

# BEYOND THE BOX:

## Tools to Uplift Emerging Leaders



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# Who We Are

## DC JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY GROUP

The District of Columbia's Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) provides active consultation to the government and private agencies, and ensures the provision of comprehensive delinquency prevention programs that meet the needs of youth through the collaboration of many local systems with which a youth may interface.

As members of the JJAG, the Youth Leaders in Action (YLA) Committee ensures that people between the ages of 16-28 with lived-experience assist in shaping policy recommendations and local support service oversight.



# AUTHENTIC INCLUSION

In 2019, I participated in a youth panel intended to inspire solutions to support unhoused students. After the session, a bubbly woman approached and shared she was a Juvenile Justice Specialist. Staffing the District of Columbia's Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, she explained her agency's mission to ensure young people had a role in shaping the systems that impact their lives.

I was completely unaware of the impact Melissa Milchman's invitation would have on my life, but I often think back to that moment and admire her intentionality and flexibility. The DC Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) understood youth impacted by incarceration often experience intersectional hardships. By meeting young people in the community, JJAG provided access to a space I would have otherwise not known existed.

Beyond an invitation to the table, JJAG also created space for the youth committee to establish itself as Youth Leaders in Action (YLA). However, this was no accident. JJAG Chairperson, Laura Furr, an expert in building authentic youth-adult partnerships, challenged my peers and I to step into the power of our lived experiences and realize ourselves as professionals. It can be easy to simplify the utility of youth engagement into a specific project or policy recommendation. However, the strategic support and community provided to me within the JJAG enhanced my quality of life and inspired this toolkit, "Beyond the Box: How to Uplift Emerging Leaders" within your SAG.

# GETTING STARTED

Before inviting youth with lived experience to the table, SAGs should consider what would be needed to sustain and support the young people engaged. While directly impacted youth may volunteer to engage with no compensation for a period of time, competing priorities can dissuade potential leaders from remaining connected to the SAG.

Imagine being encouraged to a space because of your lived experience or passion for systems change by folks who claim you are vital to the work, only to find that you are the only expert at the table who is not being compensated.

Many directly impacted individuals are asked to contribute to reform efforts for free and do so willingly in a search for community and approval. However, standardizing compensation provides a unique opportunity for SAGs to build the confidence of directly impactful youth. Dedicating funds, even if modest, shows the youth that your SAG not only respects the time and efforts put forth by young people but models equitable partnership.

***In DC, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) conducted research locally by engaging various youth boards to determine what the hourly rate of compensation should be for directly impacted youth members:***

***\$50.00 per hour (in-person), \$25.00 per hour (virtual)***

# GETTING STARTED CONT'

Because it can be administratively complicated for SAGs to pay youth directly, it is important to seek support from a youth-centered 501c3 member organization willing to act as a fiscal sponsor. In the District, Open City Advocates, an organization that offers legal representation, reintegration support and mentoring has sponsored Youth Leaders in Action, providing financial oversight and payment coordination, and they are reimbursed with Title II funds administered by the SAG.

There are different ways to approach fiscal sponsorship. The key is to seek collaboration with partners at your table with the capacity and desire to work with directly impacted youth.

*Create a list of individuals or organizations within your state or territory that you believe value innovation, youth voice, and/or understand finance.*

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Brainstorming buddies will be helpful as you explore options that work for your SAG!



# LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Once your SAG has approved the Youth Committee budget and mechanism to pay youth, take time to identify the professional and leadership skills needed to effectively participate in your SAG.

