

Getting Youth to the Table

Tips from Colorado Youth Leaders

Look Within Before You Begin

Assess organizational readiness & select adult allies

- Be dedicated to the project and to engaging youth.
- Adults need to be committed to sustaining the advisory board.
- Don't patronize the kids. Don't act like anyone's better than anyone.
- Try to see things from the youth's perspective.

Start With Who & What You Know

Connect with young people from the start

- Listen to young people's ideas!
- Don't force it on them - let them decide.
- Encourage youth to take part and actually involve them in the conversation or whatever you're doing.

Make a Plan

Plan for organizational structure, timeline, applications & interviews, & roles

- Be organized.
- Explain—it is a hard concept to understand sometimes and it is nice for young people to know exactly what they are getting involved in.
- Include youth in all learning opportunities. Don't dumb it down.
- Have an adult on the board drive them to the first meeting so that the adult can explain what the youth needs to know.
- Help the youth a little bit but not too much. That way they are able to learn, but not get frustrated.

Prioritize Diversity & Inclusivity

Recruit broadly & reflect your target population

- Try to appeal to a variety of students.
- Look for uniqueness and honesty in young people.
- Pick those who actually have been in the system and went through hard times. In order to change things you need people who know where the changes need to be made.
- Rethink your definition of leadership, but make sure the youth are responsible.

Remember What Motivates Young People

Speak to motivation in recruitment

- Only look for people who really want to do it. Recruit youth that have motivation and who want to work hard for the better of the organization.
- Think of this not as a class or activity, but as a foundation to becoming a stable adult.
- Have fun projects and activities that will benefit the community at the same time. What persuades people to go to something is connecting it clearly to a good cause.
- Show them how they can change something. Youth are motivated to change something they don't agree with.
- Ensure them that they will get what they want - to be heard.
- Let youth know all the benefits for participating and what they can get out of it (e.g. skills, experiences).

Be Creative - Highlight Fun & Action

Use creative marketing to demonstrate potential for fun & positive outcomes

- Focus on building relationships.
- Use social networking and word of mouth to recruit.
- Encourage youth to come and observe before they get involved.
- Make sure to incorporate a lot of fun. For example, when interviewing or having flyers, have fun questions that will get youth's attention.
- Make it sound exciting and entice with food. Give them something to look forward to at the end - prize, trip.
- Give example of how the youth who were previously a part of the organization helped with decisions.
- Let youth know the importance of their commitment to becoming a leader. Explain to youth the value of their opinions.

Network with other youth serving professionals and youth leadership groups online at <http://coloradoyouthdevelopment.ning.com>.

Visit www.healthyyouthcolorado.org for a list of youth advisory boards in Colorado.

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