

# Toolkit for Implementing Authentic Youth Engagement Strategies Within State Advisory Groups



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# Introduction

**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)** - The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, Public Law 93-415, as amended, established the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to support local and state efforts to prevent delinquency and improve juvenile justice systems. A component of the Office of Justice Programs within the U.S. Department of Justice, OJJDP works to prevent and respond to youth delinquency and protect children. Learn more by visiting [ojjdp.ojp.gov](http://ojjdp.ojp.gov).

**American Institutes for Research (AIR)** - Established in 1946, with headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research and delivers technical assistance to solve some of the most urgent challenges in the U.S. and around the world. We advance evidence in education, health, the workforce, human services, and international development to create a better, more equitable world. The AIR family of organizations now includes IMPAQ, Maher & Maher, and Kimetrica. For more information, visit [AIR.ORG](http://AIR.ORG).

**The Center for Coordinated Assistance to States (CCAS)** - provides responsive resources and training and technical assistance (TTA) to support states, territories, tribal units, and communities in developing a continuum of juvenile justice services—from prevention to intervention to reentry. Their work centers on assisting in implementing the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and related Title II Formula Grants Program, particularly in support of Designated State Agencies and State Advisory Groups.

**Youth MOVE National** - In 2007, the National Youth Development Board (NYDB), a committee of youth and young adults that was formed to advise the system of care grantees on youth engagement, realized they needed to do more than just advise. They saw the power of the NYDB convening youth together and sharing their voices of experience and the need for a national, formalized entity, and thus Youth MOVE National was born.

First, housed as a program within the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (NFFCMH), YMN spent the next few years building partnerships, fundraising, and changing the youth advocacy landscape on a national scale through the building of local and state-level networks of Youth MOVE chapters. Then in 2012, after much success and growth, it became clear it was time to register as an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization. A Board of Directors was formed and hired the first three staff positions, an Executive Director, a Director of Member Services, and a Director of Resource and Development. From there, YMN has more than doubled the amount of initial staffers, secured more funding, and accepted dozens more chapters into its network, growing it to over 65 and counting.



## Acknowledgments -

The Deliberate Discussion Series is part of a more significant effort in partnership with the American Institute of Research's Center for Coordinated Assistance to States (AIR CCAS) to improve authentic youth engagement with communities impacted by the juvenile justice system. A powerful platform for young people to inform change in this manner is through membership in State Advisory Groups (SAGs). The Deliberate Discussion Series aims to create space for feedback from key audiences to understand how to create sustainable pathways for youth and young adults to support their involvement in these juvenile justice State Advisory Groups. The totality of these resources is informed by State Advisory Groups' youth and non-youth members across the United States/ territories.

*- Special thanks to the justice for Community Council(J4CC), a team of 5 young leaders from across the country, who met monthly from August 2022 to January 2023 to review and provide feedback on the project overall. J4CC members also participated in a listening session exploring strategies for making state advisory group membership more accessible to youth not currently involved.*



### **Speaking Truth to Power:**

“ It is worth acknowledging the deep seeded, and founded, mistrust many historically excluded communities and individuals have towards the juvenile justice system and the criminal legal system as a whole. Many Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC), Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic (2SLGBTQIA+) individuals, folks from the disability justice communities, and more, have been intentionally and unintentionally harmed by these systems for generations. So, although this report highlights challenges and solutions based upon reform, these efforts may not be enough for folks who have heard this all before and are rightfully disenfranchised and dealing with inter generational trauma. Thus, it is also important to think of larger, more radical change that could take place, that sees communities building accountability systems by themselves, for themselves, outside of these colonial systems.

- Arc Telos Saint Amour (they/them/their), Youth MOVE National



# Promoting Recruitment and Retention of Youth on SAGs

“ I sit on the phone with young people who are interested and walk them through how to do the application... We walk through the requirements, and think through how they might want to respond to the questions ... We make sure that they have a resume. If not, we provide resources on how to get the resume updated or started. We try to go for a full circle approach, from outreach and engagement, following up with the mayor's office just to make sure that the appointment is being considered.

