public speaking.

Thank you for your commitment to improving health outcomes for yourself and your peers. Voices like yours inspire and motivate us to be the best we can be. I wish you all the best.

Sincerely,

P.S. If you want to learn more about what happens next, and how your ideas and inspiration will impact our programs, please stay in contact

[Provide ways to stay involved or hear about any changes made due to their voice]

SAMPLE OBSERVATION TEMPLATE

Having an official observer for your session is very important. This person is different from your notetaker as they are responsible for documenting the general reflections of the session (e.g., nonverbal communication, energy and engagement in the room, the look and feel of the environment, and whether the event proceeded as planned). When combined with the official notes, the observation notes provide a broader perspective of the day.

Instructions: Assign one member of your YLS Team to observe the session, rather than take detailed notes. That individual should focus primarily on active observation during the YLS, but can take some light notes that will assist her/him/them in filling out this form later.

YLS LEAD			
ORGANIZATION			
DATE			
MANNER OF OBSERVATION (E.G., IN-PERSON, REMOTE)			

Is the responsible person...	Yes	No	N/A
welcoming youth as they arrive?	Yes	No	N/A
collecting parental consent forms?	Yes	No	N/A
collecting youth assent forms?	Yes	No	N/A
taking photos?	Yes	No	N/A
collecting photo consent forms?	Yes	No	N/A
providing thank you notes/certificates?	Yes	No	N/A
collect demographic surveys?	Yes	No	N/A
disseminating incentives?	Yes	No	N/A
collecting youth YLS feedback?	Yes	No	N/A

# youth in attendance	
Description of youth (e.g., YLC members, urban/rural, age range, ethnicity/race, gender)	
# adults in attendance	
Description of adults (e.g., staff, community partners, social workers)	
Description of physical space	
Description of YLS format	
Description of energy/tone	
YLS strategy description (e.g., focus group, photovoice)	
Observations of YLS format and execution	
How did YLS strategy/ format work? What seemed to work well or not work well with how the YLS was run?	
Note any important deviations from the planning YLS (e.g., new facilitator, different location, unexpected # of youth)	

Content Notes

Jot down youth quotations, insights, ideas, emotions, interests, etc. as they come up! What sticks out to you?

Rapid Reflection (5-10 min)

Tell the story of this YLS. What is the dominant narrative? What are the most pressing issues on youth's minds in your community? What initial ideas do you have for improving your program based on this experience?

Observers: Don't forget to share your Observation Notes with the full YLS Team!

SAMPLE SUPPLY LIST

Here are a few items to get you started, but feel free to customize, add, and remove as you see fit. Identify who will be in charge of procuring and transporting all supplies.

Stationary:

- ☐ Notepads
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ White board
- ☐ Sticky notes
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Materials/Handouts:

- ☐ Handouts for youth
- ☐ Materials for facilitators (e.g., extra annotated agendas, facilitator guide)
- ☐ Sign-in sheets and demographic surveys, if relevant
- ☐ Extra copies of instructions for activities for each table
- ☐ Community agreements poster/list
- ☐ Name table tents (if youth agree to share their names and gender pronouns)
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Technology:

- ☐ Conference number and recorded line
- ☐ Recorder device
- ☐ Laptop(s) for notes, projection, and/or use by youth during session
- ☐ Projector and screen
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Speakers
- ☐ Wi-Fi/Internet access
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Logistical Considerations:

- ☐ Matching t-shirts for staff for easy spotting at the location
- ☐ Welcome signs
- ☐ “This Way” signs leading to the exact location
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Refreshments:

- ☐ Meals or snacks
- ☐ Beverages, including water
- ☐ Napkins, plates, cups, and utensils needed for meals or snacks
- ☐ Take-home boxes, Ziploc bags, or Tupperware to send leftover food home with youth who need it
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Fun Supplies:

- ☐ Play dough
- ☐ Toys and pipe cleaners
- ☐ Swag bags
- ☐ Treats
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

DAY-OF CHECKLIST

Use the following checklist as a starting point to develop a customized checklist for your YLS. This will keep you organized and ensure that you have everything you need on the day of the session.

Prior – Have you...