## Consider the Following:

- What space can be created for youth to hone these skills on a regular basis?
- How can mentoring be incentivized for the professionals within your SAG? etc. Can staff flex their time?
- What kind of organizational landscapes exist within your SAG & how can they be explained?
- Which partner(s) are willing to provide administrative staffing support → How can those professionals be supported by the SAG?
- What terms were you unfamiliar with before entering the juvenile justice space?
- What positions or professional development opportunities for youth exist or can be created within your SAG?
  - a. The JJAG created a “Youth Chair” role in 2019 to ensure young people impacted by the juvenile justice system were represented within our leadership. Also, providing a non-static opportunity for youth to influence and understand the functions of your SAG.
- What opportunities exist for youth leadership/expertise: r/led, prevention, diversion efforts to engage youth expertise?
- How can compliance practices include youth expertise? Ex. Are youth members interested in joining your compliance team during site visits?

Select and answer three of the foundational questions above. (Do not be afraid to write on your toolkit!)

# BENDING BUREAUCRACY

Because young people are not often asked by adults to lead in bureaucratic environments, professionals must make it clear that youth are capable of doing so. It may take time for some to understand the value of their lived expertise. However, adult SAG members can assist by creating specific roles, shaped by experience and capacity of directly impacted youth.

*For instance: As a youth member, I did not always feel confident in my ability to lead outside of sharing my lived experience because I did not understand our SAG's landscape. After a few months I joined the Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) Reform Committee and not only contributed to the implementation process but grew the confidence to ask questions.*

Identify a core team small team of professionals within your SAG who are vested in and passionate about moving youth engagement efforts forward → This will be your core team responsible for providing mentoring, technical assistance, and support to the youth committee.

List three potential core team members within your SAG:

1.

2.

3.



# READY TO LEAD: CHECKLIST

After joining JJAG, I was not only encouraged to lead, but frequently engaged in conversations with our Chairperson, Laura Furr and Juvenile Justice Specialist, Melissa Milchman about my interests and style of leadership. Bi-weekly core team brainstorm sessions about individual youth leadership with Laura and Melissa created a flexible and responsive culture within the youth committee. In 2020, Youth Leaders in Action, formerly known as the Youth Committee, decided that in order to maximize our impact in the District and utility to the JJAG, we must build a foundation that will outlive our tenure.

☐ **Schedule a meeting with young people on your SAG to discuss long-term goals for the Youth Committee. Don't forget! Your meeting may need to be outside of normal business hours. (Decide when and where the youth committee meeting will be held - recurring)**☐ **Create Core Values and a Mission Statement specific to the youth committee. Determine what youth members aim to accomplish within the committee.  
(Ex. Increase SAG's community outreach efforts focused on ages 13-18, leveraging peer support)**☐ **Roles and Responsibilities: It's time to delegate!  
List a few positions needed to support your Youth Committee.  
(Ex. Secretary)**☐ **Develop a Workplan: Think about what steps need to be taken to reach the goals outlined above.**☐ **Map Out Professional Development: Ask youth members to share which training/skill building opportunities they need and want!**☐ **Sprinkle in some FUN!**

Like with any team, it is important to get to know the individuals you will be relying on to mobilize collective efforts. It can be hard to build relationships in between SAG meetings. Dedicate regular time for community building among youth members and the core team.

# COMPASSIONATE COACHING

Once your core team of SAG members are on board, begin collectively mapping out the opportunities the SAG can provide for directly impacted youth members. This process will assist during outreach efforts, but also has the potential to ground adult partners in transparency concerning what advocacy opportunities/barriers currently exist within a SAG.

Policy reform and oversight interest will vary, but successful youth engagement can be measured by investments in self advocacy, mindfulness, and leadership ability. While it will take time for youth to understand the full function of your SAG, these skills will equip youth SAG members with the confidence to ask questions, challenge the status quo, and leverage their lived expertise to enhance the SAG's ability to respond to the needs of impacted youth.

Just as the impact of youth perspective will outlast any one youth member's tenure, participation in your SAG can become an invaluable and transformative experience, providing an outlet for healing and reflection to youth members.



# TIPS FOR COMPASSIONATE COACHES

**Building the Confidence to Ask Questions:** Actively affirm that youth members are experts in their lived experience. In addition, it is incredibly valuable to support youth members to dig deeper into concepts, ideas, or landscapes they may not yet know or understand.