- Deliberate Discussion 2022 Non-Youth Feedback

## Retention

### Challenge:

Recruitment and retention of youth State Advisory Group members is an identified issue for SAGs across the country. It is particularly challenging to reach, and get buy-in from, youth under 21 and youth currently involved in the juvenile justice system. Youth members emphasized that they do not always feel included or listened to while they are at the table. Youth members also noted that expanding benefits for youth members could increase retention.

“ SAG's need to pay more attention to how young people access information. For instance, our youth committee now has an Instagram, and it has significantly increased access and awareness to our youth work. We can engage with unique youth and plant seeds to invite them into this work.

- Deliberate Discussion Series 2022 Youth SAG member

### Solutions:

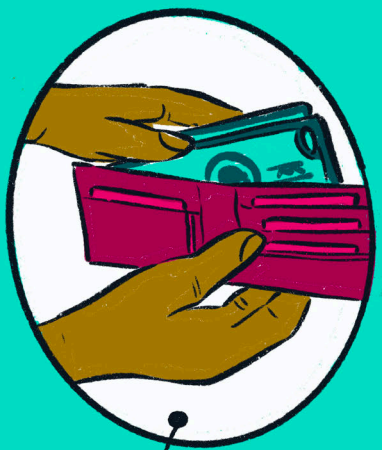


Young people must understand that their voices and input matter and are valued. Youth need to be compensated for their work with the SAGs at a meaningful rate. Investing in young people and offering personal and professional development opportunities outside the SAG meetings is essential to keep them active and interested in the work. Reaching out to young people on probation or detention facilities will provide unique insight to the SAGs. Youth could utilize this opportunity to complete community service hours that they may have been court-ordered to fulfill.

“ Keep them interested by not repeating content. Every term, allow them to list things they want to see by the following year or next retreat. Having them envision what they want keeps them actively involved.

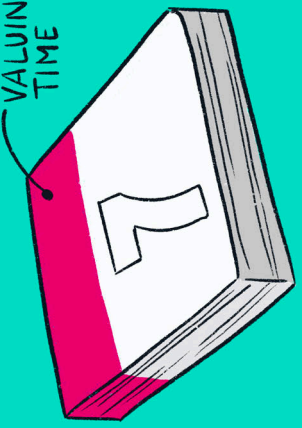
EXPANDING BENEFITS for MEMBERS

WHAT HELPS



COMPENSATION IS HELPFUL

VALUING OUR TIME



WHAT COULD BE BETTER



YOUTH INVOLVEMENT WITH ADULT MENTORS

TRAINING AND WORK ON THE GROUND



TRAINING, GRANTS, PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

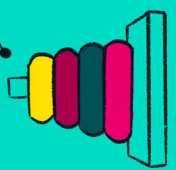
STIPEND IS TOO LOW FOR OUR TIME

STIPEND AND RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL



OFFER INTERNSHIP AND/OR SCHOOL CREDIT

CONSIDER: CHILDCARE



PUTTING ENERGY INTO THE WRONG THING



LEVEL UP: EMPLOYMENT, INTERNSHIPS, INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP



# Retention Assessment for State Advisory Groups

Youth MOVE National developed this assessment for State Advisory Groups interested in analyzing their retention practices. This 10-question assessment should be completed by non-youth and youth members alike, and collectively, the state advisory group should look to develop solutions to needs identified through this evaluation.

