



AUTHENTIC YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A Guide for Municipal Leaders



About the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC).

NLC is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal government throughout the United States. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance.

The YEF Institute helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

Through the YEF Institute, municipal officials and other community leaders have direct access to a broad array of strategies and tools, including:

- Action kits that offer a menu of practical steps that officials can take to address key problems or challenges.
- Technical assistance projects in selected communities.
- The National Summit on Your City's Families and other workshops, training sessions, and cross-site meetings.
- Targeted research and periodic surveys of local officials.
- The YEF Institute's website, audioconferences and e-mail listservs.

To learn more about these tools and other aspects of the YEF Institute's work, go to www.nlc.org/iyef or leave a message on the YEF Institute's information line at (202) 626-3014.



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| TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	3
A FRAMEWORK FOR AUTHENTIC YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	5
• What Makes Youth Civic Engagement Authentic?	
• The AYCE Framework — How to Intentionally Engage Youth in Local Government	
GETTING READY FOR AYCE	7
• What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Lay the Groundwork for AYCE to be Successful and Sustainable?	
• First Steps for the Elected Official and/or Stakeholder Group	
• A River City Story: Mayor Smith Champions AYCE	
THE SETTING: Welcome Youth in Local Government	11
• What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Create the Setting?	
• Voices Around the Country	
• 10 Reasons Why Youth Say They Do Not Participate in Local Government	
• On the Map (Short City Highlights)	
• A River City Story: Mayor Smith Champions AYCE	
THE STRUCTURE: Develop an Infrastructure that Supports Youth Participation in Government	17
• What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Create the Structure?	
• Voices Around the Country	
• 10 Ways to Keep Youth Engagement Authentic	
• On the Map (Short City Highlights)	
• A River City Story: Mayor Smith Champions AYCE	
THE STRATEGY: Create Meaningful Opportunities for Youth to Make a Difference	23
• The Four Pathways to Youth Engagement	
• What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Create the Strategy?	
• Voices Around the Country	
• 10 Ways Youth Around the Country Are Making a Difference	
• On the Map (Short City Highlights)	
• A River City Story: Mayor Smith Champions AYCE	
THE SUPPORT: Build Youth-Adult Partnerships to Support Engagement	31
• What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Create the Support?	
• Voices Around the Country	
• 10 Important Qualities for a Team of Adult Allies	
• On the Map (Short City Highlights)	
• A River City Story: Mayor Smith Champions AYCE	

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

37

- Methodology
- AYCE Perceptions Inventory and Profile Chart
- Creating an AYCE Infrastructure
- Frequently Asked Questions about AYCE
- AYCE from A to V: 10 Strategies Beyond Youth Councils to Engage Youth in Public Policy, Planning, and Decision-Making
- An Elected Official's Checklist for Action
- Local and National Resources for AYCE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

65



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the country, municipal leaders are discovering one of their greatest assets: the youth of their city. Increasingly, youth are working with elected officials and other city leaders to tackle the important issues of local government. More and more young people are also discovering that their voices matter to their communities, and that they can make their communities better places to live.

Elected officials and civic leaders find that when they offer meaningful opportunities for youth to be engaged in their communities, more young people participate and encourage their peers to do the same. In addition to engaging the next generation of civic leaders, cities already using this approach have realized many of the following benefits:

- Budget savings and revenue generation
- Increased support for city initiatives
- Improved policies and programs for youth
- Identification as a youth-friendly community
- Improved indicators of well-being among youth

Recognizing the importance of this work, the National League of Cities (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) has created a framework to support cities as they work to promote youth civic engagement. Through a year-long process of research, interviews and dialogue with city leaders, the YEF Institute has brought together the strongest theory and the best practices of localities to provide guidance on the elements that make youth engagement in government meaningful and sustainable.

The term used in this guide to describe this approach to youth involvement in government is Authentic Youth Civic Engagement (AYCE). Under this framework, young people...

- are seen as valuable participants in the work of local government;
- are prepared to take on meaningful roles in addressing relevant issues; and
- work in partnership with adults who respect, listen to and support them.

Authentic Youth Civic Engagement invites young people to participate in the democratic process through meaningful roles in public policy, planning and decision-making, which can lead to improved outcomes for youth and the community. AYCE thrives in a climate of reciprocity and respect where young people, in partnership with adults, are prepared and supported to tackle relevant issues and effect change.

The AYCE framework presents four critical elements for a successful initiative:

A **Setting** in which the civic climate of the community is welcoming and inviting to youth, acknowledging their role in public policy, planning and decision-making.

A **Structure** in which the organization and system that supports AYCE meets both the needs of the local government and the interests of the young people.

A **Strategy** that offers a wide range of activities and provides youth with a breadth and depth of meaningful opportunities for participation in local government.

Support from adult allies, both within and outside local government, which enables the young people involved in AYCE efforts to have a real impact on issues that concern them.

This guide will help local elected officials and other city leaders address each of the critical elements of this AYCE framework. Like any other new initiative in local government, there is no magic recipe or one-size-fits-all approach. Success comes from blending the unique assets of a city with the collective knowledge and best practice from across the country. Local officials can use this framework to find workable solutions for their own community.

First, an assessment tool will help municipal leaders introduce the idea of the AYCE framework into their city. To get started, officials are encouraged to:

- Convene a small group of stakeholders and include some youth;
- Learn about current youth civic engagement efforts in the city;
- Talk about the issues raised in the assessment and answer some tough questions;
- Agree on a common definition and framework for AYCE; and
- Invest in some training.

This guide then describes each of the AYCE critical elements in detail, highlighting actions that can increase the likelihood of success.

The Setting section reinforces how important it is for elected officials and community leaders to believe youth can help local government build a better community. It presents numerous tips to promote that belief and act on it.

The Structure section explores the various options that municipal leaders can consider to organize and manage the city's approach to AYCE.

The Strategy section describes how to make a wide range of opportunities available and accessible to a broad diversity of youth that allow them to have an impact on important issues.

The Support section outlines how adults, within and outside of local government, can work as colleagues with youth and build bridges between them and the adult world.

Finally, a Tools and Resources section will connect city officials with ideas, strategies and other local leaders around the country who can share information and support for this challenging and rewarding work.

There is a place in nearly every community where the passions of young people intersect with the work of local government. For each city or town it is different. In some communities, teens help organize the mayor's literacy campaign. In others, hundreds of youth will attend a public hearing to weigh in on solutions to neighborhood violence. In a few cities, teens and city officials will work together to map safe routes to school or craft a recycling ordinance.

In some areas of the country, the place where youth and government meet in productive and meaningful ways has not yet been discovered. Although many of these cities strive to involve youth in positive activities, authentic youth civic engagement (AYCE) can be of much greater value to elected officials and other city leaders. It can help the city involve a previously untapped resource in the work of leadership and governance — a group of willing and knowledgeable citizens with the power and potential to help build a better community.

Sometimes the intersection of youth and municipal government can result in a collision. The fast-paced, peer-driven world of young people is often at odds with the world of policy and governance. Conflicts can arise over curfews and use of public space. City leaders can struggle to understand the language, style and technology of a youth culture so foreign to them. Youth can become apathetic and disengaged from the very community that might support them.

Local governments face challenges like these every day. Tackling them with the advice, support and action of young people can help ensure that cities craft effective policies, cultivate the next generation of productive citizens and find ways to enhance the quality of life in their communities.

The practice of including youth in public policy, planning and decision-making is not new. For more than 15 years, NLC has supported and documented the efforts of cities to engage young people intentionally and effectively. Over time, these cities have discovered numerous benefits to both youth and their communities. Some of these documented benefits include:

Budget savings and revenue generation. Youth input can redirect city investments away from programs and facilities that would be underutilized into areas that reflect the needs of youth and their families. Involving youth in city decisions leads to a greater connection between planning and the realities of that segment of the city's population. For instance, youth-led analyses of their peers' spending patterns have provided municipal leaders with valuable feedback for local economic development initiatives.

Increased support for city initiatives. The partnerships created between local government and young people can be invaluable in helping youth and their families learn about, and then work on behalf of, city plans and policies. City councils that have reached out to youth have found them to be an important constituency in promoting change and tackling difficult issues.

Improved policies and programs for youth. Young people can raise genuine concerns about their education, health and safety and offer workable options and solutions. Youth efforts to map their community resources have resulted in more accessible services. Youth recommendations have improved school and afterschool curricula. Youth-driven safety policies have helped save lives.

Identification as a youth-friendly community. Cities that engage youth in the work of local government are consistently listed among the top places for young people to live. Many businesses are attracted to cities with this distinction, and there is increasing evidence that young adults want to reside in a community that valued them when they were young.

Improved indicators of well-being. Studies consistently show that youth in civic engagement programs are more likely to graduate, adopt productive attitudes about their role in the community and avoid risky behaviors. When these same youth reach adulthood, they tend to vote, volunteer and become valuable members of the workforce. They become lifelong civic leaders.

In other words, successful engagement of youth in local government is a powerful strategy to improve the community and the lives of its youth and their families.

To increase the focus on city government as a point of entry for youth engagement, the YEF Institute — with support from the Surdna Foundation — embarked on a year-long initiative in 2008 to strengthen the capacity of municipal leaders to promote authentic youth engagement in local government. The ensuing research, along with a synthesis of the experiences of more than 300 city leaders, youth experts and young people, resulted in a wealth of insights into the state of youth engagement across the country. It was clear that:

- Local elected officials and other city leaders see youth civic engagement as well within the purview of municipal government.

- There are an ever-increasing number of initiatives around the country that demonstrate the success of involving youth in local policy, planning and decision-making.
- Adults, recognizing the challenges of engaging youth, want guidance, support and practical suggestions for beginning, or enhancing, their own efforts.

The Authentic Youth Civic Engagement (AYCE) framework presented in this publication builds on these findings and lessons from across the country. It presents a guide for local government officials, alongside their community partners and the youth of their city, to build an effective and authentic system of engaging youth.

| A FRAMEWORK FOR AUTHENTIC YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

What Makes Youth Civic Engagement Authentic?

One of the most compelling definitions of Authentic Youth Civic Engagement was coined by Dr. Barry Checkoway of the University of Michigan. Checkoway, a long-time expert on youth engagement, refers to young people as “colleagues in a common cause” when they join adults in tackling the important work of their neighborhoods, schools and municipalities.

“Colleagues in a common cause” embodies the critical components of a good AYCE definition. In authentic civic engagement, young people:

- are seen as valuable participants in the work of local government;
- are prepared to take on meaningful roles in addressing relevant issues; and
- work in partnership with adults who respect, listen to and support them.

In AYCE, youth are engaged in work that makes a difference. Their efforts can lead to improved outcomes for other youth and the community as a whole. They can be agents of change.

The AYCE Framework — How to Intentionally Engage Youth in Local Government

The AYCE framework offers a helpful lens to sort out the process of creating and sustaining a long-term approach to engaging youth in local government. Most cities already have pieces of the process in place; applying a framework will help elected officials enhance their efforts and intentionally build a system that can be sustained.

There are four critical elements of Authentic Youth Civic Engagement in any community:

A **Setting** in which the civic climate of the community is welcoming and inviting to youth, acknowledging their role in public policy, planning and decision-making.

A **Structure** in which the organization and system that supports AYCE meets both the needs of the local government and the interests of the young people.

A **Strategy** that offers a wide range of activities and provides youth with a breadth and depth of meaningful opportunities for participation in local government.

Support from adult allies, both within and outside local government, which enables the young people involved in AYCE efforts to have a real impact on issues that concern them.

Like the four legs of a table, these elements are the essential foundation, each supporting one piece of an AYCE definition. Any city committed to effectively engaging youth must pay attention to all four elements in order to shift the role of young people from mere recipients of city services to contributors to the city’s well being.

It is important to note that the four elements are not sequential steps. All are interrelated and equally important. The following sections cover setting, structure, strategy and support in greater detail, describing each element within the context of the ongoing roles civic leaders can play to ensure the success of their AYCE initiative. Each section makes numerous suggestions to help elected officials and other implementers take practical steps toward creating a welcoming climate, designing a workable system and ensuring the support of youth who will be engaged.

It is tempting at this point to jump into creating some specific activities. However, long-term success will depend on careful up-front planning. City leaders are encouraged to avoid the trap of taking a “Ready — Fire — Aim” approach and, instead, to treat AYCE like any other development strategy for the city. The next section describes some initial helpful steps. Even if the city already has a number of youth engagement activities, these beginning steps will contribute to the development and sustainability of the AYCE initiative.

A FRAMEWORK FOR AUTHENTIC YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

AYCE Definition	Critical Element	Role of City Leaders	Ingredients
Young people are seen as valuable participants in the work of local government.	The Setting	Welcome youth in local government.	Elected officials and other community leaders believe youth can help local government build a better community. They promote that belief and act on it.
Young people are prepared to take on meaningful roles in addressing relevant issues.	The Structure	Develop an infrastructure that supports youth participation in government.	A workable structure matches the interests of youth with the needs of the city.
	The Strategy	Create meaningful opportunities for youth to make a difference.	A continuum of opportunities available and accessible to a broad diversity of youth allows them to have an impact on important issues.
Young people work in partnership with adults who respect, listen to and support them.	The Support	Build youth-adult partnerships to support engagement.	Adults, within and outside of local government, are willing and able to work as colleagues with youth and build bridges between them and the adult world.

| GETTING READY FOR AYCE

What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Lay the Groundwork for AYCE to be Successful and Sustainable?

In most cities, mayors and city councilmembers will serve as the champions, initiators and conveners for the creation of a youth civic engagement system within local government. What happens next will vary from city to city. Sometimes elected officials set the vision and then turn the implementation over to city management, department heads, other staff or community-based organizations. In other cases, they choose to have a more hands-on role in designing and implementing the strategies.

Either way, a small but diverse stakeholder group can aid in the design and implementation of any city planning or community improvement strategy, bringing its best thinking and resources to bear in tackling the issue. This steering or working group is composed of people who understand the potential impacts of any strategies that may be created.

Because young people are at the center of the AYCE approach, it is essential for municipal leaders to work closely with youth regardless of the method they choose to create or enhance the city's youth civic engagement efforts. Young people must be seen as "experts" in this topic and included in the planning process. For municipal leaders, this role requires additional time and some training in order to work effectively with teens in a partnership.

First Steps for the Elected Official and/or Stakeholder Group

A key word related to Authentic Youth Civic Engagement is "intentional." Like any other city improvement strategy, AYCE should be carefully researched and considered. The mayor, along with his or her advisors or the newly formed Stakeholder Group, has three basic steps before embarking on implementation.

TIPS FOR CREATING A YOUTH AND ADULT STAKEHOLDER GROUP FOR AYCE

A small, working group of people who are most passionate about creating a youth-friendly city will help municipal leaders get started on their AYCE initiative. Try to have no greater a ratio than two or three adults to one young person.