**Building and Maintaining Momentum:** Every team needs a cheerleader! Directly impacted youth within your SAG will go through ups and downs in their personal life that may affect how they show up. When young people experience consistent support and encouragement by their core team, they are given access to a community (even if it's a tiny one).

**Practicing Strength-based Problem Solving:** Like all advocates, actively engaged youth SAG members will likely experience frustration with a system, individual, agency, or policy. Core team members are key to assisting and appreciating the power of channeling their disappointment or anxieties into identifying strength-based solutions.

Through YLA's efforts to uplift the impact of electronic monitoring in the juvenile justice system, it became clear that more needed to be done to gain the buy-in of other SAG members.

YLA decided to make our case through community engagement, data collection, and policy reform efforts. Instead of becoming angry that we felt unheard, we implemented a strength-based approach that our core team ingrained in us.



# TIPS FOR COMPASSIONATE COACHES CONT'

**Uplifting the Power of Self-Reflection:** It is wonderful to uplift and implement ideas and solutions brought by directly impacted youth. However, it is equally important to model for young leaders the benefits of understanding alternative perspectives. Transformative systems-change takes more than experience; it takes partnership. Core teams can support growth by (frequently) challenging youth members to think intentionally about how they show up or would like to show up.

We collectively explored our SAG's landscape to aid YLA in learning how politics might show up in the work (allies, neutral parties, opponents to reform work). By setting expectations around how others might show up in the work, we did our best to leverage allies, educate neutral parties, and respectfully disagree and/or prepare for hard conversations with opposition. YLA also built solidarity by developing group affirmations to avoid feeling discouraged or derailed by political opposition throughout the **Beyond the Box campaign**.

YLA conducted research, community outreach, and hosted a series of deliberate discussions during "Beyond the Box" **to uplift the impact of Electronic monitoring and explore the following issues highlighted by Professor Kate Weisburd in "Electronic Prisons: The Operation of Ankle Monitoring in the Criminal Legal System":** *Violations /Reincarceration, Lack of Privacy, Impact on Personal Relationships (Friends/Family), Effects on Housing, Employment, Financial Independence, and Lack of Quality Control/ Oversight.*

**Transparency and Trust:** Young leaders joining your SAG may have ideas and desires for grassroots action that fall outside of your SAG's scope. As mentors, the core team should use this as an opportunity to build trust. Setting aside time to explain limitations within the SAG, allows core team members to build rapport with youth members. Your transparency will provide youth members with the opportunity to identify priorities that align with your SAG's goals. Core team members can also leverage their network by connecting Youth SAG members with related state/local initiatives that may fall outside of the scope of the SAG work.

# BEYOND THE BOX CAMPAIGN

## TIMELINE (STEP 1-4)

**Step 1: Work collaboratively with the Youth Committee to identify an area focus that impacts justice-involved youth, specifically in your state.**

**February** - JJAG member Brittany Mobley, (Public Defender Services) partnered with YLA to plan a presentation and panel conversation on the impact of e-monitoring of youth in the District.

**Step 2: Prepare to make your case: support data collection efforts, invite allies to engage in thought partnership/uplift potential barriers, determine how SAG buy-in can be achieved.**

**March** - Brittany Mobley (DC Public Defender Services) moderated a panel of directly impacted youth, agency professionals, and highlighted best practices researched by Kate Weisburd, Associate Professor of Law, George Washington University Law School

**Step 3: Ensure youth members understand feedback received and support efforts/create space to outline a youth-led work plan.**

**April** - Two JJAG Members raised concern about YLA's position/advocacy efforts focusing on the e-monitoring, developed workplan, YLA responded to/approved work plan, Core Principles Developed in, Continued research (e-monitoring in the US)

**Step 4: Create space for youth members to identify the shared values/core principles. Meet weekly/bi-weekly to review team deliverables and delegate action items for the next planning session. (Reoccurring meetings suggested)**