Yes      No      Goals for Change

Do you offer training and professional development outside of SAG meetings for youth members?
Is feedback from youth members incorporated into the SAGs' 1-year and 3-year plans?
Do the SAGs offer career pathways for youth members to grow as a professional in the juvenile justice field?
Is there shared power between the SAG members and youth members?
Are youth members compensated for their time spent during SAG meetings and work outside of the meetings?
Do the SAGs ensure that the youth members are familiar with the meeting process, language, and explain acronyms used during the sessions?
Are the SAG meetings accessible to all members? Do SAG funds pay for transportation and lodging? Is there an option to attend the meeting virtually if someone cannot travel?
Do you intentionally check in with youth members outside of the SAG meetings? Is there a prep and debrief meeting?
Does your SAG accept and celebrate youth for their full holistic authentic selves - (2SLGBTQIA+ identities, affirming names and pronouns, disability meaning disabled by the system, not a disabled person who is inherently broken, etc.)
Do your SAGs offer personal development opportunities for youth members, like helping young people think about their identity outside of juvenile justice work and connecting young people with needed resources in the community?



# Recruitment

“ The most important lesson is recruiting from different areas and exhausting all possibilities. We tend to overuse our youth and expect them to be so engaged in their work without properly serving them and their needs. We ask a lot of them, and we need to come back with things to offer them as well.

- Massah Massaquoi, Senior Research Assistant, The Fenway Institute

## Challenge:



Through our deliberate discussion series, we learned that recruitment for State Advisory Groups is largely by word of mouth. You need to be connected to specific people to access information and support in joining the State Advisory Groups. Many State Advisory Groups have a general website with information. However, most members were unsure who manages those inquiries or who supports youth seeking membership.

## Solutions:

State Advisory Groups should explore ways to make this information more widely accessible. In today's society, social media and digital marketing are strong tools for connecting with young people. Many youth SAG members recommended using technology as a promising strategy for engaging youth.



### *Additional Solutions:*

- Work with youth members/sub-committee to identify new strategies to solicit more youth participation
- Create a state-wide coalition for youth-serving/led programs
- Strengthen partnerships with youth-serving systems and designated state agencies to support the involvement of multi-system involved youth
- Tour various juvenile justice placements/programs to raise awareness about State Advisory Groups and provide direct support to those interested in participating
- Maintain an active presence within communities across your state by tabling at local events or sending a representative to network

### *Resources for a Deeper Dive:*

- [Recruiting and Retaining Young Leaders – School-Based Health Alliance](#)





# Transitioning Leaders Out of Youth Roles

## Challenge:



Members that join as youth are not transitioned out of that role within the SAG. This results in those appointed before the age of 25 who no longer fit the description of youth being considered youth members. For instance, the general policy states those appointed before the age of 25 are youth members. At this time, youth are not required to be transitioned into a non-youth role. Through our conversations with stakeholders, we learned there are currently youth members who are 26-32. This is a form of tokenization and sometimes causes youth members to feel siloed to only youth-specific roles and responsibilities. This also creates a potential misrepresentation of your current youth membership. Many SAG leaders expressed that the hardest part of retaining youth is sometimes they get older and are no longer interested in serving in a youth capacity. If we plan to support their transition into different leadership positions within the State Advisory Groups, we can also get a head start on recruiting new youth leaders for replacement.

## Solutions:



Completing Generation NEXT activities with State Advisory Group youth members will engage them in the discussion of transitioning from youth advocates to advocates for youth. The worksheet allows young people to determine where they are in their journey and what support they need to reach the next step in their advocacy. This can assist with succession planning and ensuring the makeup of youth membership is accurate.

*\* State Advisory Groups should consider creating terms for youth members and revise bi-laws to reflect this change. Terms could help transition members that joined as a youth into more leadership roles within the state advisory group, and bi-laws will ensure accountability for these efforts.*

“As Youth Advocates transition into advanced leadership roles, it is also critical to have continued support and mentorship as many of these young leaders transition to director, administrator, and executive roles. While many skills learned from advocating are applicable and carried through to the next phase of life, it is especially crucial for young adults to have continued support and guidance in this transition, as many new skill sets need to be developed in these more advanced leadership roles.