Adults: Scan the city council, city staff or community leaders to find adults who:

- are willing to see young people as resources who can help the city.
- have the ability to be part of a team that focuses on what is already working locally and what works in other cities.

Youth: Enlist the support of adults in the city, schools or community-based youth groups who can help identify youth who:

- are representative of the diversity of the city's teenage population.
- have the ability to participate in a discussion, analyze issues and offer recommendations.

Facilitator: Look within the city staff, schools, universities or community-based organizations to find someone with the expertise to:

- support the group to complete their tasks in a timely manner.
- assist the youth and adults to work together in effective cross-generational conversations.

The Support section of this booklet describes the characteristics of an adult ally who will most likely have connections with the youth you want to involve at this point in your process. The Tools and Resources section provides a list of national organizations that may provide additional assistance.

Step 1: Learn about current youth civic engagement efforts in the city.

The Tools and Resources section of this booklet contains a “Perceptions Inventory” that can be used by city leaders to assess the current state of youth civic engagement in their own communities. This tool provides a series of questions that are grouped according to the definition and critical elements of authentic youth civic engagement. Responses can be plotted on a chart and the results will present a visual portrait of the current status of youth engagement in a city.

A rich dialogue can result if a variety of individuals, including city leaders, youth workers and young people, complete the assessment. There is bound to be a wide diversity of opinion, which can lead to valuable insights.

An additional assessment strategy can involve young people identifying current youth engagement efforts in the community. While it is helpful to collect a list of all the services the city provides for youth and the wide variety of organizations or activities they can join, this step focuses specifically on the youth engagement activities that connect young people with the work of local government. Through surveys or canvassing their community, youth can gather baseline information on two important questions:

- What activities are already taking place?
- How do youth perceive the existing opportunities for engagement?

Step 2: Talk about the issues raised in the assessment and answer some tough questions.

What did the overall assessment say about the city’s readiness and capacity to do this work? A candid dialogue is important to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the city’s current approach to involving youth in local government.

Much of the valuable feedback will come from young people. However, adults must also consider these essential questions:

- What level of interest exists among city leaders and other adults to engage youth in local government? Why would the city want to do this?
- What is the opinion of city leaders about the roles youth could play?
- How willing are adult leaders to open up their decision-making process to youth involvement?

Step 3: Agree on a common definition and framework for AYCE.

The following sections of this publication elaborate on the framework for supporting the authentic engagement of young people in public policy, planning and decision-making. If everyone involved has read about and understands the framework prior to moving forward, this becomes the time to decide whether or not to proceed with the process. The following questions may help city leaders find consensus on this decision:

- Does everyone share a long-term vision for implementing the AYCE framework in the city?
- Does everyone agree that there are potential strategies the city can undertake that will create or improve the setting, structure, strategy and support for engaging youth in local government?

Next Steps

The assessments of current youth engagement efforts have been completed. Youth have shared their ideas. There is a general understanding among local officials and key stakeholders that this new endeavor involves a lot of planning. People seem excited and ready to *do something*. So what to do?

This is the time to dive into the AYCE framework and begin to apply it to your city. Next steps might include expanding the initial stakeholder group, or turning the process over to specific staff or youth development experts. It also might be

time to invest in some training to ensure that the planners of the city's AYCE strategy have the skills necessary to lead the development of this new initiative (see the Frequently Asked Questions section for more information about resources on youth-adult partnership training).

One approach is to look at a critical element that showed up with lower scores on your Perceptions Inventory and other assessments and choose a few strategies to improve that area. Often the act of concentrating on one of the critical elements of AYCE will open doors in the other elements as well.

Another approach is to design one strategy in each of the critical areas that could be easily accomplished and provide some initial results. It is important, especially working with youth, to have some immediate successes that help generate positive reactions to the city's early attempts at youth engagement.

Still another approach is to concentrate your initial efforts in a district or neighborhood where there is already some activity and youth civic engagement might be well-received. This type of pilot approach can provide some valuable lessons that will be helpful in spreading the framework citywide.

In addition to the tips in the following sections of this document, the Tools and Resources and Frequently Asked Questions sections may provide additional ideas on logical next steps.

The best advice for a new AYCE initiative is "go slow to go fast." Many cities have a tendency to use their initial enthusiasm to tackle complicated social issues. Some imagine high-level youth councils or youth serving on numerous boards or commissions. The reality is that early successes are important, so it may be best to select one or two feasible strategies to get everyone on board and establish a basis for future work.

No matter who is planning the implementation and which initial strategy is pursued, it is essential that elected officials and other city leaders, as the champions and conveners for the AYCE initiative, remain involved and committed to the process.

A RIVER CITY STORY: MAYOR SMITH CHAMPIONS AYCE

Mayor Smith is trudging up the two flights of stairs to his small office overlooking the River City square. He has avoided the elevator today to grab just a few more moments alone with his thoughts.

Ever since he was elected three years ago to lead the seven-member City Council, Mayor Smith has used this stairwell time to ponder the challenges of his small Midwestern city. Today, his thoughts turn to an article in the morning paper citing the city's loss of jobs and population.

The fact that River City's 40,000 residents are feeling the pinch of challenging economic times, recently made worse by the closing of an important manufacturing plant, was not news. What made this article different was the reporter's slant on the local young adult population. To hear this version of the issue, they were leaving the city in droves.

By the time he reaches his office door, Mayor Smith has an idea, and it involves the city's 3,000 teens. What if high school-aged youth got involved in the city's economic development plans? Would they care? If they did, what would they think was important? Could they be persuaded to remain in River City? Could involving them in this issue have any impact on maintaining jobs and population?

Mayor Smith knows this will take a lot of work, and the support of at least three of his fellow councilmembers, but it is worth a try...

continued on page 15

| THE SETTING:

Welcome Youth in Local Government

Do elected officials and community leaders believe youth can help local government build a better community? Do they promote that belief as well as act on it?

“Every single person has capabilities, abilities and gifts. Living a good life depends on whether those capabilities can be used, abilities expressed and gifts given. If they are, the person will be valued, feel powerful and well connected to the people around them. And the community around the person will be more powerful because of the contribution the person is making.”¹

John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight

co-directors, Asset Building Community Development Institute

The above quote by community development pioneers presents an innovative way for local government and community leaders to view residents. Some localities have found very effective ways of engaging adult citizens to share their capabilities in the work of local government, yet far fewer have learned how to expand this engagement to younger citizens.

While an AYCE framework may appear simple, its depth comes from the requirement that people — both youth and adults — change the way they think, believe and behave. A prevailing general attitude in many cities views young people as recipients of what adults have to provide or teach them. While there is much value to the view of youth as recipients, this perspective presents problems when adults are unable to also value youth for the contributions they have to offer.

In a typical government setting, adults may view youth as problems to be fixed, a vulnerable population to be protected or a special interest group that draws a disproportionate amount of local resources. Adopting an AYCE framework challenges these views. In an AYCE framework, youth are seen as:

- Problem-solvers;
- Contributors to community safety and well-being;
- Designers, planners and evaluators; and
- Grant-makers.

Authentic youth civic engagement can flourish in a setting that is conducive to citizen engagement in general and, specifically, goes the extra step to see youth as part of the community. The setting of the AYCE framework is the environment — the social and political climate — that makes young people believe they are welcomed as civic participants.

To what extent are city leaders — mayors, councilmembers, managers, department heads, school and civic leaders — willing to open up their decision-making process to the voice of young people? This will vary from city to city, and each city needs to determine the level of youth engagement that is most practical for them. Often, the more adults participate in an intergenerational committee or learn about fresh ideas from youth presentations, the more open they are to continue including youth in municipal affairs.

¹ Kretzmann, John P., and John L. McKnight. *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, 1993.

What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Create the Setting?

Acknowledge youth as active civic participants.

In order for youth engagement to be authentic, adults must see young people as resources. Thus, the first step in welcoming youth into local government is to believe that they belong there. Local leaders may ask themselves, “Is there a current issue facing the city that could benefit from a youth perspective?” Elected officials can capitalize on any existing local civic engagement efforts happening among adults by extending an open invitation to youth. City leaders can also build young people’s interest in local government from the ground up. Most cities have numerous civic and volunteer opportunities for youth that can be connected to municipal issues.

Youth are extremely interested in issues that have a direct impact on their lives, such as safety in their neighborhoods, curricular and extracurricular offerings at their schools and the presence or lack of parks and recreation facilities. However, it is a mistake to assume that young people are not interested in other issues as well. In many cities, they take leading roles in shaping environmental policy, advocating for health services and getting out the vote at election time.

Create youth-friendly municipal processes.

Taking a fresh look at municipal processes from a youth engagement perspective may uncover ordinances, policies or practices that inhibit youth participation. City council meetings, public hearings and other processes for soliciting citizen input may not lead youth to believe they are welcomed participants.

Under the guidance of the mayor or other local officials, cities can examine the details of typical citizen engagement opportunities. Times and locations, sign-up procedures, complexity of information, formalities and unspoken expectations all may be off-putting to youth. Are they absolutely necessary, or is there another way to accomplish the same objectives? A council-appointed working group of youth and adults can recommend workable strategies to change or adapt local procedures for civic engagement.

VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

“It is essential to have an openness on the part of elected officials. The word ‘welcomed’ is important to use about youth so it implies to policymakers a serious, sincere commitment.”

— Elected official, California

“They expect you to have a voice. It makes me proud to be part of my city.”

— Youth, Virginia

“Public officials must see that many of these problems, like the dropout issue, cannot be solved without youth at the table.”

— Adult ally, Tennessee

“Authentic engagement is very important — it means we have to look them in the face when we are making decisions.”

— Elected official, California

In some cases, cities create strategies specifically for youth input. The most common of these is the summit or speakout — a sort of youth-friendly public hearing. These activities, planned in partnership with youth, can be focused on one issue of youth concern or open-ended to determine the topics youth want their city to address.

Listen to youth voices and open strong lines of communication.

Communication is essential for youth to participate in city government. There are several key components to effective communication. First, nothing can kill enthusiasm for engagement faster than youth believing that their participation did not matter. If a public process is opened to or created specifically for youth, it is important that there be some kind of feedback loop so that young people know their ideas were taken into consideration. Websites, newsletters or messages to youth leadership groups can be helpful mechanisms for following up with youth who participated. Youth who are in a position to represent their peers can be selected to follow up with city leaders as work progresses on a given issue.

It is also important to make expectations clear. Some youth believe that by merely presenting their ideas to city leaders, their suggestions will be implemented. They may interpret a lack of immediate results as an indication that their voices were not heard, resulting in disillusionment. Elected officials can help youth understand that their ideas were considered by honestly explaining the process and the reasons for the city's decisions.

Elected officials also play a vital role in convincing youth they are being taken seriously. Sometimes public officials do not know what to say when youth present an issue or concern to them because they do not want to appear argumentative or unfriendly. So, instead of addressing the youths' concerns, mayors or councilmembers end up complimenting the speakers on how they look or perform. Youth appreciate compliments, but the mayor or city council can also demonstrate that they are listening by asking questions, noticing areas of alignment with city policy and acknowledging the young people's ideas.

Promote youth leadership.

Mayors and other elected officials have the advantage of the “bully pulpit” to establish public clarity about “how we are going to do business in our city.” They have a unique vehicle to intentionally embed the idea of youth engagement into a whole range of planning and decision-making situations.

Public proclamations, documents and policies can help institutionalize the place of youth at the decision-making tables of the city. When proposals are presented to the coun-

10 REASONS WHY YOUTH SAY THEY DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

10. Think their voice would not be heard.
9. Lack transportation.
8. Difficult to balance job, school, family and other time commitments.
7. Parents object, or general lack of parental support.
6. Activity is held at an inconvenient time (during school hours, on college prep testing day, etc.).
5. Issue to be tackled seems too big.
4. Issue to be tackled is not interesting to youth.
3. No other youth are doing it.
2. Believe that, in general, adults do not take youth seriously.
1. No one asked!

cil, officials can inquire as to how youth were consulted or involved. Elected officials can urge city boards and commissions to consult with a youth group (such as a local youth council, if available) so that young people can weigh in on new policies or initiatives. If local officials are making appointments to a new board or committee, they can stress the importance of appointing youth.

Strong partnerships with schools, universities, the faith community, youth-serving agencies and neighborhood groups can help local government create a community norm that supports and sustains a broader youth engagement agenda. Reinforcing local government efforts with similar actions in the rest of the public sector and in the nonprofit sector can enhance the civic environment.

The more public officials promote youth engagement, the more it will become a reality throughout the community.

VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

"Outside of political campaigns, the only outlet for civic activism in my community was through local government."

— Youth, Wisconsin

"We need to make the case about why it matters to the mayor and to the city. It is important to focus on economic development and sustaining democracy. Elected officials need to come to see the importance of youth being in that process."

— University professor, New Hampshire

"The youth just keep showing up, and finally it becomes part of the city culture."

— Adult ally, Massachusetts

"We must give youth the same credibility as other community groups and legitimize their participation."

— Elected official, Colorado

"This is very doable, in fact it is already being done. We are creating an environment where kids are less likely to get in trouble."

— Elected official, Minnesota

On the Map

Boston, Mass.: Putting the "Mayor" in Mayor's Youth Council

The sustained success of the Boston Mayor's Youth Council is due in no small part to the emphatic support of its primary champion, Mayor Thomas M. Menino. At first, city agencies and partner organizations were uncomfortable meeting with youth because they thought teens would only have negative things to say about programs. However, Mayor Menino encouraged them to involve youth because he knew that young people would have positive and creative ideas to share. After 15 years in office, the mayor's emphasis on youth involvement has become a pervasive and self-perpetuating expectation throughout Boston. As Patty McMahon, director of the Mayor's Youth Council, explains, "It has been institutionalized...You'd have to involve young people from this point forward."

Hampton, Va.: A Community Norm that Youth are Seen as Resources

Everywhere you look throughout local government in Hampton, there are young people taking on meaningful roles in planning, policy and decision-making. Youth are a fixture in City Hall, and City Council and the Planning Commission expect regular reports from high school students working on

the youth component of the Community Plan. Other decision-making bodies invite youth involvement and input through a variety of strategies. With a successful long-term focus on citizen engagement, it was not too much of a stretch for Hampton leaders in the early 1990s to extend the invitation to the youth population. Each successive mayor and city manager affirms his or her expectation of youth engagement to city departments, the school division and outside agencies, and continues to promote the benefits in public forums.