# BEYOND THE BOX CAMPAIGN

## TIMELINE (STEP 5-6)

**May** - YLA held two strategy meetings, created a workplan, continued research, and conducted partnership mapping to gauge buy-in among JJAG members. Core Principles Developed (understanding the barriers we could experience within our SAG concerning buy-in) Partnership Mapping - who are our allies, which parties are neutral, who opposes our efforts. Determined that while 2 stakeholders were opposed to our efforts, YLA can take steps to better understand and consider their position; 2 YLA Strategy Planning meetings

**Step 5: Prepare for tough conversations, by meeting at least once before the discussion to ensure youth members have an opportunity to talk through their feelings and prepare thoughtful responses. Assist youth members with the development materials to communicate: the issue, findings, collective demand/recommendation.**

**June** - “Clear the Air” meeting: YLA and JJAG leadership met with agency partners who had reservations about our efforts. YLA also submitted a session proposal for the STRAD National Conference. Conference Proposal (draft); Meet with TA support (CCAS) to review deliverables

**Step 6: Debrief with youth members about the feedback received, negative or positive to determine if and how the information received will impact your project and determine next steps.**

**July** - YLA considered the concerns raised by agency partners and identified data collection as an opportunity to gain buy-in.

**August** - YLA continued research efforts & developed outreach materials to create greater awareness and engage potential thought partners in our community.

# BEYOND THE BOX CAMPAIGN

## TIMELINE (STEP 7-10)

**Step 7: Support youth leaders in determining how data will be collected and presented. Ex. Sharing the difference between qualitative/quantitative models**

**September** - YLA tabled at the 2022 Homeless Youth Count Kick-Off event and invited impacted youth to an impactful conversation on e-monitoring in the District. Over 30 young people RSVP'd.)

**Step 8: Offer assistance with logistics planning and securing supplies. Ex. Does your office have tables/chairs that youth members can use for community engagement efforts?**

**October** - Organized and hosted a youth-led focus group: 12 youth attended. Feedback reviewed to identify trends. JJAG resolution drafted based on focus group responses.

**Step 9: Partner with youth members to review community feedback categorically to ensure common trends can be uplifted.**

**November** - "What We Heard" presentation prepared for a second focus group to recap recommendations received in October. YLA met with CCAS to share findings & review conference speaker logistics.

**Step 10: In preparation for SAG feedback, assist youth members in identifying which individuals, organizations, and agencies needed to mobilize/implement the policy/program recommendation.**

**December** - Final Resolution (2023-01) was Brought to JJAG for a vote → If approved, be sent to the Deputy Mayor of Public Safety.

# YOUTH POLICY REFORM

YLA presented the resolution below to the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) for review on December 6, 2022. Resolution 2023-01 received positive initial feedback even from opponents of broader electronic monitoring reform efforts. On January 10, 2022 resolution 2023-01 passed unanimously with 15 YES votes, 0 abstentions, and 0 NO votes recorded.

## Juvenile Justice Advisory Group RESOLUTION 2023-01

**Supporting Enhanced Mentoring Efforts as a Non-punitive Form of Engagement**  
**Resolution:** To expand non-punitive forms of engagement, invest in mentorship, leverage workforce development, and fund investments in the arts.

**PURPOSE:** For the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group of the District of Columbia (JJAG) to build on the Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) reform efforts by making mentoring a Title II funding priority. Additionally, Youth Leaders in Action (YLA) seeks further partnership with the Bowser Administration, the Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens, local juvenile justice agencies, and community stakeholders to develop a 2-year plan to guide citywide implementation and programming.

**WHEREAS:** The JJAG provides active consultation to the Mayor and government agencies to ensure the provision of comprehensive delinquency prevention programs and programs designed to reduce status offense behaviors that meet the needs of youth through the collaboration of many local systems with which a youth may interface.

**WHEREAS:** Mentorship provides an opportunity for supervised individuals with lived experience to enter a rewarding field while improving the quality of life of system involved youth and young adults.