- ☐ Sent event reminders to youth and your partners, including specific instructions for how to get there
- ☐ Confirmed technology is working and ready
- ☐ Set up the room to accommodate your session and the specific needs of participants
- ☐ Put out snacks and drinks
- ☐ Confirmed roles and responsibilities for adults
 - ◇ Who is:
 - ✧ Taking photos: _____
 - ✧ Welcoming youth: _____
 - ✧ Collecting signed forms: _____
 - ✧ Providing thank you notes and incentives: _____
- ☐ Put out name tents (if appropriate)

During – Have you...

- ☐ Welcomed and excited youth participants
- ☐ Taken pictures
- ☐ Collected forms and surveys
- ☐ Collected youth feedback on YLS

Immediately after – Have you...

- ☐ Thanked youth and partners
- ☐ Informed youth and partners as to how they can learn more about how you use their ideas
- ☐ Made sure youth have transportation home
- ☐ Remind notetakers and observers to submit their notes in a timely manner
- ☐ Completed your rapid check-in
- ☐ Scheduled your official debrief

Use the space below to include any additional steps not included above:

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

SAMPLE RAPID CHECK-IN AGENDA

Activity: Heart – Brain – Foot

- » Participants choose to reflect on one of the 3 options:
 1. Heart – how are you feeling after the YLS?
 2. Brain – what are you thinking after the YLS?
 3. Foot – What are you excited to do after the YLS?

Activity: Round Robin

- » Identify 1-2 main questions from the formal debrief agenda and ask participants to offer initial responses to those questions.

Next steps:

- » Schedule formal debrief.
- » Identify what information should be shared with participants in advance of the formal debrief. These may include notetaker notes, observation form, notes from the rapid check-in, and formal debrief agenda.

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN PROCESSING WORKSHEET

Here is an overview of how your YLS findings can evolve into ideas that you can potentially act upon! Please note this is just one (of many) options; you are welcome to use your own process. Adapted from IDEO.

Synthesize Learning

1. Learning + Capture

Learnings are the recollections of what stood out during the YLS. They should be communicated in full sentences. You'll capture learnings onto sticky notes as your team recounts what they observed during your youth listening session(s). More information can be found at <http://www.designkit.org/methods/12>.

» **Step 1: Set up a space to capture your learnings.**

- ◇ Before you begin, you'll want to make sure you're in a room with plenty of wall space or boards to post your learnings. Distribute sticky notes (or their equivalent) and markers to the whole team. It may also be helpful to have large sheets of paper and tape to attach these sheets to the wall.

» **Step 2: Capture your learnings.**

- ◇ What did you hear from youth/participants? Be specific and revisit the notes you took during your research. If possible, print out some of the photos and notes you took and use them to illustrate your stories.
- ◇ Jot one observation/learning per sticky note. Think small pieces. This is very important for flexibility in sorting and clustering later.
- ◇ This can be done individually at first and then as a group, or all together as a group.
- ◇ A few options of what to "capture":
 - ✦ Motivations: What did the participants care about the most? What motivates them?
 - ✦ Interesting stories: What's the most memorable or surprising story/quote you heard? Quotes are very powerful!
 - ✦ Barriers: What frustrated them?
 - ✦ Remaining Questions: What questions would you have liked to explore if you had the chance?

» **Step 3: Display what you've captured.**

- ◇ Once you have your learnings captured on sticky notes, put them up on the wall/space.

2. Cluster + Themes

Using the learnings that are captured and now displayed, start to look for patterns and cluster the sticky notes. Keep clustering, creating different groups of similar learnings. From the clusters, create themes from these organized learnings by creating topics/headlines for the different clusters. Write down the label for the theme.

- » **Step 1: Cluster the sticky notes or learnings into categories.**
 - ◊ Look for how these learnings relate to each other. Can you combine categories?
- » **Step 2: Arrange and rearrange the sticky notes.**
 - ◊ Take time to discuss, debate, and talk through what's emerging.
 - ◊ Keep arranging until everyone is satisfied and the clusters are rich with information.
- » **Step 3: Determine themes of the clusters.**
 - ◊ Continue to refine the categories. Ensure everything is accounted for.
- » **Step 4: Name the themes by creating a label and new name for the categories.**
 - ◊ You can circle and label with a marker or add another sticky note.