Greenville, S.C.: Intentional Planning to Engage Youth

In 2008, Councilwoman Diane Smock spearheaded an effort to develop an AYCE initiative in Greenville. When Mayor Knox White joined the Mayors' Action Challenge for Children and Families, he committed to completing and implementing an AYCE initiative by August 2009. More than 100 youth and adults joined the AYCE initiative, which is managed jointly by the City of Greenville and the United Way of Greenville County. These participants divided into teams to identify and develop opportunities for youth engagement in every sector of the community, from schools and neighborhoods to community-based organizations and city government. By taking this strategic and inclusive approach, the City of Greenville has ensured that rather than being limited to a single program, the AYCE initiative will create lasting change to the community's civic culture.

A RIVER CITY STORY: MAYOR SMITH CHAMPIONS AYCE

THREE MONTHS LATER...

It is the first meeting of River City's Pride team and Mayor Smith is excited. The past three months have been busy. Council's new "Conversations on a Prosperous River City" held throughout the community have been successful. The youth session far exceeded his expectations. Mayor Smith remembers how surprised most of the adults were by the passion of the teens about economic issues and their enthusiasm for participating.

Tonight's meeting will convene a new organization — business and industry representatives, educators, elected officials, parents and youth — that will promote investment in River City as a great place to live, work and play. There is a buzz in the room and Mayor Smith notes with some satisfaction that the reporter who wrote the article about youth leaving the city is currently in the corner surrounded by teens. He hopes they are describing their ideas for a video project that will interview citizens on what makes River City great.

As he takes his place at the head of the table, Mayor Smith makes a mental note to remember the tips he learned about making a meeting youth-friendly. He knows that adult committee work can be very challenging for youth, and he is committed to helping these kids stay engaged. "Welcome everyone!" he begins, nodding toward the youth representatives. "Let's start with introductions."

continued on page 22



| THE STRUCTURE:

Develop an Infrastructure that Supports Youth Participation in Government

Is there a workable structure that matches the interests of youth with the needs of the city?

A municipality's efforts to engage youth occurs within the structure that city leaders establish. Every community's AYCE structure will be different, and city leaders must balance what will work for their local government with the passions and challenges of their city's youth. In listening to the experiences of cities across the country, the overriding theme is: *AYCE is not just a program.*

There are two important lessons in this advice. First, the "not just a program" description means that AYCE is an approach, or a way of looking at young people that permeates the perception of the adults and youth in a community. How a city structures its AYCE initiative can promote that mindset and support numerous opportunities for youth. The location and oversight of the AYCE initiative matter.

Secondly, youth and adults both stress that if civic engagement is to be authentic, young people will need more than a single opportunity to have a role in their community. It is important to create multiple pathways for youth to become involved and make a difference. The structure of a city's AYCE initiative must support a system of opportunities, as described in greater detail in the next section.

Using the definition of AYCE as guidance, how can the organizational structure of the initiative ensure that youth:

- are seen as valuable participants in the work of local government?
- are prepared to take on meaningful roles in addressing relevant issues?
- work in partnership with adults who respect, listen to and support them?

Examples across the country range from initiatives that are run almost entirely by a city department (or in some cases a mayor) to those run almost entirely by an outside youth development agency. The common thread among them is someone serving as champion and a coordinator who possesses the knowledge and skills to effectively engage youth.

If the initiative is based within the government organization, it must support youth in maintaining a perspective that genuinely reflects their peers rather than only that of local officials. It must rely on partnerships within the community to accomplish any of the tasks that are beyond the capacity of local government.

If the initiative is based in the community, it must support youth in maintaining an effective relationship with local government that helps them navigate city hall and remain connected to information pertinent to their work. It must rely on strong agreements that keep the initiative relevant in the eyes of decision-makers.

If the initiative is structured as a joint venture between government and community agencies, it must coordinate the diverse perspectives and approaches of two or more groups, blending the skills, resources and perspectives into one inclusive, workable strategy.

What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Create the Structure?

Choose the organizational setup that is right for your city.

Municipal leaders and their partners may consider following a four-step process for determining what type of infrastructure will best meet the needs of a local AYCE initiative:

Step One: List the Factors for Success

What will it take for the AYCE initiative to be successful in your city? What qualities of its location, organization or governance could give youth the best opportunities to impact the city? The sample chart on the right lists a number of considerations that will be important in making this decision.

Step Two: List the Potential Structures

Create a list of potential structures for an AYCE initiative for your local government. Consider possible locations, lines of authority and the composition of the initiative. Options may already be available in your community or may need to be created if they do not currently exist. Here are some examples of structures that cities are currently using:

- **Designated:** A stand-alone department or office focuses on youth issues, including AYCE.
- **Embedded:** The city manager's or mayor's office, or a department that has another (hopefully related) mission, coordinates the initiative.
- **Contractual:** The city establishes a contract with an outside entity for operation of the initiative in a partnership model.
- **Multi-jurisdictional:** A citywide policy commission (e.g., a health or youth and families commission or an economic development initiative) assigns staff to support a youth agenda within its area of focus.
- The city uses other ideas or a combination of any of the previous options.

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS OF AN AYCE INITIATIVE
Direct connection to city council, and other decision-making bodies
Sufficient authority to convene
Existence/visibility of an adult champion
Strong orientation to youth development and engagement
Strong orientation to civics and participatory governance
Capacity for training, recruitment and support of youth in civic engagement opportunities
Access to a diverse youth population
Ability to rally support among city departments and throughout the local government organization
Ability to create partnerships throughout the community
Capacity for project management
Flexibility in approach and operations
Cost effectiveness
Other

VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

"The challenge for city leaders is how do we make a place for youth within all the issues a city is facing?"

— Elected official, Colorado

"I couldn't believe during my freshman year of college that the kids from other cities had never met their mayor. I was the only one who had ever heard of a Comprehensive Plan."

— Youth, Virginia

"We need to be careful about expectations. Are there really meaningful roles? Do we really listen? It's important to not start something or give the appearance of being on board if that's not the case."

— Elected official, California

"As with adults, youth need to know what's in it for them. Are there some direct benefits to their participation? Can they earn credit, receive stipends, meet new people, have the chance to travel or speak in public?"

— Adult ally, Maine

Step Three: Consider the Benefits of Each Option

Each option for an AYCE structure that a city is considering should be matched against the list of contributors to success to see the benefits it can provide. Local officials can use the list of factors for success as a checklist of criteria to assess each potential structure. Another option is to create a matrix (see the sample in the Tools and Resources section) to determine which criteria match each potential option.

Step Four: Analyze and Determine the Best Fit

Review your completed lists or chart to determine the best combination of factors for a successful AYCE initiative in your city. Often, the best option to consider will be the one that appears to meet the greatest number of criteria on the list of needed qualities and capacity. In some cases, there may be one or two criteria on the list that are significantly more important than the others that will determine the choice of structure. Once the choice for a structure is made, the missing qualities and capacities will need to be addressed in other ways.

Enlist other partners for missing expertise, resources or connections.

Ultimately, any structure created will rely on some partnerships. City officials can work with a variety of local entities including nonprofit agencies, intermediary organizations, schools, chambers of commerce, foundations and colleges and universities to take on various components of the AYCE initiative. No one entity — not even local government — has the capacity to do this effectively on its own.

If the initiative will be located within local government, outside organizations can provide assistance with training, surveying, recruitment, transportation, pooling resources and co-sponsorship of events. If the initiative is to be located within an outside organization, cities can provide access to key decision-makers and information that will ensure the youth participants can achieve what they seek to accomplish.

Connect youth to key decision-makers.

If the AYCE initiative's activities are located too far from the "action" of city hall, or if authority for the initiative is buried too far down in the organizational chart, the initiative may not be taken seriously and young people will miss out on opportunities to contribute. The structure of the initiative can allow for one-time or ongoing interactions with city leaders, as well as official and informal connections to the decision-making processes. The following questions may help city officials consider effective ways to connect youth to decision-makers:

- Will there be a youth council or advisory group that has access to the mayor or city councilmembers?
- Is there an official way to bring youth input into strategic planning, budget deliberations, capital improvement plans and evaluation of city services?
- Is there a way of connecting a group of youth to the work of specific departments?
- Are there some open opportunities for youth to raise their concerns and ideas?

Pay attention to barriers that might keep youth from participating.

All decisions about structure that the city faces must take into consideration the barriers that exist for the very youth who are being invited to participate. Welcoming youth means more than greeting them with a smile when they come to a meeting. It means setting up a structure that sends a message that they belong.

Paying attention to logistics — where and when meetings are held, if food or other incentives are offered, availability of transportation, etc. — will help attract youth participation. Adults might not take into account that youth do not have secretaries to remind them of meetings or office equipment to produce reports. Some do not have computers or newspapers in their homes.

The best strategy to address these barriers is the ongoing, intentional and positive outreach to engage all youth, including those outside the usual line-up of high achievers. If there is a wide range of opportunities for youth with various interests and abilities, and a friendly adult ally to welcome them, youth are more likely to participate.

Community-based organizations that specialize in working with youth from socially vulnerable settings can be valuable partners in the recruitment and support of youth who might not be attracted

VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

"Creating a workable structure is doable, but we need to think about how it can be done differently. For example, the use of newer communication techniques may eliminate some previous barriers."

— Adult ally, California

"We need to be aware of their schedules — youth have a lot of commitments. But that's why we need to stress the importance of civic engagement, so it can become a priority as well."

— Elected official, California

"Part of an assessment is recognizing whether there is an authentic demand for the role youth can play. If the demand isn't there, the other part of the work is to create it."

— Adult ally, New Hampshire

to an activity in local government. If harder-to-reach youth have participated in a community-based civic activity or service project, they may be more open to participating in another structured activity.

Learn from the experiences of other communities.

The National League of Cities (NLC), through its Institute for Youth, Education and Families, routinely collects information on best practices and the experiences of cities across the country. City officials can benefit greatly from reaching out to other experienced cities such as those listed in the Tools and Resource section of this booklet. There is also a wealth of information to be found in additional NLC resources such as the Youth Participation Advisors Network (YPAN), an action kit for municipal leaders on *Promoting Youth Participation* and a 2009 report on *The State of City Leadership for Children and Families*.

10 WAYS TO KEEP YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AUTHENTIC

10. The opportunities are meaningful, not just made-up work.
9. Youth have access to decision-makers in official settings.
8. Enough time is allocated for youth to learn the issues and complete projects.
7. Adult-driven initiatives or groups try to maintain a ratio of four to six adults to every young person.
6. Youth-driven initiatives try to maintain a ratio of four to eight youth to every adult.
5. Training and skill-building are built into all projects.
4. Training and skill-building match the opportunities youth will tackle.
3. Opportunities are connected as a system; youth can move easily from one to another.
2. Any opportunity balances learning, work and fun.
1. Adults want youth at the table because they add value, not because it will be good for them.

Many local youth engagement initiatives receive a boost by participating in youth delegate programs at NLC's annual Congress of Cities and Exposition in the fall and the Congressional City Conference in the spring. Elected officials and youth delegates alike return to their communities inspired by their peers, full of new ideas and comforted that many other cities are confronting similar problems and have similar hopes for their youth.

On the Map

Grand Rapids, Mich.: A Unique City-School Partnership

In Grand Rapids, youth civic engagement enjoys a place of prominence in both the city and school district. The two entities collaborate through Our Community's Children, formerly the Mayor's Office for Children, Youth and Families, to offer a broad range of youth development and youth engagement programs and services, including the Mayor's Youth Council (MYC). Under this partnership, the school district contributes not only financial support, but also provides class credits for the MYC's special curriculum in leadership and government. Our Community's Children Director Lynn Heemstra sits on the top management team within city government and has guided the city through a youth master planning process. She acknowledges that the positioning of her department allows Grand Rapids to be inclusive in bringing to the table the voices of youth who are affected by city policy.

Chicago, Ill.: When Traditional Youth Councils Will Not Work, Invent Something New

The Mikva Challenge, a nonprofit working to expand civic education and participation among low-income Chicago youth, operates an innovative system of issue-based, policy-making youth councils. Because of the challenges presented by creating a single youth council to represent such a large and diverse city, the Mikva Challenge created a unique approach that establishes a variety of councils in schools and in local government. Based in the five high schools with the highest rates of violence in Chicago, Peace and Leadership Councils research local causes of youth violence and provide their school administrations with policy recommendations. Within city government itself, the Education Council, Teen Health Council, Youth Safety Council and Out-of-School Time Council work closely with city agencies and lead officials to impact policy. Youth leaders on these councils conduct research, produce reports and outreach materials for their peers and facilitate trainings on youth-adult partnerships in Chicago Public Schools.

A RIVER CITY STORY: MAYOR SMITH CHAMPIONS AYCE

SIX MONTHS LATER...

The city's new youth coordinator is being introduced at a City Council work session. She will work with the economic development department's Pride team to make sure the youth members have a strong voice, and she will coordinate the activities of the three new youth projects detailed on her PowerPoint slide.

Mayor Smith scans the room for the reactions of his fellow councilmembers and the public. He hopes they will not see the plan as too ambitious, but in the past three months he has learned the importance of having at least three approaches for youth engagement that provide a continuum of opportunities for action, advisory or representation roles, and shared leadership.

The Action Team, an active and enthusiastic group of teens, is already well on their way to creating their video interviewing citizens on what makes River City great. They have also been surveying youth about where in town they spend their money and canvassing the community to find businesses and organizations that want to help with the initiative.

The Advocacy team has been cautious in their approach. They spent time learning about how decisions are made in the city and what factors influence local leaders' attitudes and policies on promoting economic progress. They have talked about their concerns that economic prosperity may not be a reality for some of River City's youth. Some of the members have been appointed to a new curriculum review committee for the high school, and others are approaching the workforce development board about greater youth input into training programs.

The Innovation Team is a small group of youth that has pledged a great deal of time for the Pride initiative. They have researched models for youth entrepreneurship and mentoring programs and, along with members of the Chamber of Commerce, are creating a business plan for implementation.

As the presentation concludes, and applause ripples through the room, Mayor Smith is glad he remembered to ask the schools to be part of the initiative. It was their idea to offer credit incentives to students for attending public meetings. The youth have been so involved in the presentation, he knows even the biggest skeptics on council will be impressed.

continued on page 29

| THE STRATEGY:

Create Meaningful Opportunities for Youth to Make a Difference

Is there a continuum of opportunities available and accessible to a broad diversity of youth that allows them to have an impact on important issues?

Keeping in mind that AYCE is not a program, how does a city begin to offer meaningful civic opportunities to its youth? Ultimately, AYCE would look like a system of opportunities throughout the community that connects young people to the work of local government. However, this does not happen overnight, and cities can begin their initiatives in many different places. Then, combined with a welcoming civic climate, strong adult allies and a functional and sustainable infrastructure, municipal leaders can eventually build a sound strategy into a long-term system for engaging youth.

With a fundamental understanding of an AYCE system, cities can choose the beginning or expansion points that meet their needs. The model below has been helpful to many cities in building that system.