“ We need more mentorship. So many young people just need a guide, and we can potentially be that support. If not us, the community can; first, we must create the pathway.

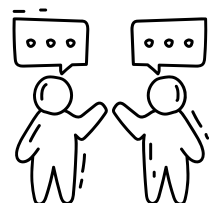
- Deliberate Discussion 2022 Youth SAG member

## Mentorship

Mentorship programs are valuable ways of supporting the development of youth leaders. Each youth member should be paired with adult SAG members and compensated for their time spent with mentors. Time spent together can focus on getting them oriented to the SAGs and setting goals for professional development. This connects them with community stakeholders etc. This will positively contribute to personal and professional development. This will also create a relationship that will encourage young people to seek support when experiencing challenges within the State Advisory Groups instead of just leaving. Finding the right match is key! Matching and pairing mentors with mentees must be intentional, emphasizing intersectionality, holistic affirmation, and celebration of individuality.

### *Resources for a Deeper Dive:*

- [Impact of Mentorship](#)
- [Starting a Mentoring Program](#)



“ If I could put my finger on one thing, it's giving a young person the ability to reach out to somebody whenever they need help, or a person that can provide them with positive encouragement.

- Deliberate Discussion 2022 Non-Youth SAG member



## Host Annual Statewide Youth Advocacy Conference

Many of the young people that contributed to this project emphasized the importance of having opportunities to connect with other youth leaders within their area. Hosting a youth-led and driven conference can be a great way to create networking opportunities for young leaders within your state or territories. It is also a great way to partner with other youth programs and creates pathways for an increased youth presence within State Advisory Groups.

### *Example for Reference:*

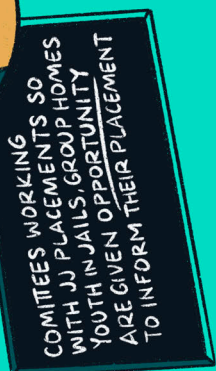
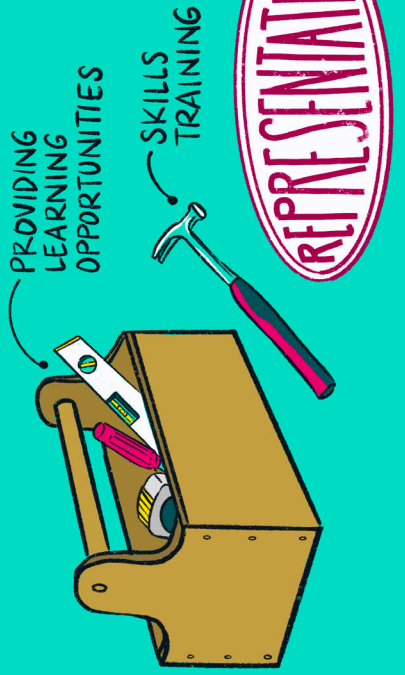
- [Youth First Initiatives](#)

“ When people come into these groups, we feel left out of the conversation because there's not enough of a connection between the youth and non-youth. Find common ground in the group and be inclusionary with the topics.