3. Insight Statements

Insights are a succinct expression of what you have learned from your youth listening sessions. Insights offer a new perspective, even if they are not new discoveries. They are inspiring and relevant to your experience. challenge. More information can be found at <http://www.designkit.org/methods/62>.

- » **Step 1: Review the themes.**
 - ◊ Look at each theme and the stories/sticky notes that support those themes to dig deeper. Consider a specific challenge within that theme.
- » **Step 2: Draft a first “insight statement” about that theme.**
 - ◊ An insight statement is something that relates to the theme, is inspiring, and relevant to the overall topic.
- » **Step 3: Make revisions.**
 - ◊ Take a few rounds to revise and refine this statement until it is the most compelling version.
 - ◊ Consider inviting someone who is not part of your team to read your insight statements and check whether they resonate with an outside audience.
- » **Step 4: Repeat for all of the themes.**
- » **Step 5: Record the insights.**
 - ◊ Try to limit to the most important insight statements!

4. How Might We Questions

“How Might We” (HMW) questions are the starting point for a brainstorming session. They are written in direct response to an insight. These questions feel optimistic and exciting and should help you think of new ideas quickly. They help frame problems as opportunities. By defining themes and insights, you’ve identified problem areas that may pose challenges. Try reframing your insight statements as How Might We questions to turn those challenges into opportunities. The How Might We format suggests that a solution is possible and offers you the chance to answer them in a variety of ways. A properly framed How Might We doesn’t suggest a particular solution, but rather gives you the perfect frame for innovative thinking. Find more information here - <http://www.designkit.org/methods/3>.¹¹

» Step 1: Turn your insight statements into questions!

◇ Try utilizing “How Might We” as an invitation for exploration.

» Step 2: Generate multiple HMW questions for each insight.

◇ This shows you how one thing can be framed in so many different ways!

» Step 3: Revise and refine these statements.

◇ Use plain, simple, and concise language.

» Step 4: Chose a few HMW statements (around 3) to use for brainstorming.

◇ Trust your gut! Go with the ones that feel compelling and connect to what you heard.

				
Learnings Learning are the recollections of what stood out during a conversation or observation: direct quotes, anecdotes, notes on sounds, smells, textures, colors, etc. Learnings should be communicated in full sentences to capture the story. You'll capture learnings as your team recounts what they observed during research.	Themes Themes are created after you have organized the stories from your field research into categories. Did you hear similar statements or observations from multiple people? Themes are the headlines for clusters of similar learning.	Insights Insights are a succinct expression of what you have learned from your field research activities. Insights offer a new perspective, even if they are not new discoveries. They are inspiring and relevant to your challenge.	How Might We “How Might We” questions are the starting point for a brainstorming session. How Might We questions are written in direct response to an insight. These questions feel optimistic and exciting and should help you think of new ideas quickly.	Ideas Ideas are generated during a brainstorming session. Ideas can be practical and simple or wild and crazy (like the hypothetical delivery drone in the example above, which could make low-cost fruit deliveries in small quantities to multiple locations in a neighborhood). All judgement is deferred during a brainstorm, as the goal is to come up with as many ideas as possible. Ideas are best communicated with quick sketches.

¹¹Design Kit by IDEO.org. How Might We. Available at <https://www.designkit.org/methods/3>.

HOW MIGHT WE TEMPLATE

Below is a template that can be used with some examples of insight and How Might We statements.

Insight: Youth identified transportation as a barrier to program participation.

How might we...minimize the impact of limited transportation options on youth participation in our programs?

Insight: Some of the youth in the program have unstable housing.

How might we...minimize the impact of housing instability on youth participating in our program?...build internal supports to aid unstably housed youth?

Insight: Youth don't feel comfortable attending partner clinics.

How might we...create linkages to more youth-friendly serving organizations for referrals?

1. Insight:

How might we...

2. Insight:

How might we...

3. Insight:

How might we...