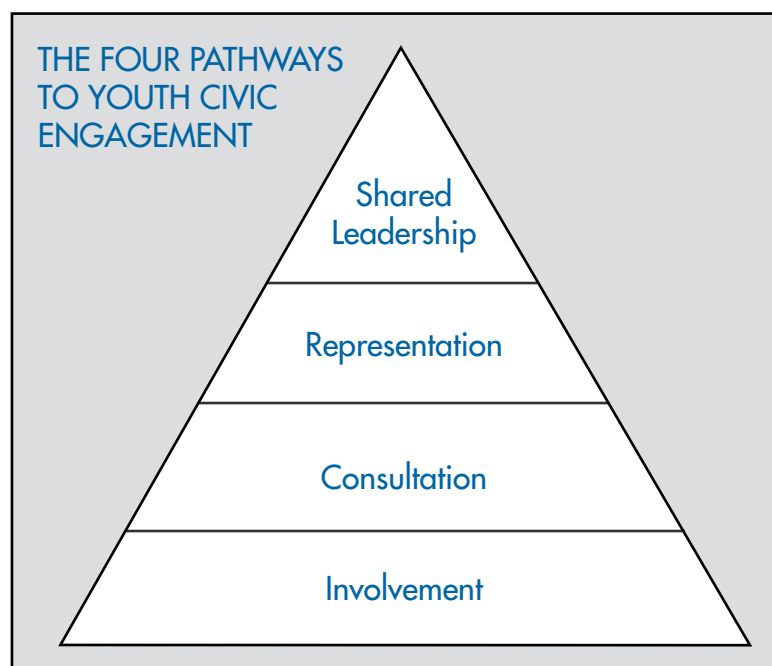
If an issue is important to youth, they will participate. Yet, just like adults, what young people do about that issue will vary depending on their interests, availability, skills or the issue itself. Like adults, many youth want active, hands-on activities that can be accomplished in short-term settings. Others are interested in longer commitments that provide increasing opportunity to share ideas and influence decisions.

To make the work of local government approachable for a broad diversity of youth, cities can create a continuum of opportunities for engagement that increase the extent to which youth share authority and accountability in policy, planning and decision-making. It is important to note that AYCE avoids “tokenism” in which one or two youth are consulted or invited with little expectation that anyone will heed their suggestions. Instead, it may be helpful to visualize a pyramid with four pathways of engagement:

The Four Pathways to Youth Engagement

Involvement: Youth actively participate in volunteer opportunities and meetings initiated by adults, and have input on the strategies and day-to-day operations, or take on projects within ongoing city initiatives.

Consultation: Adult officials create intentional settings, such as advisory groups, in which youth give input and advice



on important issues facing their neighborhoods, schools, community and local government, while the adults retain the authority to make the final decision.

Representation: Selected youth gain the opportunity to participate in ongoing municipal work on behalf of their peers, with the ability to help set the agenda and vote on a government-sponsored activity (e.g., through a city board or commission).

Shared leadership: Youth share positions of authority with adults as colleagues and share accountability for the goals and outcomes of the activity.

The AYCE pathways are positioned as a pyramid not to imply that any one has a greater value than another, but rather to demonstrate that activities increase in their depth and intensity as they move from the base to the apex. The pyramid also demonstrates that the potential number of opportunities and the corresponding number of youth involved tends to decrease as the type of involvement increases in its complexity.

Most cities already offer a number of opportunities within the Involvement pathway. AYCE encourages cities to build on the experience of involving youth to explore other pathways that create a permanent place for more youth to participate in city decision-making. Each of the following suggestions can be the basis for beginning the strategy or building on it.

What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Create the Strategy?

Use the four pathways of engagement to ensure a broad continuum of opportunities.

Cities can create activities for youth participation that will be meaningful for young people, relate to their interests and skills and have an impact on the city. In an AYCE system, one size definitely does not fit all. The broader the range of opportunities, the more youth will participate — particularly when young people can move easily from one type of opportunity into another.

Involvement strategies are a good first step to put youth in touch with municipal, school, neighborhood and community decision-makers. Some cities create a service corps, host public awareness events, sponsor government days and use new media to develop a variety of educational approaches that can strengthen young people's civic connection and expose them to the issues that local government faces.

Opportunities for consultation, representation and shared leadership will bring youth even closer to the places where planning and policy-making occur. The most common of these opportunities are youth councils or commissions, placement of youth on city boards and youth summits or other youth-friendly public meetings. However, a host of additional strategies, many of which are described in the Tools and Resources section, will provide youth with a real voice and opportunities for action.

City leaders can miss out on valuable input if they limit their expectations of the range of issues in which youth might be interested. In addition to working with the mayor and city council, youth can engage in numerous city processes, including master planning, neighborhood and land use planning and decisions about roadways and bike paths.

Work with staff and partners to shift the role of youth from service recipient to resource.

Youth may already be connected with local government as recipients of city services. With some thought and careful planning, their role as consumers can be enhanced in a way that improves the services they receive and benefits the city as a whole.

Cities can easily create involvement activities in areas where youth already participate. These settings provide a ready-made pool of participants for activities with a broader purpose. Youth who participate in city cleanups can begin to organize “green” activities or campaigns that educate other youth about the environment. Participants in afterschool programs can take on leadership roles in guiding the programs and advocacy roles that educate funders and decision-makers about children’s educational needs.

Local officials can create consultation activities by giving recipients of a city service an advisory role. Many community centers support youth advisory groups that make recommendations about the centers’ programming and also advise city leaders about the recreational needs of the youth population.

Representation opportunities are available when boards and commissions open up slots for youth members. Advisory boards for libraries, recreation, parks, the arts, tourism, economic development and health and human services can all benefit from youth membership. Youth who are patrons of these services can represent a unique perspective. They are more likely to successfully contribute to the boards’ work if at least two youth are appointed and they receive a thorough orientation and support for participating.

A system for offering shared leadership opportunities may be more difficult to build out of an existing group of youth receiving a city service, unless there is a youth council or commission. Current councils or commissions that are primarily engaged in involvement and consultation activities can take their influence to another level with the addition of some funding authority or by connecting their focus to the development and/or implementation of an official city plan.

Use the idea of the youth engagement pyramid to address a pressing city issue.

Many cities choose to focus their youth civic engagement efforts around targeted issues identified and championed by elected officials or through city plans. In this type of concentrated approach, youth become partners in an overall city effort to address a specific social or civic issue.

The four pathways of AYCE can be a helpful model for creating a system of opportunities that will attract a variety of youth and provide the greatest likelihood of impact on the issue. The chart on page 26 highlights an example of how to address one specific issue using a variety of methods of youth engagement.

Create “feeder systems” to support the city’s AYCE initiative.

Young people grow up in neighborhoods and spend much of their time in school. In addition, most attend youth programs or religious services. Thus, these locations where youth are already engaged are ideal settings to promote AYCE. If the same elements of authentic engagement — a welcoming climate, a strong adult ally, a workable structure and accessible and meaningful activities — exist in these settings, youth will gravitate to those opportunities that are convenient and relevant to their day-to-day lives.

AYCE PATHWAY	APPLICATION TO AN IDENTIFIED ISSUE EXAMPLE: DROPOUT PREVENTION
INVOLVEMENT	A Mayor's Service Corps organizes mentoring and tutoring projects directed toward younger youth who are educationally at risk.
CONSULTATION	Student Advisory Committees in the middle and high schools advise principals on creating a supportive school climate. The local Youth Council sponsors a youth speakout in targeted neighborhoods on barriers to youth success in the community.
REPRESENTATION	Youth representatives are appointed to serve as members on the city's commission to raise student achievement. They bring recommendations from the Student Advisory Committees and Youth Council to be considered by the group.
SHARED LEADERSHIP	A Youth Funding Board maintains responsibility for a special fund created through the city budget and private partnerships that is designated for teen entrepreneurship and other programs that rekindle students' interest in school.

The challenge for the AYCE initiative is to connect these settings to a broader city agenda, and to increase youth participation in increasingly complex opportunities. If neighborhood youth have decided to clean up a vacant lot or students have organized to reduce fighting at football games, local elected officials or city staff can support these efforts — and then expand that support to expose youth to other challenges the city is facing. Over time, these groups outside of city government can become a conduit to municipal engagement opportunities.

Some cities connect their civic opportunities with specific school-based programs and curricula. Civics, government and social studies classes can use real city issues for academic content as well as service learning projects. City government benefits from the fresh and often creative input into policies or planning.

Often, school and community-based volunteer opportunities can serve as a training ground for youth to learn how to successfully communicate in groups, complete projects and express ideas. These skills can “level the playing field” so that youth from even the most challenged settings can be comfortable with city government activities and even compete for opportunities that only offer a limited membership.

The key is to ensure that some type of connection is made among the various opportunities that make it easier for youth to be engaged. These connections can range from a website of updated opportunities to ongoing meetings of service providers ensuring that everyone is working together and personally encouraging young people to participate.

VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

"AYCE is not just about listening to youth at the input level, it's about them having some opportunities at the decision-making end as well."

— Adult ally, Massachusetts

"Seeing and witnessing the policy process from research to development through implementation was eye-opening and inspiring."

— Youth, California

"Youth are frustrated with traditional approaches — they need more dialogue and action. We need to pay attention to how we name and frame the work. It is important to employ topics that interest and excite youth, to frame issues in a way that are concrete and that relate to their world."

— Adult ally, New Hampshire

"We have the potential to shape youth policy by gaining empowerment and work experience through opportunities created by us."

— Youth, Massachusetts

"It is essential to match the skills and interests of the young people to the opportunity they will pursue. It's so important not to set kids up for failure."

— Adult ally, Virginia

Add a youth component to established or strategic city processes.

One way to bring youth voice into the city's decision-making process is to construct a parallel process in which separate adult and youth groups tackle a selected issue. Both groups are given the same task — to gather data from their peers and to use that data to create recommendations that address the problem. They can work at their own pace and in their own style to meet a pre-determined deadline. The two groups then come together, at least once, in an interactive event to present their own ideas and prepare joint recommendations.

The success of a parallel process hinges on the facilitator. The adult(s) selected to work with the youth must be able to translate technical and detailed information into concepts that are both appealing and understandable to young people. The other key task is to prepare both sides to work together and facilitate their joint meetings so that the work of each is valued and incorporated into the final recommendations.

It is essential to the process that everyone is clear about expectations. Youth need to know how their input will be used and who will make the final decision. At the end of the process, an evaluation of the youth and adult participants' perceptions will yield useful findings for planning the next steps.

On the Map

Olathe, Kan.: A Continuum of Civic Engagement Opportunities for Youth of All Ages

The City of Olathe (pop. 119,993) and the Olathe School District have developed a unique AYCE initiative that connects young people with the legislative, executive and judicial branches of local government from elementary grades through high school. Olathe's Youth in Government cur-

riculum begins with a third-grade level “Learning About Olathe” workbook on the structure of local government, and continues with tours of City Hall where youth participate in mock City Council meetings. By middle school, youth can participate in a year-round Youth Congress, modeled on the U.S. Congress, that culminates in an annual General Assembly to set local policy priorities. High school students take part in influential consultation opportunities through a Teen Council, which provides input on city policies and sponsors youth leadership programs. These older youth can also apply for city internships that connect them with careers in local government and teach them about criminal justice, health and human services, finance, public administration, information technology and environmental planning. Finally, youth have access to shared leadership opportunities through a student-run Youth Court that focuses on “positive, pro-social sanctions” of first-time juvenile offenders as an alternative to prosecution in District Court, as well as an Olathe Youth Fund in which youth disburse funding to student-led projects.²

10 WAYS YOUTH AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

10. Using GIS technology to plot the location of safe places and supportive organizations in the community.
9. Meeting with elected officials about the impacts of budget cuts on youth from low-income neighborhoods.
8. Planning a conference to promote “going green” throughout the city.
7. Reviewing proposals from youth groups requesting funds for their annual service projects.
6. Lobbying the state legislature to lower the voting age in local elections to include high school seniors.
5. Creating Web-based strategies for cities to reach out to youth and young adults.
4. Recommending policies to reasonably address concerns about youth congregating in public spaces.
3. Designing models for a new city skate park.
2. Attending a school board meeting to monitor the impact of student input on board decisions.
1. Hosting a candidates’ forum for the upcoming local city council elections.

Nashville, Tenn.: Relying on the Strength of Local Intermediaries

Thanks to the City of Nashville and the Oasis Center, a local nonprofit that offers a range of youth development services, young people in Nashville are able to participate in a broad spectrum of opportunities for civic engagement. The Mayor’s Youth Council serves in a political capacity by gathering input from peers throughout the city and county and conveying that perspective to city government. Through Oasis Community IMPACT, young people develop leadership skills to promote education and economic equity in their community by conducting research, publishing reports and mobilizing their peers. Targeting youth in high-violence areas, Youth United provides a venue for anti-violence education, adult mentorship and youth-led community organizing. Within this system, youth with varying interests, backgrounds, skills and abilities can all find a way to contribute.

² For a fuller description of the Olathe, Kan., AYCE initiative, see NLC’s 2009 report on *The State of City Leadership for Children, Youth, and Families*, which is available at www.nlc.org/iyef.

A RIVER CITY STORY: MAYOR SMITH CHAMPIONS AYCE

ONE YEAR LATER...

One year into the project and the Pride team is in full swing. As he reads the first annual report, Mayor Smith thinks back on the ups and downs of the previous year. Certainly, the youth involvement was a highlight. But how can it be sustained? Already, some of the young people have dropped off the teams. There was also that string of meetings where a group of adults, used to making decisions in smaller, more private settings, threatened to derail the process.

Fortunately for Mayor Smith, he had assembled a small group of supporters to think through the initiative and brainstorm how to tackle problems. As he reads the report, Mayor Smith smiles at how many of the suggestions came from the group's two youth representatives, and he remembers proudly the candor that developed in the group after they all agreed to the value of everyone's input.

There will definitely be a commitment for year two.

continued on page 35

| THE SUPPORT:

Build Youth-Adult Partnerships to Support Engagement

Are there adults, within and outside of local government, who are willing and able to work as colleagues with youth and build bridges between them and the adult world?

Just about everyone knows the three fundamental criteria for success in the field of real estate are location, location, location. In the field of youth civic engagement, the mantra is: relationships, relationships, relationships.

The relationships between young people and adults, and among youth and their peers, are the single most influential contributor to the success of any youth engagement initiative. Youth may be attracted to the work of local government because of their passion for an issue, but they will remain engaged because of their relationships with adults and other youth they encounter.

Adults who work alongside youth in any type of social or community change activity are often referred to as allies. They build the bridge between young people and the adult world. In the hands of skilled and caring adults, youthful enthusiasm and ideas can be channeled into meaningful action.