**WHEREAS:** The YLA will develop a framework to support youth interested in shaping in the development of strategic recommendations on mentoring, alignment of youth mentorship services, and creating standard practices and supports for District-wide mentoring programs.

**THEREFORE:** The JJAG resolves to support investments in mentoring, and alignment of youth mentorship services in the District of Columbia while acknowledging the various approaches to mentoring among stakeholders.



# LESSONS LEARNED

Over the past year, Youth Leaders in Action (YLA) was forced outside of our comfort zone in the best ways. After receiving push back internally on the issue of e-monitoring, we understood that this was an opportunity to enhance system coordination.

Through youth-led community engagement and data collection, YLA delivered a resolution to JJAG. Although our goal was to impact policy change, we learned much more about working in solidarity as youth members.

**Anticipate the need for balance:** YLA's efforts this year focused solely on Beyond the Box. As our excitement grew, we poured more energy into the project leaving little room left to explore other projects in 2022.

**Build momentum:** Seek Community-based partners outside of the SAG to support research, event planning, and data collection efforts.

**Request support from the allies:** Don't be afraid to ask for help or delegate tasks. A youth led project can and should leverage the expertise of adult partners.

**Build your outreach efforts around community and recreation:** There are plenty of youth who are willing to provide expertise from their lived experience. However, they are unaware that SAGs exist. Through community outreach members can gain feedback on current initiatives, recruit members, and increase awareness. These events and activities should be fun or social in nature.

**Invest in social media:** as a tool to develop youth member professional development and on-going data collection. This is also a tool that supports engagement of other youth who utilize this platform to engage and connect with peers.

**Leverage the expertise and talents of youth on your team.** Their skills will make your project unique and will provide ways to meaningfully engage and impact the work