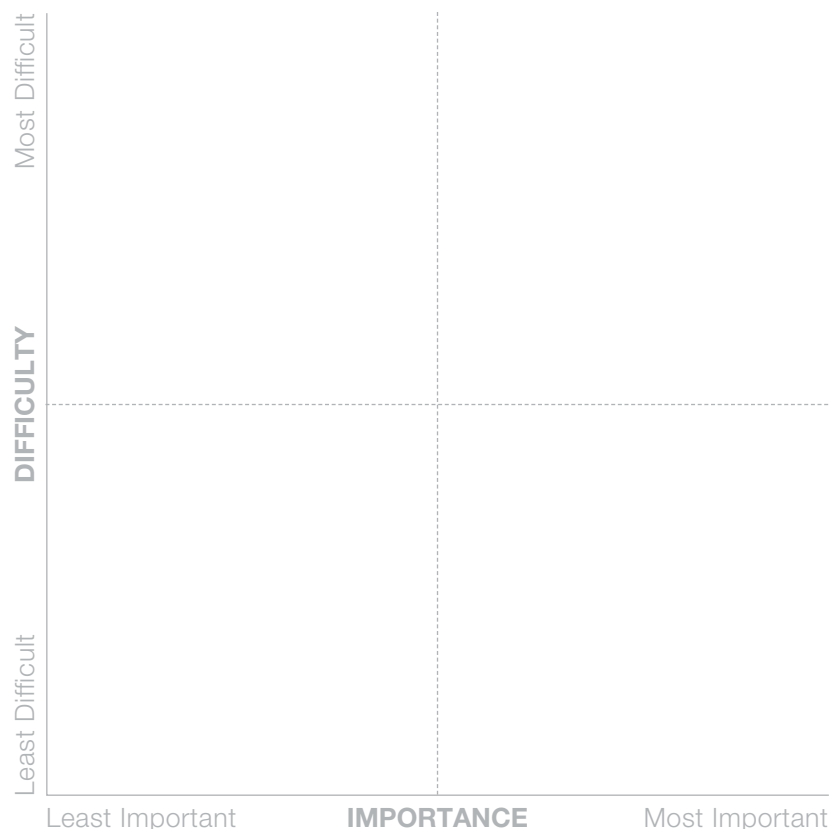
Generating Ideas

Ideas are generated during a brainstorming session, using an HMW question to frame the problem. Ideas can be practical and simple or wild and crazy. All judgment is deferred during a brainstorm; the goal is to come up with as many ideas as possible (30-50). Ideas are best communicated with quick sketches. More information can be found at <http://www.designkit.org/methods/28>.¹²

- » **Step 1:** Bring a group together; include some youth if possible.
- » **Step 2:** Set up your space, gathering supplies such as Post-it notes and Sharpies.
- » **Step 3:** Write out your selected How Might We statements (selecting ~3) and brainstorm ideas following the rules.
- » **Step 4:** Repeat for all HMW questions (or do them together).

Prioritizing Ideas Using a Matrix

Once there are several different ideas to the opportunity statements, it's a good idea to prioritize using a matrix (importance/impact and difficulty). And then move forward with developing an action plan for incorporating the ideas. More information can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/Design-Thinking-Matrix>.¹³



¹² Design Kit by IDEO.org. Brainstorm Rules. Available at <https://www.designkit.org/methods/28>.

¹³ Crawford, Kimberly. (2018). Design Thinking Toolkit, Lesson 8 – Difficulty & Importance Matrix. Available at <https://spin.atomicobject.com/2018/03/06/design-thinking-difficulty-importance-matrix/>.

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Now that you have generated some ideas and prioritized action items, it's time to develop an action plan. An action plan provides a clear picture of the entire improvement effort, its goals, and how all activities fit together to achieve those goals. Using an action plan makes it easy to track and update the implementation of all your YLS program improvement activities.

Instructions: *First, choose an appropriate goal(s) and clearly define your objective(s). Next, create your action plan by choosing steps that are concrete, measurable, and attainable. Then, identify the responsible person(s) and resources needed to complete each action step. Finally, determine the benchmarks, completion dates, and evidence of improvement for each action step.*

GOAL:

Objectives:

Action Steps	Responsible Person(s) or Partners	Resources Internal and External	Progress Indicated at Benchmark	Completion Date	Evidence of Improvement
What you need to do to achieve the goal	Who is responsible for each action step	What resources you'll need to achieve the goal	How you'll know progress has been made on each action step	When you expect to complete each action step	The result of completing each action step

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Potential Barriers *(Who [individuals/organizations] might resist? What are your plans to mitigate?)*

Communications Plan *(Who is involved? What methods? How often?)*

Evaluation Process *(How will you determine that your goal has been reached? What are your measures?)*