The key to the youth-adult relationship is understanding partnership. In many such relationships, the adult either dictates the agenda and controls what occurs, or leaves the young people alone and abdicates responsibility for what occurs. In a partnership, the adult ally and young people work “shoulder to shoulder” sharing ideas and expertise, translating information about one another’s worlds, creating a mutual agenda and taking joint responsibility for outcomes.

Adult allies can play an essential role in supporting youth participation by:

- recruiting a diverse group of youth and helping them all feel welcomed;
- preparing them to participate through training and education;
- setting high expectations for what youth can accomplish;
- opening doors and increasing their access to decision-makers;
- assisting them in taking advantage of the ongoing opportunities within the structure that has been established; and
- supporting their efforts to create other youth-driven initiatives.

What Can Municipal Leaders Do to Create the Support?

Identify caring, skilled adults who share your passion about youth engagement and empower them to undertake this work.

There are adults in every city (within or outside of local government) who are willing and able to work in partnership with youth. Adult allies can be found within city hall or in schools, universities, nonprofits or intermediary organizations.

In some situations, the mayor or other municipal leaders serve as allies in the city's youth engagement initiatives, although this requires strong listening skills and an openness to youth input when teen concerns challenge current city policy.

Adult allies can inspire and support young people and encourage them to explore their passions. Many city leaders and adult allies recognize that youth are an underserved and under-represented population and that AYCE efforts amplify the voices of those who may not be heard.

VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

"People say not to use jargon with kids. The issue is not avoiding it, it's educating youth so they are empowered to converse in any setting."

— Adult ally, Rhode Island

"Trained adult allies are essential — they are the ones who help youth navigate through a foreign system and prepare them for the work they are about to do."

— University professor, New Hampshire

"Good ideas are only part of the solution. Effectively relating to people, and understanding the 'politics' of the situation are also key."

— Youth, Oregon

"Cities that really 'get' this have a network of adults who find a common language and vision about youth and believe deeply in the democratic process."

— Adult ally, Virginia

"Councilmembers can be a liaison to a youth council and serve in that educational role. Youth serving on a board or commission can be matched with a mentor or 'buddy' to help them learn the ropes."

— Elected official, Colorado

Ensure that adults continue to learn the dynamics of youth-adult partnerships and group work.

The adults selected as allies must be able to set realistic, high expectations for what youth can accomplish, focus on intergenerational relationships and build safe and nurturing settings. They must be able to empower without abdicating, support without taking over and encourage without preaching. Most importantly, they must be able to remain as focused on the desired outcomes of the AYCE initiative as on the needs of the youth participants.

Even adults who are experienced in working with youth may need some additional training in order to work effectively with teens in a partnership (see the Frequently Asked Questions section for information on youth-adult partnership training resources). The role of adult ally is different than the familiar teacher, counselor or recreation professional relationship.

Provide youth with ongoing training in civic participation and ensure they are prepared to navigate adult settings.

Young people's knowledge and skills must match the available opportunities and tasks they will be undertaking. When youth do not receive the proper training, their meetings, presentations and project outcomes may lack the focus needed to succeed. When properly trained, youth can far exceed even the highest expectations.

Part of the adult ally's role is to ensure that youth receive the right training. From basic presentation skills to understanding the city's capital improvement plan, the adult ally's knowledge and resources are essential if youth are to be seen as legitimate participants in municipal decision-making.

Model the kind of youth-adult relationship you seek for the community.

It is important that city leaders meet directly with youth in order to understand their concerns and interests, and to closely monitor the direction of the city's youth engagement efforts. It also sends a powerful message to others in the community. Many adults are influenced by youth stereotypes and their fear of teenagers can make them reluctant to bring youth into a decision-making process. Municipal leaders can be helpful in confronting these stereotypes as the public sees youth and adults working together.

VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

"You know you have the right adult when the kids' eyes light up when they come in the room."
— University professor, Minnesota

"The issue of 'prepared and supported' is very important — this is an experiential process, not just learning about it."
— Adult ally, California

"We also need to remember that the best advocates may be parents, teachers, etc., so we need to have an element of grassroots support."
— Elected official, California

"When I get confused, I go back to the mission, which is bridging the gap between young people and government."
— Adult ally, California

"I learned that I may not always agree with the choices of others, but I can understand that our differences stem from our experiences."
— Youth, Washington

"The role of the adult can be to show youth that local government is a forum for making a difference."
— Elected official, Colorado

"Young people do not typically get the larger view without processing with an adult."
— Adult ally, Minnesota

Reach out to parents to encourage their support of youth participation.

Parents can be powerful allies who encourage youth to become involved in their community. Yet parents' negative attitudes about government or concern about how youth engagement will impact their children's schoolwork or other responsibilities may inhibit the ability of youth to serve as resources to the city.

Meeting with parents early in the process to cultivate a relationship will eliminate many of these concerns. Partnerships with schools and community-based organizations can help local govern-

ment reach out and communicate with parents from various cultural groups or linguistic backgrounds. In many cases, the young person serves as the interpreter for the family, so it is important to carefully plan how the meeting is structured.

On the Map

San Francisco: Building Relationships Pays Off

After nearly a decade and a half of investing in youth civic engagement, San Francisco is proving that young people really are the leaders of tomorrow. By engaging local youth not only in middle and high school, but through their college years as well, the San Francisco Youth Commission (SFYC) and the community-based Youth Leadership Institute encourage and support youth leaders as they develop into adult allies. With a strong focus on developing leaders through training and mentoring, some alumni have graduated to elected and appointed positions within the city. For instance, Julia Sabory, the inaugural youth chair of the SFYC, now leads the commission as its full-time adult director.

10 IMPORTANT QUALITIES FOR A TEAM OF ADULT ALLIES

10. A fundamental belief that authentic youth engagement is the right approach.
9. Ability to connect with a wide range of youth.
8. A sense of the potential and possibilities of youth.
7. Knowledge of how to support youth to develop their ideas.
6. Wise and creative use of resources.
5. Willingness to challenge youth in a caring way.
4. Flexibility and a willingness and ability to change how they do business.
3. Patience and persistence — in it for the long haul.
2. Ability to separate a young person's personal issues and the outcomes of the effort.
1. Relationships! Relationships! Relationships!

Spokane, Wash.: The Importance of Adults Who “Get It”

Joanne Benham, director of the city/county youth department in Spokane, has a strong background in youth development. As a local government employee, she brings a community-based, youth advocacy perspective to her role and relies on partnerships to accomplish her goals. By staying on top of the latest youth development research and best practices from across the country, the youth department is able to facilitate a youth engagement approach that not only works for the city, but meets the needs of local youth. Staff see their roles as listener, supporter, connector, translator and mentor, and they work hard to create trust among the youth and adults of the community. According to Benham, the department serves as a bridge — between youth and adults, and between local government and the community.

Cambridge, Mass.: Adult Allies are Crucial to Youth Success

Youth-adult partnerships are key to youth civic engagement in Cambridge. By creating a youth subcommittee of the mayor-led Cambridge Kids' Council, adult allies provide youth with the extensive training and support network needed to navigate often unfamiliar professional environments and political processes. Reflecting on a recent achievement of the youth subcommittee, Mary Wong, executive director of the Kids' Council, explains, “It was an eye-opener for the city to see how the youth can be empowered if you give them the appropriate supports needed. It was also an eye-opener to the youth to be able to see what they can do.”

A RIVER CITY STORY: MAYOR SMITH CHAMPIONS AYCE

THE STORY CONTINUES...

Mayor Smith swings his car into the parking area at the entrance to the interstate where he has agreed to meet his riders. It will be a two-hour drive to the state capital where members of the local Pride team will present to developers on the benefits of investing in River City. He relishes the time he will be able to re-connect with Alyce, now a high school senior, who has been with the Pride team since the first meeting. He has not met his other passenger, Robert, but the city youth coordinator says he is a passionate presenter and ready to take on the challenge.

The young people will be an excellent complement to the economic development advisors and city officials sharing the presentation. For just a moment, he envisions the look of astonishment on the faces of the developers when the team walks into the room, and then how it gradually dawns on them that River City is a great investment because of its genuine focus on youth.

It has been more than two years since Mayor Smith first launched his idea of engaging youth in the city's economic development plans. In spite of the bumpy ride, he sees a number of promising strategies underway such as the youth-to-business mentoring project and the new initiatives incubator, both supported by youth.

But most importantly, he realizes that a shift has happened in his city. It is subtle but real. Youth are being seen and treated like citizens. People talk about them differently. They are not just football players or delinquents.

As mayor, he knows the city's economic challenges are not entirely solved, but a new voice has been added to the decision-making process. When another problem surfaces, or a new idea is introduced, he knows he can count on his fledgling youth civic engagement initiative to help the city tackle it.



| TOOLS AND RESOURCES

| METHODOLOGY

| AYCE PERCEPTIONS INVENTORY AND PROFILE CHART

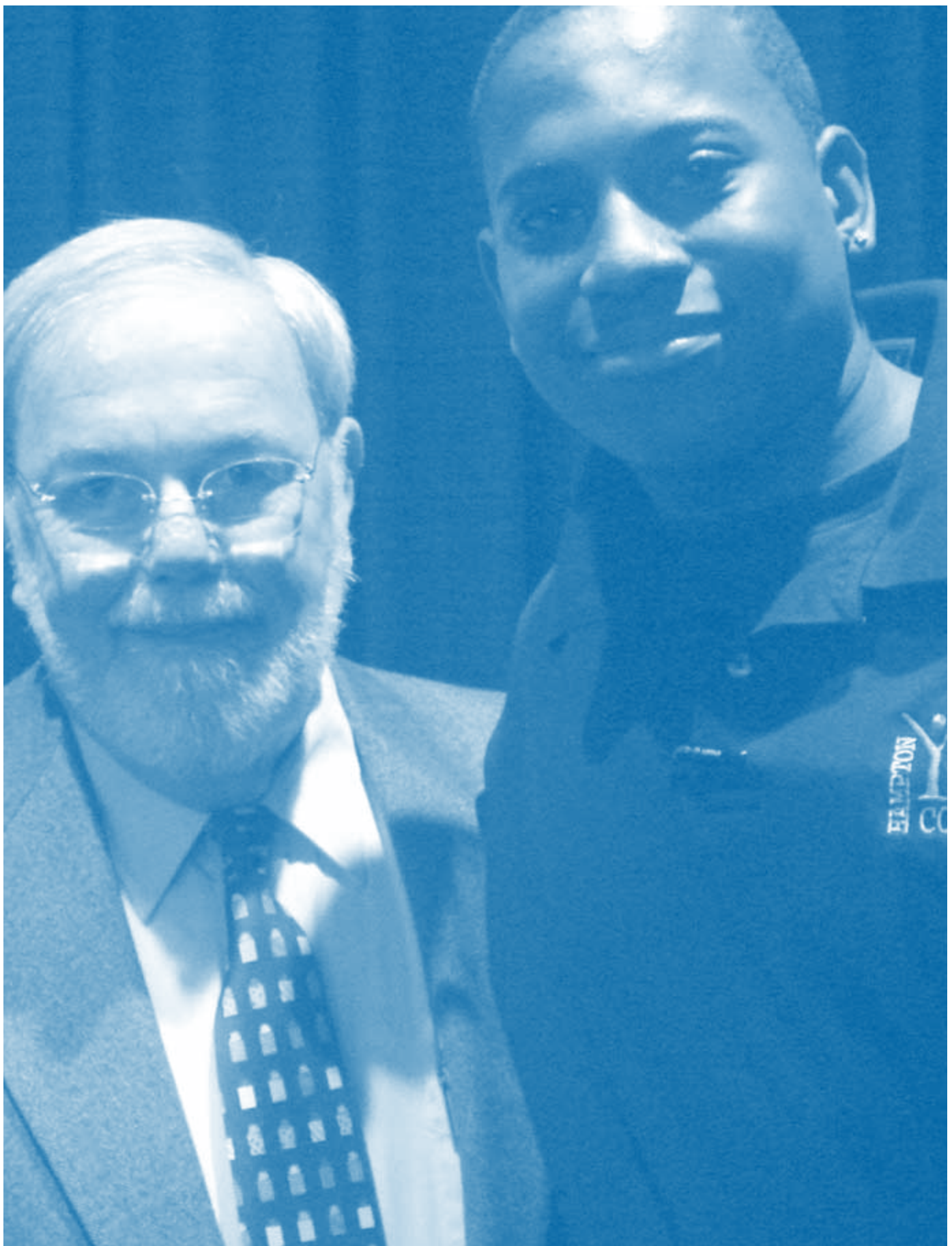
| CREATING AN AYCE INFRASTRUCTURE

| FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AYCE

| **AYCE FROM A TO V:** 10 Strategies Beyond Youth Councils to Engage Youth in Public Policy, Planning and Decision-Making

| AN ELECTED OFFICIAL'S CHECKLIST FOR AYCE ACTION

| LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES FOR AYCE



METHODOLOGY

In preparing this guide on Authentic Youth Civic Engagement in Local Government, NLC staff and consultants reviewed a wealth of research and local best practices, and conducted a series of surveys, interviews and focus groups that involved more than 300 municipal leaders, youth development experts, youth and young adults. These discussions were held throughout 2008-09 as part of a year-long project supported by the Surdna Foundation's Effective Citizenry Program.

The purpose of the project was to strengthen the capacity of municipal leaders and youth development experts to create sustainable systems that prepare and empower young people for authentic engagement in civic discourse and local government policy and planning. Through this initiative, NLC sought to develop and test a framework of the essential elements of authentic youth civic engagement.

NLC began the project by collecting promising practices and lessons learned and conducting a scan of communities throughout the country that have implemented some of the framework's core elements. NLC also established a Young Adult Advisory Board composed of young adult alumni from successful youth engagement initiatives to help guide the project and provide feedback.

After generating a list of cities of potential interest, reviewing information from those cities and drawing upon existing knowledge, NLC created an initial protocol for 25 phone interviews and an online survey of Advisory Board members that were used to inform and develop the AYCE framework. NLC shared and received feedback on this initial framework through a series of additional interviews and focus groups, which helped NLC make refinements and better understand AYCE opportunities and activities across the country. The following interviews, surveys, and focus groups generated feedback from senior municipal staff and community and youth leaders, other experts in the youth development field and Young Adult Advisory Board members:

- In-depth phone interviews of 25 city staff, representatives of national youth development organizations, state municipal league staff, community-based organization representatives and university professors held in early- to mid-2008;
- An online survey of 100 former youth council leaders from 10 cities conducted in early- to mid-2008;
- A focus group discussion with 50 local elected officials and senior municipal staff at NLC's November 2008 Congress of Cities conference in Orlando, Fla.;
- A focus group with five members of NLC's Democratic Governance Panel at NLC's March 2009 Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C.;
- In-depth interviews of five senior municipal staff at the 2009 Congressional City Conference;
- A focus group with 10 senior municipal staff at the North Dakota League of Cities convention held in March 2009;
- Two focus groups organized in Minneapolis in May 2009 with the assistance of the Search Institute and League of Minnesota Cities: one with 25 senior municipal staff, community organizations, and youth from Minneapolis and St. Paul; and one with two mayors and three community leaders from smaller Minnesota cities;
- A regional focus group held in La Mesa, Calif., in May 2009, involving 10 senior municipal staff leading youth engagement efforts;

- A focus group with 15 municipal leaders at the League of California Cities Executive Forum in San Diego in May 2009;
- A conference call discussion with 10 members of the Young Adult Advisory Board in June 2009;
- A focus group involving 15 local elected officials and senior municipal staff held at the Colorado Municipal League annual convention in Vail, Colo., in June 2009;
- Two focus group sessions involving 25 municipal officials, community organization leaders, national experts, and university professors held at the Deliberative Democracy Consortium Conference at the University of New Hampshire in July 2009; and
- A focus group of five local elected officials and municipal staff at NLC's National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials Summer Meeting in Hartford, Conn., in July 2009.