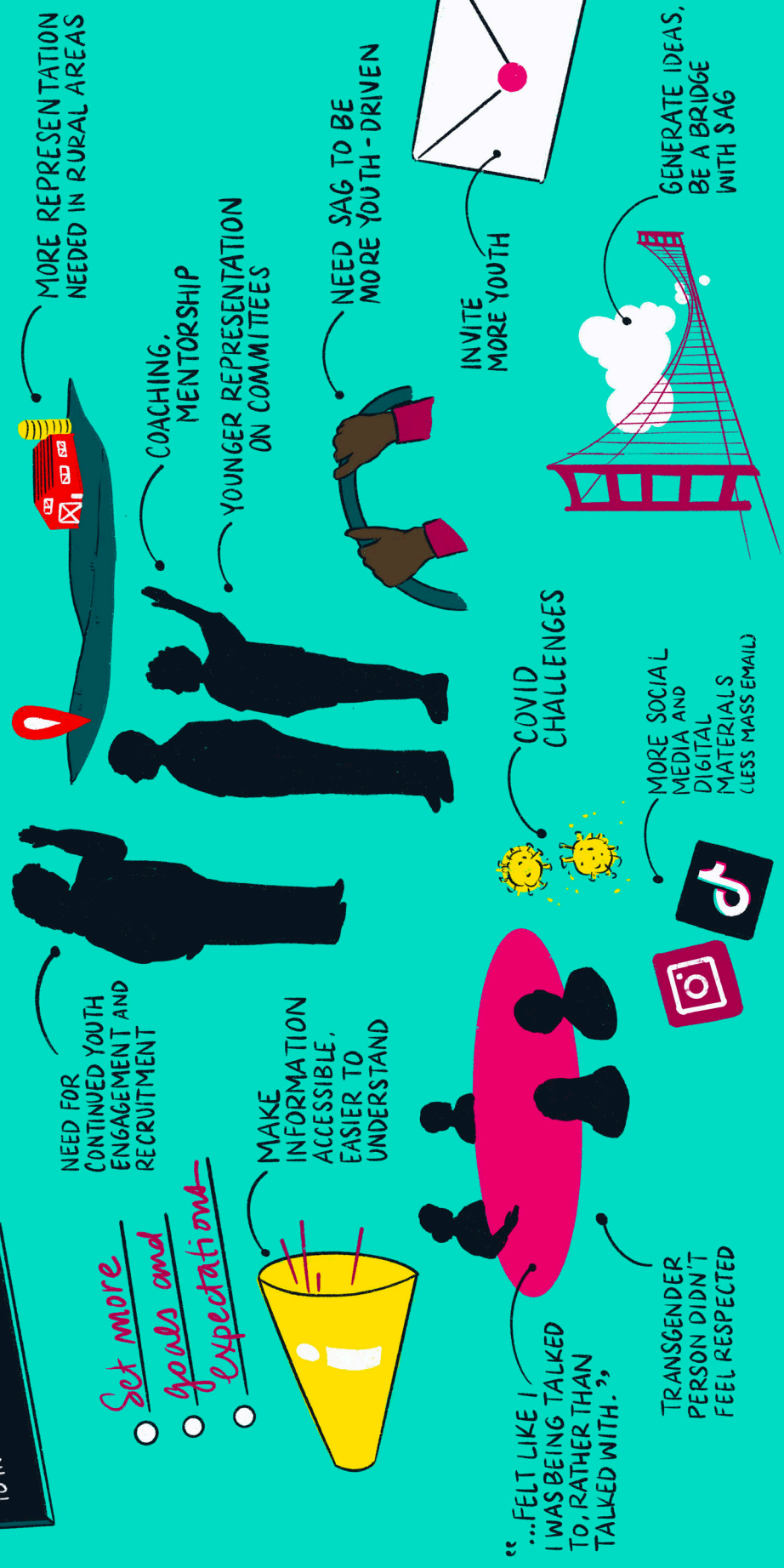
Deliberate Discussions Series 2022 Youth SAG member

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

WHAT HELPS



WHAT COULD BE BETTER?



# Increasing Engagement with Unique Populations

## Justice Impacted Communities

### Challenge:

Across the board, state advisory groups can benefit from improving their strategies for engaging with current system-involved youth. Many members expressed their state advisory groups are missing input for these communities but are committed to creating pathways to support their involvement.



### Solutions:

Build relationships with leaders within the current system and generate solutions for increased engagement. Consider reallocating funds to create sub-committees within each district/ region that meet with a group of currently justice-involved youth to elevate their voices within SAG priorities and advocacy. Do NOT use their records as a barrier to them being involved with the State Advisory Groups. Create roles for youth to engage with SAGs without completing the appointment process

“ There's not enough [ SAG members] that look like us or act like us or that are us. They all have different experiences. They all come from different backgrounds. Most of them have never been in a juvenile facility or had that experience. So it's like okay, am I going to be judged going into this space for not having the academic skills?