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

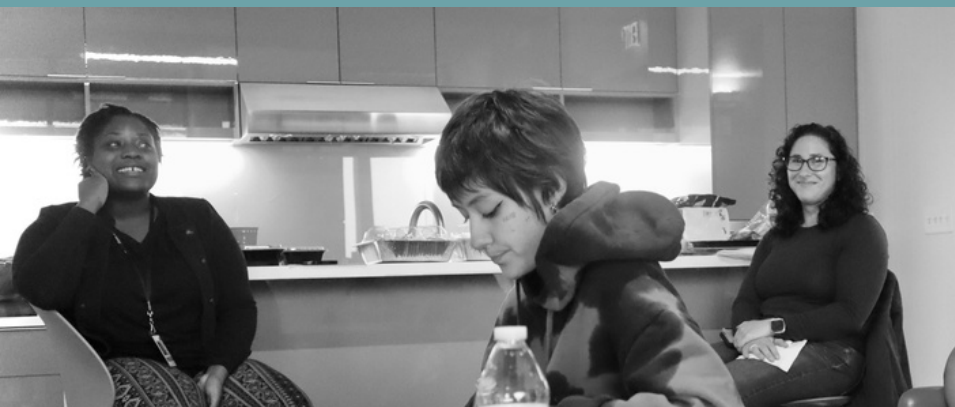
## EMERGING LEADERS

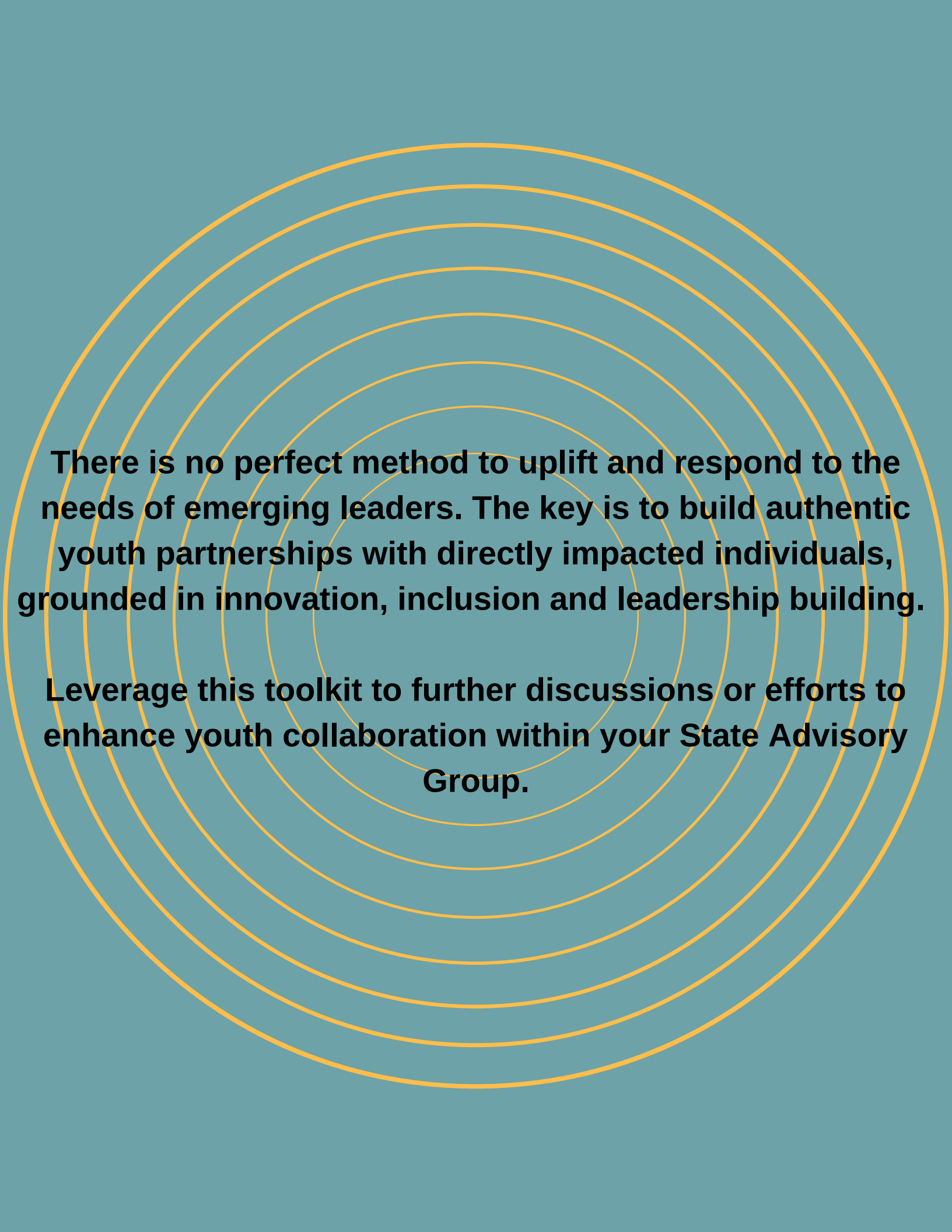
**Mylan Barnens Nataly  
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Hope Robert Wiggins  
Aaron White  
Collin Coston  
Destinee Barnes  
Diamond Barnes  
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Cani Bryant  
Miso Gordon  
Litzi Valdivia-Cazzol**



## SAG ADVISORS

**Melissa Milchman – DC Juvenile Justice Specialist  
Laura Furr – JJAG Chairperson, Laura Furr Consulting  
Rondell Jordan – JJAG Community Member, Open City  
Advocates Brittany Mobley – JJAG Member, Public Defender  
Service  
Lisette Burton – JJAG Community Member, ACRC**



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**There is no perfect method to uplift and respond to the needs of emerging leaders. The key is to build authentic youth partnerships with directly impacted individuals, grounded in innovation, inclusion and leadership building.**

**Leverage this toolkit to further discussions or efforts to enhance youth collaboration within your State Advisory Group.**