In addition to these surveys and discussions, NLC drew upon nearly 20 years of experience working with cities to promote youth participation in local government, as well as the 28 years of youth development experience and expertise of this guide's primary author, Cindy Carlson, who has directed the award-winning Hampton, Va., Coalition for Youth for 20 years and provided consulting services on youth civic engagement to numerous communities throughout the country.

| AUTHENTIC YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A PERCEPTIONS INVENTORY

Please read each of the following statements. Using the scale that follows, place the number — 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 — in the space immediately preceding each statement that best represents your perception of the current reality in your community.

0 = I am not informed as to whether this statement is true in my community.

1 = I believe this statement is “not at all true” in my community.

2 = I believe this statement is “somewhat true” in my community.

3 = I believe this statement is “mostly true” in my community.

4 = I believe this statement is “very true” in my community.

THE SETTING

_____ Public officials and community leaders view youth as valuable resources to improving the community for everyone.

_____ The input, planning and decision-making processes of the city government are open and welcoming to young people.

_____ Adults in elected and leadership positions encourage young people to have a real voice and are intentional about ensuring that youth believe they are heard.

_____ City government enlists schools, community organizations and other groups to support its vision of a youth civic engagement initiative.

_____ Community leaders and public officials speak publicly about the need for engaging youth in decisions and they influence others to adopt a youth engagement approach.

_____ **Total** score for The Setting

THE STRUCTURE

_____ There is a recognizable approach to youth civic engagement within local government and designated individuals responsible for carrying out a set of AYCE activities.

_____ Public officials have established strong partnerships with organizations outside of local government based on their capacity to share support for the city’s youth civic engagement efforts.

_____ City leaders see youth civic engagement as more than just a single program and have taken active steps to embed it into municipal, school, neighborhood and community decision-making.

- _____ Youth civic engagement activities are set up so that young people have access to city decision-makers.
- _____ Youth civic engagement activities are positioned high enough in local government to be able to rally support among city departments and throughout the government organization.
- _____ **Total** score for The Structure

THE STRATEGY

- _____ There is an ever-increasing number of meaningful opportunities for all youth to be involved regardless of their background, interests, confidence or skill levels.
- _____ A wide variety of engagement opportunities are available that span a range of involvement, consultation, representation and shared leadership functions.
- _____ The community's youth civic engagement opportunities are connected so that youth can access them through a variety of pathways, increasing their responsibilities as they increase their skills.
- _____ The existing youth civic engagement opportunities are appropriate and realistic for young people and sensitive to their developmental needs.
- _____ Youth have access to the transportation and other resources needed to support their active involvement.
- _____ **Total** score for The Strategy

THE SUPPORT

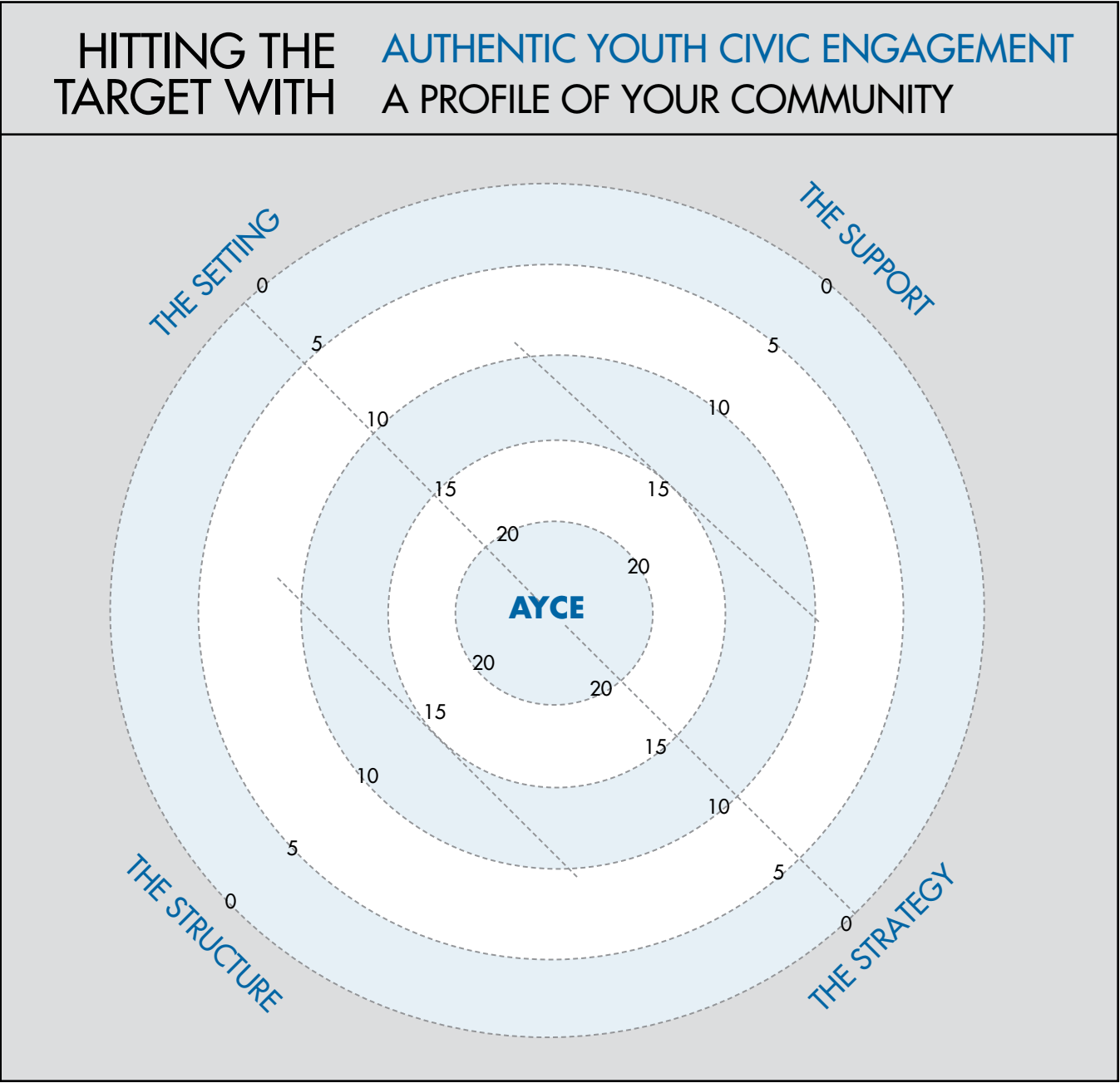
- _____ A network of caring, skilled adults helps youth have a role within local government and community decision-making.
- _____ Adults have, or can easily acquire, the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to work in partnership with youth in various youth civic engagement roles.
- _____ Youth are provided adequate training that prepares them to participate in meaningful roles and assists them in navigating adult-focused municipal settings.
- _____ Adult leaders are able to recruit and establish positive relationships with a wide diversity of youth.
- _____ City leaders reach out to parents in order to ensure their support of youth involvement in city leadership.
- _____ **Total** score for The Support

FOLLOW-UP INSTRUCTIONS

Be sure that you have totaled your score in each separate area. Now transfer your scores to the AYCE Profile Sheet. The score for each separate element is plotted on a separate axis of the chart. Once the numbers are plotted, draw a line from dot to dot to create a four-sided figure.

The figure you have created represents your perception of the current status of AYCE in your community. The smaller the box and closer to the center that the various elements are situated, the closer your community’s youth civic engagement efforts are to being authentic.

Most figures will be lopsided, meaning that your community is strong in some areas and weaker in others. If more than one person has completed the inventory, there is likely to be a noticeable difference in their perceptions. Use this information as data to inform planning conversations.





| CREATING AN AYCE INFRASTRUCTURE

The sample matrix below identifies key factors that determine the success of an AYCE initiative and a list of some potential structures for how the initiative may be organized (described in more detail in the Structure chapter on pages 18-19). Use the matrix to consider the qualities and capacity that each AYCE structure would provide in your community, and whether some factors for success would need to be addressed in other ways. You can also use this chart as a template for creating your own matrix listing other potential options for an AYCE structure and determining which structure is the best fit for your city or town.

SAMPLE MATRIX FOR MAKING DECISIONS REGARDING LOCATION, ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

Needed Qualities and Capacity for Initiative's Success	Sample Options for Structure				
	Designated	Embedded	Contractual	Multi-jurisdictional	Other
Direct connection to city council and other decision-making bodies					
Sufficient authority to convene					
Existence/visibility of a champion					
Strong orientation to youth development and engagement					
Strong orientation to civics and participatory governance					
Capacity for training, recruitment and support of youth in opportunities for civic engagement					
Access to a diverse youth population					
Ability to rally support among city departments and throughout the local government organization					
Ability to create partnerships throughout the community					
Capacity for project management					
Flexibility in approach and operations					
Cost effectiveness					
Other					

REFERENCE LIST OF POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND WHAT THEY MIGHT BRING TO AN AYCE INITIATIVE

POTENTIAL INTERNAL PARTNERS	WHAT THEY MIGHT BRING TO AN AYCE INITIATIVE
Mayor's or city manager's office	authority, oversight of special initiatives, connections to city council and other governing bodies, potential financial resources
Planning department	connection to city plans, support for policy development
Department of parks and recreation	may have youth development orientation, access to youth for recruitment, facilities, opportunities for partnerships on events
Economic development	relates to many youth issues
Public safety departments	relates to many youth issues, offers a stable infrastructure, typically has trust of local residents
Libraries	technology and information support
Human services, neighborhood services	may have youth development orientation and capacity for recruiting and training youth
POTENTIAL EXTERNAL PARTNERS	WHAT THEY MIGHT BRING TO AN AYCE INITIATIVE
Nonprofit agencies and organizations	may have strong youth development orientation and capacity for recruiting and training youth
Public and independent schools	access to youth for recruitment, interested faculty, civics curriculum
Colleges and universities	may have faculty trained in youth development, expertise in data gathering strategies
Intermediary organizations	may have strong youth development orientation and capacity for recruiting and training youth, potential resources
Faith community and civic/service clubs	may already be supporting youth in service activities
United Way, Chamber of Commerce, other community-based organizations	potential resources, assistance with recruitment and marketing
Business/professional community	potential resources
Hospitals, community health system	may have youth development orientation, potential resources, assistance with recruitment and marketing

| FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AYCE

How do we start shifting the adult attitudes about youth so that we can get more support for our youth civic engagement efforts?

This is a challenging question since established attitudes are hard to shift. The Setting section of this guide describes the challenge of confronting a status quo in most communities in which adults see youth as recipients of adult expertise and services rather than resources who can help build a better community. Many adults do not have much experience with youth other than what they see in the media. If they have teens of their own, they often do not see the potential for their child and his or her friends to be part of a city's decision-making process.

The best way to shift attitudes in the long term is to put youth and adults together, working on joint projects and participating in discussions. It also helps to put youth in positions of prominence — for example, through presentations to city council on youth issues, or by encouraging youth to attend meetings — so that adults can be exposed to their talents and ideas.

As elected officials work to establish a community norm of engaging youth, this is one area where it is best to have the assistance of allies in the community. If a number of organizations focus on fostering positive youth-adult relationships, the message has a greater chance of becoming a community norm. If the city has a Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth initiative or a similar youth development coalition, they can be an important resource to help the community value young people's voices and ideas.

What is the best way to build support from other city departments and staff?

Elected officials have an essential role in establishing the credibility of the AYCE initiative. The location of the initiative, access of staff to city decision-makers and the way the initiative is introduced all speak volumes about the initiative's level of importance and the role it will be expected to play in the city. Clear expectations that the city is in it for the long haul will help municipal officials meet the skeptics head-on.

To provide top-down support, the mayor or city manager can direct department heads to identify one strategy for their department that engages youth in a meaningful way. For the municipal workforce, finding representatives to serve on committees and allowing release time for training will develop support among staff.

It is important to take advantage when departments demonstrate an affinity to the idea of the AYCE initiative. Sometimes, the passion will come from unexpected places, such as the visitor's bureau, the libraries or the economic development department.

How do we motivate youth to want to participate?

Basically, youth motivate themselves and other youth. The role of adults is to set the stage for that motivation to happen. It is important to engage youth in topics that interest and excite them and to frame issues in a way that is concrete and relates to their world.

Some of the best support for youth participation can come from teachers, youth workers, coaches, other adult allies and parents. Many times these adults can inspire youth participation in an event just by the way they describe it. Other ideas that can get youth in the door include food, door prizes for open meetings and extra school credit for committee work.

Leaders of an AYCE initiative seeking to engage youth can also make sure it will be worth their while when they get there. Youth are frustrated with traditional approaches. They need more dialogue and action than is afforded them within the school day. Their civic engagement experience needs to tap into their energy and innate interest in being of service. The section on adult allies also addresses the importance of relationship-building in maintaining participation.

What age are these youth? Is there a specific target group?

Youth of any school age can be engaged in local government. Preteens and early teens often like to volunteer at civic events and visit government buildings to learn about their function. These involvement-level activities set the stage for later engagement and it is important to have a wealth of them available throughout the community — in schools, afterschool settings, youth-serving organizations and city hall.

For consultation, representation or shared leadership activities, high school-aged youth (and eighth-graders if it is very structured) have more of the developmental skills and abilities needed to tackle policy and analysis work.

An AYCE process should be as inclusive as possible. If youth are participating in consultation, representation or shared leadership activities, it is important to find a representative group who will work on behalf of young people throughout the community, not just voice their own opinions. Many cities have questions about getting the “right” kids involved. For some, this means “the kids who need it.” Others struggle with how to attract a greater racial and cultural diversity, or how to attract those who are not the “superstars.”