- Deliberate Discussion 2022 Youth SAG member

## Young People At Risk of System Involvement

### Challenge:

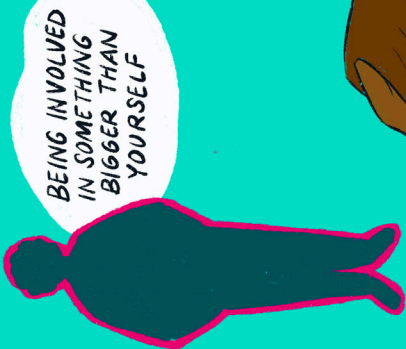
There is a lack of services for young people that do not have an active case with the system. Meaning, if they are not “in trouble” they don't qualify for support. Leadership and youth have expressed that some State Advisory Groups are not likely to fund more preventive programs due to the uncertainty of what qualifies as preventive methods; and the emphasis on funding evidence-based programs.

### Solutions:

- Increasing more preventive methods
- OJJDP should provide more guidance to states and territories to help define what qualifies as a preventive program
- State Advisory Groups should look for more opportunities to fund community-based programs, especially ones led by grassroots organizations and people with lived experience



WHAT COULD  
BE BETTER



INCREASING SUPPORT FOR JUVENILE  
JUSTICE IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

WHAT HELPS



“ Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior.

- Willie Littlechild - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

## Building Partnerships with Indigenous Communities

### Challenge:

From the Deliberate Discussion Series, we learned that there is generally a lack of representation of Indigenous young people within SAG spaces. In different states, SAG leaders are developing relationships with tribal leaders to generate solutions for their inclusion. A part of developing these relationships is acknowledging the historical role that colonization has played and its impact on current relationships. We must be willing to acknowledge the harm systems have had if we intend to develop solutions to promote more positive outcomes.

“ Native American law is one of those forgotten things. And it's not always intentional, and it's just the fact that everything in the US is rooted in colonialism. And so a lot of the time, we're left out of the conversation. To be inclusive, we need to start breaking down the colonizing systems that are in place that still hold barriers and oppress indigenous people, and then lead to more serious issues such as MMIW, or "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and Two-Spirited peoples". I think it's imperative to acknowledge that there is a colonial role at play in the grand scheme of things.

- Deliberate Discussion 2022, System Impacted Youth

### Solutions:

- Understanding how tribal law impacts juvenile justice-involved young people
- Build relationships with tribal leaders and elders to increase the involvement of Indigenous young people within State Advisory Groups
- Less carceral punishment, more accountability, and restorative justice practices (which are based upon Native teachings)
- Opening meetings with land acknowledgments while also ensuring tangible actions occur as well

“ I'm speaking from my experience as an Indigenous person, and having to deal with not only state law, but also tribal law, and what that looks like and navigating the systems put in place to protect Indigenous people and tribal sovereignty so that we can be able to interact with other Indigenous people. And so we don't necessarily have to deal with state law because tribal law sometimes takes precedence over it, especially if it's a child.

## BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+

### Challenge:

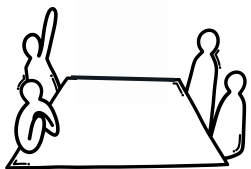
From our discussions with youth members and SAG leaders, we learned that sometimes young people don't feel represented or welcomed to be their true selves within SAG spaces. SAG leaders emphasized the lack of diversity as a challenge and affirmed their commitment to prioritizing solutions. Everyone has a role to play in making SAGs a more welcoming and affirming environment.

### Solutions:

Leadership should consider quarterly surveys or evaluations to understand how to make SAG spaces more inviting and affirming for everyone.