Although some populations are harder to recruit, engage or retain than others, all youth need more meaningful roles in their community. All of them need to believe that their contributions will be valued, not just that some adult thought it would be good for them. The greatest success comes from recruiting youth for the gifts they bring, and helping them find the opportunity that matches their skills and interests, as well as the training they will need to participate effectively in local government.

What kinds of training do we need to have, and where do we get it?

Three kinds of training will help create a successful AYCE initiative that involves both youth and adults. First, since a youth-adult partnership relies on each party bringing their own expertise and perspective, youth members and adult allies will each require their own unique preparation. In addition, any group of youth and adults can benefit from a third level of training through some mutual orientation and team-building prior to setting out on a task together.

Many of the city governments and local, state and national organizations in the Tools and Resources section have curricula or materials that can assist communities with training. Some of the national organizations (such as Search Institute) host conferences that provide a fundamental grounding in youth development and an opportunity to network with peers. Many states have training networks in the field of youth work. City leaders can also contact NLC’s Institute for Youth, Education and Families to learn about materials and training that may be offered at national conferences.

In addition, city leaders should explore resources in their own communities. Colleges and universities often have leadership programs or personnel within their student services offices with a background in youth or community development. Youth-serving organizations and nonprofits may also have expertise in this area. Those that are affiliated with a national organization (such as 4-H) have access to established curriculum materials and perhaps even training resources, while local agencies may have their own resources or be able to create them.

As described in the section on Support, the adults working with youth in civic opportunities will benefit from training in the dynamics of youth-adult partnerships and the skills that help youth translate their passion into concrete action. The more attuned the adult ally is to the local government and political process, the better they can serve as a guide and support to youth.

Training for youth is essential so that they are empowered and prepared to tackle the projects they are determined to pursue. Youth can increase their knowledge of the basic issues they have identified through Internet research and contacting local and national organizations that focus on that issue. For instance, many youth groups tackle policy in the areas of alcohol or tobacco advertising or obesity and health issues. Local and national resources can be essential in helping youth understand and strategize around these issues.

Young people also need the skills to navigate the very adult-focused and often complicated world of government, policy and community resources. Skills in analysis of issues and power dynamics are important to avoid the experience, or perception, of being manipulated by adults. Adult allies can train youth in how to prepare and deliver a presentation to decision-making bodies. In addition to information from the Tools and Resources section, many groups across the country have used the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) curriculum created by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities. Adult allies should also explore the many resources in the youth activism and organizing field that are designed to level the playing field for youth as a marginalized group in local decision-making.

How do we get a more diverse, representative group on our youth council?

Cities with the greatest diversity of opportunities are able to attract a greater diversity of youth. Some cities with only a youth council wonder why they cannot attract a wide range of participants. Often, youth from socially vulnerable situations are not initially attracted to or comfortable in settings that focus on meetings and official work. However, there is no reason these young people cannot be leaders. With a concentrated effort to work on barriers, recruitment can be focused on some high-interest initial activities.

With continued support and additional opportunities presented to them, youth can move into a variety of opportunities when they are ready to do so. By the time they are on the youth council, most will have the skills and experience needed to be successful in that setting. If the youth council is focused on meaningful work that addresses relevant issues, it will maintain their interest. Building “feeder systems” in neighborhoods and youth programs, as suggested in the Strategy section, creates a pool of potentially interested and experienced youth.

Should we move our youth council from a focus on service projects to participating in city policy work?

Youth councils or commissions are an increasingly popular strategy for mayors and city councils to access input from and promote the involvement of young people. Many of these councils spend a large portion of their time engaged in service projects. These projects offer youth a concrete way to

contribute to the community that appeals to their developmental needs for inclusion, action and immediate results. Supporters and opponents of youth councils debate the value of this involvement in service opportunities.

One question frequently raised is that if service opportunities are available throughout the community, does the youth council need to be doing these projects as well. To create a full range of youth engagement opportunities, the youth council can often go beyond service activities to focus on municipal policy and planning. This group is uniquely positioned for this work, as most other youth groups are well-positioned to carry out service projects.

However, the more the city and the youth council are connected to and support community-based service projects, the greater the likelihood a system of opportunities can be created. This system exposes a greater number and diversity of youth to civic participation, and opens a channel for interested youth to join a more in-depth civic opportunity.

When the youth council opens its work to other youth in the community by inviting outside youth groups to meetings and consulting with them, these new youth can see the value of this type of engagement. Youth who become interested in the policy and planning work of municipal government will want to support the youth council's approaches or develop their own initiatives.

The bottom line is that local government and the entire community benefit from the energy, fresh ideas and commitment of youth. A youth council provides a unique opportunity for youth to share their gifts within the decision-making processes of local government.

| AYCE FROM A TO V:

10 Strategies Beyond Youth Councils to Engage Youth in Public Policy, Planning and Decision-Making

Assessment/Mapping- This strategy involves active research by young people about the resources available to them in their neighborhood and community. There are numerous variations. In the first step, youth canvass or survey a given area to uncover its youth-related services, supports and opportunities. The next step is cataloging and analyzing the data to determine youth needs. Additional steps can include advocating for needed services and programs or creating referral and information services for their peers.

Bill of Rights- A number of cities have supported youth-led processes to identify and articulate the basic rights of children and youth. The resulting document raises community-wide awareness of youth issues, and helps young people hold adult decision-makers accountable to their youngest constituents.

Congress/Summits/Speakouts- Cities use a variety of strategies to bring young people together to identify and set youth priorities. The most extensive of these models is the Youth Congress, fashioned after the U.S. Congress and complete with an annual General Assembly, in which youth research and shape local policy. Summits and speakouts are generally single events, often held annually, for youth to raise and discuss issues. City officials and other adults may be invited to these events, but are asked to listen rather than speak.

Design and Planning- It is a pretty safe bet that for every youth-related issue the city must tackle, there is a group of youth with the expertise and willingness to provide ideas and recommendations. From neighborhood centers to skate parks to websites to afterschool programs, cities can engage youth to design workable plans that will meet the needs of their peers. These opportunities can range from one-time planning charettes to ongoing employment in city departments.

Funding and Philanthropy- In youth-run grant programs, young people take responsibility for a sum of city funding and ensure that it is appropriately awarded to programs benefitting other youth. Youth set priorities, create funding criteria and applications, screen and review proposals, appropriate funds, monitor implementation and create final reports.

Issue-Based Advocacy -This strategy is generally best tackled in partnership with an outside intermediary or youth development organization. Young people learn skills in analysis of public policy and social issues, and then identify doable projects that often include organizing other youth in support of policy recommendations. Youth across the country have created successful advocacy projects around financial literacy, tobacco advertising, rights of foster care youth, fitness and obesity, violence prevention, media bias and the voting age for local elections.

Membership on Boards, Commissions and Committees- City boards and commissions can become more attuned to the needs of youth and their families with the appointment of young people as voting members. Most cities have dozens of appointed groups, from arts commissions to zoning boards, addressing topics of youth interest. Both youth and adult members receive training on communica-

tion and roles, and new youth members are often paired with a long-time adult member as a “buddy” to help acclimate them to board work.

Social Networks and Media- Communication is a major aspect of engaging youth in government — to reach out to youth as well as provide a vehicle for them to share issues with their peers. A growing number of cities use social networking sites and other interactive Web-based services to inform youth about activities and receive their input on social and civic issues. This technology, as well as the city’s public access television channel, are excellent vehicles for youth activism, allowing young people to identify issues of concern and creatively communicate them to the public.

Training -Skilled and experienced youth can be invaluable resources for local government as trainers. Youth insight into the interests, needs and behaviors of their own generation helps adults relate to and serve the youth population. Police academies, neighborhood planning teams, information technology and communication departments, and human services agencies are just some of the places where youth can assist in orientation and staff development.

Voting and Electoral Participation- Voter education/registration drives and candidate forums are successful strategies to engage youth in the electoral process. As with other strategies, it is important to go beyond the common expectation of teen volunteering (i.e., handing out campaign literature) to truly authentic participation. When youth identify current community issues, prepare questions for candidates, educate others about the voting process, conduct mock elections and sponsor candidate debates, they are learning valuable civic lessons and widening the civic landscape of their city.

| AN ELECTED OFFICIAL'S CHECKLIST FOR AYCE ACTION

Getting Ready for AYCE

- ☐ Convene a small group of stakeholders and include some youth.
- ☐ Learn about current youth civic engagement efforts in the city.
- ☐ Talk about the issues raised in the assessment and answer some tough questions.
- ☐ Agree on a common definition and framework for AYCE.
- ☐ Invest in some training.

The Setting: Welcome Youth in Local Government

- ☐ Acknowledge youth as active civic participants.
- ☐ Create youth-friendly municipal processes.
- ☐ Listen to youth voices and open strong lines of communication.
- ☐ Promote youth leadership.

The Structure: Develop an Infrastructure that Supports Youth Participation in Government

- ☐ Choose the organizational setup that is right for your city.
- ☐ Enlist other partners for missing expertise, resources or connections.
- ☐ Connect youth to key decision-makers.
- ☐ Pay attention to barriers that might keep youth from participating.
- ☐ Learn from the experiences of other communities.

The Strategy: Create Meaningful Opportunities for Youth to Make a Difference

- ☐ Use the four pathways of engagement to ensure a broad continuum of opportunities.
- ☐ Work with staff and partners to shift the role of youth from service recipient to resource.
- ☐ Use the idea of the youth engagement pyramid to address a pressing city issue.
- ☐ Create “feeder systems” to support the city’s AYCE initiative.
- ☐ Add a youth component to established or strategic city processes.

The Support: Build Youth-Adult Partnerships to Support Engagement

- ☐ Identify caring, skilled adults who share your passion about youth engagement and empower them to undertake this work.
- ☐ Ensure that adults continue to learn the dynamics of youth-adult partnerships and group work.
- ☐ Provide youth with ongoing training in civic participation and ensure they are prepared to navigate adult settings.
- ☐ Model the kind of youth-adult relationships you seek for the community.
- ☐ Reach out to parents to encourage their support of youth participation.

| LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES FOR AYCE

NLC drew upon the following local, state and national resources to prepare this guide:

CITY RESOURCES

1. Chase Youth Commission

- a. Website: www.chaseyouth.org
- b. Contact:
 - Spokane Regional Youth Department
 - City Hall, 6th Floor
 - 808 West Spokane Falls Boulevard
 - Spokane, WA 99201
 - Phone: (509) 625-6440
 - E-mail: chaseyouthcommission@spokanecity.org (Joanne Benham, director)
- c. Summary:

Initiated by former Mayor Jim Chase in 1985, the Chase Youth Commission (CYC) is the voice of youth in both the City of Spokane and Spokane County. Funded jointly by the city and county through the Spokane Regional Youth Department, the CYC is commissioned to identify the needs of youth, determine and provide appropriate solutions and resources for those needs, and advocate for pro-youth policies and perceptions in local government and the community at large. A collaboration of youth and adults, the CYC affords youth the opportunity to hold seats on both city and county boards, in addition to its own Teen Advisory Council.

2. Cambridge Kids' Council

- a. Website: www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/kidscouncil.cfm
- b. Contact:
 - Cambridge Kids' Council
 - 51 Inman Street
 - Cambridge MA 02139
 - Phone: (617) 349-6239
 - E-mail: kidscouncil@cambridgema.gov (Mary Wong, executive director)
- c. Summary:

Established by city ordinance in 1991, the Cambridge Kids' Council unites the mayor and other city officials with parents, youth, community members, charitable foundations, businesses, universities and community organizations to better understand and meet the needs of children, youth and families in the city of Cambridge. The Cambridge Kids' Council not only drives the creation and distribution of direct services, but also shapes overall city policy on these issues. One of the key elements of its work is the Youth Involvement initiative, which has encouraged and supported the civic engagement of youth ages 14 to 18 since 2001.

3. City of Indio Youth Task Force

- a. Website: <http://indioyouthtaskforce.org/board.html>
- b. Contact:
 - 46800 Jackson Street
 - Indio, CA 92201
 - Phone: (760) 391-4035
 - E-mail: iytf@indioyouthtaskforce.org (Dave Ison, human services manager)
- c. Summary:

Established in 1994 by the Indio Police Department, the Indio Youth Task Force (IYTF) represents a vibrant coalition of individuals and institutions working to improve long-term outcomes for youth in their community by preventing youth violence and substance abuse. IYTF brings together the City of Indio, community-based organizations, school districts, local businesses, media, parents, law enforcement and religious organizations. The task force provides mentoring programs for the children of incarcerated parents, mini-grants to youth-serving organizations and scholarships to graduating high school students.

4. Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families and Community

- a. Website: www.ourcommission.org
- b. Contact:
 - 421 S.W. Oak Street, Suite 200
 - Portland, OR 97204
 - Phone: (503) 988-4502
 - E-mail: joshua.l.todd@co.multnomah.or.us (Joshua Todd, director)
- c. Summary:

Representing both the City of Portland and Multnomah County, the Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families and Community promotes policy, develops programs and acquires resources to strengthen and support an inclusive, equitable community in which all individuals can thrive. The Commission focuses on several key areas: positive youth development, economic security, foster care reduction and academic and life success for school-age and early childhood. The positive youth development component encompasses a broad range of opportunities for youth civic engagement, including the Youth Planner Program. Through this program, youth are hired directly by various city and county agencies and the Multnomah Youth Commission, a group of 13-21 year-olds who advise the city and county governments and independently craft youth policy and programming.

5. San Francisco Youth Commission

- a. Website: www.sfbos.org/index.aspx?page=5585
- b. Contact:
 - City Hall, Room 345
 - One Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
 - San Francisco, CA 94102
 - Phone: (415) 554-7112
 - E-mail: julia.sabory@sfgov.org (Julia Sabory, director)
- c. Summary:

Following a citywide vote in 1995, the San Francisco Youth Commission was incorporated into the city as an advisory body responsible for communicating the perspective of San Francisco's youth to the joint city-county government. The mayor and Board of Supervisors appoint youth ages 12-23 to serve on the Commission as representatives of their Supervisorial districts and city youth as a whole. The Commission is also supported by staff members who assist with day-to-day operations and logistics, as well as skill development in leadership and government processes.

6. Boston Mayor's Youth Council

- a. Website: www.bostonyouthzone.com/myc
- b. Contact:
 - One City Hall Plaza, Room 603
 - Boston, MA 02201
 - Phone: (617) 635-4490
 - E-mail: patty.mcmahon@cityofboston.gov (Patty McMahon, director)
- c. Summary:

Funded collaboratively by the City of Boston, the Boston Bar Association and Northeastern University since its establishment in 1994, the Boston Mayor's Youth Council (MYC) empowers youth to act as advocates for themselves and their peers, identifying and representing the needs and desires of the youth community before city leadership. The Boston MYC consists of 40 high school juniors and seniors selected from each of the city's 22 neighborhoods to ensure that the council represents the diversity of youth in Boston. Council members are highly responsive to their peers, and conduct regular outreach to their neighbors and local community organizations. At the same time, MYC staff encourage youth to explore the full political course of their interests, connecting them with state legislators, U.S. Senators, members of the White House, and other local, state and federal leaders.

7. Grand Rapids Our Community's Children

- a. Website: www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us/index.pl?page_id=3501
- b. Contact:
 - 300 Monroe Avenue, N.W.
 - Grand Rapids, MI 49503
 - Phone: (616) 456-4353
 - E-mail: lheemstr@grcity.us (Lynn Heemstra, executive director)
- c. Summary:

Fulfilling the recommendations of a Child Well-Being Task Force, the city established Our Community's Children in 1998 as a partnership between the City of Grand Rapids, the Grand Rapids Public School District and the community at large that would assess public policies while advancing cross-sector collaborations for the success of children and families. Our Community's Children is home to the Mayor's Youth Council, a group of 15 youth that serves the multiple purposes of developing the participants' civic knowledge and leadership skills, bolstering a positive image of youth in the community and engaging youth in policy decision-making processes. The Mayor's Youth Council publishes an annual report, hosts a regional youth summit and meets monthly with the mayor.

8. Hampton Coalition for Youth

- a. Website: www.hampton.gov/foryouth
- b. Contact:
 - 22 Lincoln Street
 - Hampton, VA 23669
 - Phone: (757) 728-3280
 - E-mail: foryouth@hampton.gov (Cindy Carlson, director)
- c. Summary:

Formed in 1990 and now a department within local government, the Hampton Coalition for Youth is the coordinating, planning and catalyst organization for youth issues in Hampton. The department focuses on four major areas: coalition building around youth issues and policy development to protect the city's investment in youth; promoting Developmental Assets through a citywide Mobilization for Youth; supporting and enhancing a comprehensive system of youth civic engagement; and sponsoring the Hampton Youth Commission and youth participation in government.

LOCAL & STATE RESOURCES

9. The Oasis Center

- a. Website: www.oasiscenter.org
- b. Contact:
 - 1704 Charlotte Avenue, Suite 200
 - Nashville, TN 37203
 - Phone: (615) 327-4455
 - E-mail: hcatto@oasiscenter.org (Hal Cato, president and CEO)
- c. Summary:

Established in 1969, the Oasis Center serves as a hub for youth development programs and services in Nashville. Through leadership training and volunteer service-learning projects, the Center's Teen Outreach Program (TOP) empowers youth to be proactive members of their communities. Other civic engagement opportunities include Oasis Community IMPACT, through which youth campaign for social justice in their communities and schools, and Youth United, a peace-seeking collaboration of youth from high-violence neighborhoods and schools. The Oasis Center is funded in part by state and local government agencies, national charitable foundations and individual donations.

10. Alternatives Inc.

- a. Website: www.altinc.org
- b. Contact:
 - 2021B Cunningham Drive, Suite #5
 - Hampton, VA 23666
 - Phone: (757) 838-2330
 - E-mail: kjohnson@altinc.org (Kathy Johnson, executive director)
- c. Summary:

Alternatives Inc., a nonprofit organization based in Hampton and Newport News, Va., provides both direct youth services at the local level, as well as youth development training to other organizations and communities across the country. Alternatives, Inc., grounds its programs and training in the firm belief that artistic exploration and active civic engagement are essential to creating a strong understanding of oneself and a real relationship with one's community. The organization presents a multi-tiered theory of youth civic engagement, in which youth encounter a spectrum of opportunities for participation, from community service to shared leadership with adults.

11. Mikva Challenge

- a. Website: www.mikvachallenge.org
- b. Contact:
 - 25 East Washington Street, Suite 820
 - Chicago, IL 60602-1708
 - Phone: (312) 863-6340
 - E-mail: inquiries@mikvachallenge.org (Brian Brady, executive director)
- c. Summary:

Inspired by former White House Counsel, Judge and U.S. Congressman Abner Mikva and his wife Zoe's passion for and lifetime commitment to civil service and political activism, the Mikva Challenge provides Chicago's low-income youth with expansive opportunities for civic engagement and leadership development. Mobilizing youth around the motto "Democracy is a verb," the Mikva Challenge focuses on the key areas of youth policy-making, activism and electoral participation. This nonprofit organization finances its work through a combination of individual donations, fundraising events and grants from charitable foundations at the national and local level.

12. Institute for Local Government

- a. Website: www.ca-ilg.org
- b. Contact:
 - 1400 K Street, Suite 301
 - Sacramento, CA 95814
 - Phone: (916) 658-8208
 - E-mail: tamsler@ca-ilg.org (Terry Amsler, program director, Collaborative Governance Initiative)
- c. Summary:

As the research and education affiliate of the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities, the Institute for Local Government (ILG) gathers and disseminates information on challenges, best practices and innovations in local governance through online publications and in-person training programs. ILG has conducted significant study in the area of youth engagement, devoting special attention to youth councils — the variety of forms they take in different communities, the qualities of a successful council and the benefits to communities from establishing their own council. ILG receives funding from individual donors, national foundations, corporations, local associations, and revenue from publications, training programs and contracts.

13. Youth in Action

- a. Website: www.youthinactionri.org
- b. Contact:
 - 672 Broad Street
 - Providence, RI 02907
 - Phone: (401) 751-4264
 - E-mail: adeola@youthinactionri.org (Adeola Oredola, executive director)
- c. Summary:

Located in Providence, R.I., Youth in Action is an innovative youth development organization governed and operated almost entirely by youth participants. Adult staff members provide leadership training and continued support to youth as they conduct educational outreach to other youth in the community, provide academic mentoring to their peers, and identify, design and implement solutions to community-wide challenges. Youth raise funds for these efforts by applying for grants, lobbying local and state officials and reaching out to corporations and individual donors.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

14. Youth Leadership Institute

- a. Website: www.yli.org
- b. Contact:
 - San Francisco Office
 - 246 First Street, Suite 400
 - San Francisco, CA 94105
 - Phone: (415) 836-9160
 - E-mail: info@yli.org (Maureen Sedonaen, president and CEO)
- c. Summary:

In order to strengthen communities, the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) facilitates the creation of youth-adult partnerships while developing the leadership capacity of youth in politics, philanthropy and substance abuse prevention. YLI takes a multifaceted approach, offering its own community-based programs directly to youth, as well as providing training, research and evaluation services to organizations and communities across the country. YLI receives its funding from a combination of sources: national charitable foundations, corporate partners, local government agencies and individual donations.

15. Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development

- a. Website: <http://cydpr.aed.org>
- b. Contact:
 - 1825 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
 - Washington, DC 20009-4721
 - Phone: (202) 884-8000
 - E-mail: cyd@aed.org (Bonnie Politz, vice president and senior technical expert)
- c. Summary:

The Academy for Educational Development's Center for Youth Development and Policy Research supports local, state and national organizations and government agencies in their efforts to initiate and enrich youth development infrastructure. Its primary issue areas are community youth mapping, promising practices in afterschool, and transformational education. The Center receives funding from individual donations, government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Labor and national charitable foundations.

16. Youth Innovation Fund

- a. Website: www.theyouthfund.org
- b. Contact:
 - 100 Fifth Avenue, Eighth Floor
 - New York, NY 10011
 - Phone: (212) 367-4608
 - E-mail: jbynoe@aed.org (Jessica Bynoe, national coordinator)
- c. Summary:

An initiative of the National Service-Learning Partnership and Academy for Educational Development, the Youth Innovation Fund provides funding to youth boards in eight different localities. These youth boards allocate mini-grants to other youth-led organizations that incorporate service-learning into their civic engagement efforts. The Youth Innovation Fund is made possible by support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

17. Youth on Board

- a. Website: www.youthonboard.org
- b. Contact:
 - 58 Day Street
 - Somerville, MA 02144
 - Phone: (617) 741-1242
 - E-mail: info@youthonboard.org (Jenny Sazama, director and co-founder)
- c. Summary:

Since 1994, Youth on Board has served as an advocate for youth voice in government, schools and nonprofit organizations by providing consultation and training to improve understanding and strengthen partnerships between youth and adults. Their assistance focuses on the areas of policy development, youth organizing and activism, program and curriculum development, involving young people in decision-making, improving school culture, strategic development and coaching adult allies. Youth on Board is funded through a combination of individual donations and grants from local and national charitable foundations.

18. Search Institute

- a. Website: www.search-institute.org
- b. Contact:
 - 615 First Avenue N.E.
 - Minneapolis, MN 55413
 - Phone: (612) 376-8955
 - E-mail: si@search-institute.org (Nancy Tellett-Royce, senior consultant)
- c. Summary:

The Search Institute works to supply policymakers, parents and local organizations with the knowledge and skills necessary to build strong, caring communities in which children can grow and flourish. Backed by more than 50 years of research in the field of youth development, the Search Institute has identified 40 Developmental Assets needed for every child to thrive at each stage in her life, from age three to 18. The work of the Search Institute is supported by grants from many national charitable foundations, as well as individual donations.

19. Forum for Youth Investment

- a. Website: www.forumforyouthinvestment.org
- b. Contact:
 - The Cady-Lee House
 - 7064 Eastern Avenue, N.W.
 - Washington, DC 20012
 - Phone: (202) 207-3333
 - E-mail: thaddeus@forumfyi.org (Thaddeus Ferber, vice president)
- c. Summary:

The Forum for Youth Investment is a nonprofit organization that supports communities and leaders in ensuring that all young people are Ready by 21[®]: ready for college, work and life. The Forum works directly with both youth leaders and adults, empowering them with research, peer networks and strategies to help them achieve positive youth development outcomes in their communities. The Forum is funded by private foundations, corporations, state and local governments, nonprofits and individuals.

20. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation

a. Website: www.wkkf.org

b. Contact:

One Michigan Avenue East

Battle Creek, MI 49017-4012

Phone: (269) 968-1611

E-mail: int@wkkf.org (Gregory Taylor, vice president for programs)

c. Summary:

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation funds programs and organizations that work to strengthen community infrastructure and support for children and families. Targeting populations in Michigan, Mississippi and New Mexico, the Kellogg Foundation strives to build partnerships and strengthen communities around three key elements: education and learning; food, health and well-Being; and family economic security. In this work, the Kellogg Foundation is mindful of “Race and Place as Critical Factors in Children’s Success,” as well as the importance of civic and philanthropic engagement within the communities they serve.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

21. Barry Checkoway, University of Michigan

- a. Website: www.ssw.umich.edu/about/profiles/profile-barrych.html
- b. Contact:
 - University of Michigan
 - School of Social Work
 - Room 3840 SSWB
 - 1080 South University
 - Ann Arbor, MI 48109
 - Phone: (734) 763-5960
 - E-mail: barrych@umich.edu
- c. Summary:

Dr. Barry Checkoway is a professor of social work and urban planning in the School of Social Work at the University of Michigan. His research interests include increasing the involvement of diverse groups in community organization, social planning and neighborhood development; community-based research and evaluation; and the involvement of young people in creating community change. Dr. Checkoway also leads the Michigan Youth and Community Program, which facilitates youth organizing and community change, youth participation in public policy, youth dialogues on race and ethnicity and community-based participatory research and evaluation in cities and neighborhoods across the country.

22. R. Shepherd Zeldin, University of Wisconsin

- a. Website: www.sohe.wisc.edu/hdfs/faculty/shepherdzeldin.htm
- b. Contact:
 - 432 Human Ecology Building
 - 1300 Linden Drive
 - Madison, WI 53706
 - Phone: (608) 263-2383
 - E-mail: rszeldin@wisc.edu
- c. Summary:

Dr. Shep Zeldin is a professor of human development in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Zeldin studies the effects of civic engagement and afterschool programming on positive youth development; youth-adult partnerships around community improvement, school reform and social justice; community-based research and evaluation of youth programming and best practices; and training and consultation to national and state initiatives, policymakers and foundations. His research includes “Youth in Decision-Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations.”

23. Michael Baizerman, University of Minnesota

- a. Website: www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/about_ssw/faculty_staff/profiles/baizerman.asp
- b. Contact:
 - School of Social Work
 - University of Minnesota
 - 105 Peters Hall
 - 1404 Gortner Avenue
 - Saint Paul, MN 55108
 - Phone: (612) 624-4912
 - E-mail: mbaizerm@umn.edu
- c. Summary:

Dr. Michael Baizerman is director of youth studies in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota and co-author of the book “Becoming Citizens: Deepening the Craft of Youth Civic Engagement.” His research interests include socio-cultural and geographic models of youth development; youth involvement models; youth work; youth policy; and philosophical and human sciences understandings of the idea of “youth.”

24. Carmen Sirianni, Brandeis University

- a. Website: www.brandeis.edu/departments/sociology/sirianni.html
- b. Contact:
 - Pearlman 210
 - Brandeis University
 - 415 South Street
 - Waltham, MA 02453
 - Phone: (781) 736-2652
 - E-mail: sirianni@brandeis.edu
- c. Summary:

Dr. Carmen Sirianni holds the Morris Hillquit Chair in Labor and Social Thought and is professor of sociology and public policy, with a joint appointment at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management and its Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University. His research interests include civic innovation and public policy, collaborative and network governance, community organizing and civic associations and youth civic engagement, among others. Additionally, Dr. Sirianni serves as the Youth Civic Engagement research director for the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Youth Civic Engagement Project and is on the advisory board for the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). His most recent publication, “Investing in Democracy: Engaging Citizens in Collaborative Governance,” showcases Hampton, Va., as a model local youth civic engagement effort.

| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cindy Carlson, NLC consultant, served as primary author of this publication. During the project year, she was the director of the Hampton, Va., Coalition for Youth, where she led the authentic youth civic engagement initiative in local government, and she currently is an officer in the consulting firm Onsite-Insights. Leon T. Andrews Jr., program director for youth development at NLC's Institute for Youth, Education and Families (YEF Institute), directed the overall project and coordinated its major elements. Cindy Carlson and Leon Andrews worked collaboratively to develop and implement the research design for eliciting input from municipal leaders and to determine the guide's structure and key messages.

In the project's early stages, Kathryn Sandel, former senior associate for youth development and current senior associate for education at the YEF Institute, along with Angela Rosales, the YEF Institute's 2008-09 Thomas M. Menino Fellow, conducted phone interviews, assisted with early meetings and provided input in the development of the initial AYCE framework. Claire Libert, the 2009-10 Thomas M. Menino Fellow, drafted the Local and National Resources for AYCE section and provided helpful comments and feedback on the publication. Clifford M. Johnson, executive director of the YEF Institute, provided overall editorial oversight and Michael Karpman, the Institute's senior associate for outreach, provided additional editorial assistance. Alexander Clarke was responsible for the publication's design and layout.

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1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW | Washington, DC 20004 | (202) 626-3000 | www.nlc.org