*Tips on creating more space for young people to feel welcomed and validated:*

- Pronoun usage
- Non-discrimination language for by-laws and other policies including youth subcommittees.
- Host discussions with SAG youth and leaders about the value of diversity and generate solutions for increasing representation within SAG spaces
- [What Helps What Harms Tip Sheet for supporting BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth by Louie Gasper](#)



“ We've had one member who is transgender...and it was very difficult for them, because they didn't inherently feel like staff respect [Them], or they felt like staff didn't like them.

- Deliberate Discussion 2022 Youth SAG Member

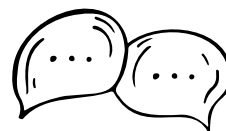
## Rural Populations

### Challenge:

For many rural areas, it is perceived that State Advisory Groups only focus on metropolitan areas in cities. This neglects a whole community of folks with a stake in their priorities. State Advisory Groups must have representation from these areas as there is usually a lack of preventive resources and an abundance of carceral facilities.

### Solutions:

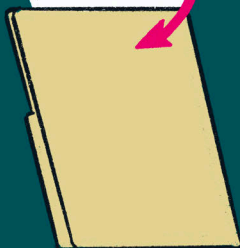
Build partnerships with local youth-serving programs and system providers to discuss strategies for increased youth participation in rural areas.



“ I think there could be more opportunities for these youth in smaller communities and rural areas. Maybe have a county advisory group who then reports to the State Advisory Group and use some of the technology we have like Zoom, and bring those kids involved from the other areas too, so we get more voices.



CASE MANAGER, PROBATION OFFICERS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS CAN REFER YOUTH TO STATE ADVISORY GROUPS



RECOGNIZE THE WORK, TRANSPARENCY ABOUT ATTENDANCE AND PAYMENT



DIRECTORY OF MEMBERS IN STATE ADVISORY GROUP



GIFT



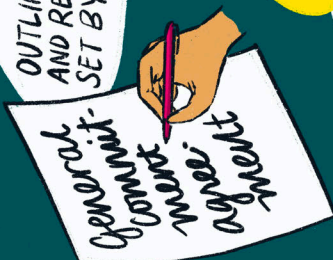
CARDS AND TRANSPORTATION TO REMOVE BARRIERS

DEFINE

## ACRONYMS

WHEN USED

OUTLINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, SET BY YOUTH



HELP YOUTH UNDERSTAND GOVERNMENT PROCESSES



FOLLOW THROUGH WITH ONLINE APPLICATIONS

YOUTH MEMBER EVALUATIONS ON SAG LED TO POLICY CHANGES AND SOLUTIONS



FOCUS GROUPS AT DETENTION CENTERS PROVIDED SUPPORT AND SUGGESTIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS SENT TO STATE AGENCIES

GOVERNOR-APPOINTED YOUTH POSITION

## WHAT COULD BE BETTER

A PLACE FOR MEMBERS WHEN THEY AGE OUT



WE LOVE TO HAVE AN IMPACT- HOW CAN WE REMOVE BARRIERS?

COMMUNITY-BASED RESOURCES MOST NEEDED BY YOUTH ARE NOT REACHING THEM

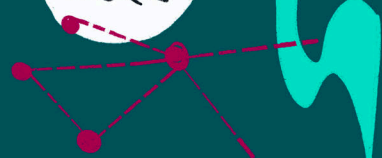


WEBSITE NEEDS UPDATING

VOICE DOESN'T ALWAYS TRANSLATE TO CHANGES



IDENTIFY AND CONNECT AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS IN RURAL AREAS



BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH TRIBES FOR PATHWAY TO MORE TRIBAL YOUTH MEMBERS

YOUNG PERSON IN EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP ROLE



BYLAWS CREATED BY YOUTH COMMITTEE

MORE AND BETTER COMMUNICATION- HOW YOUTH CAN BE INVOLVED

INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY TO BUILD COMFORT AND ENGAGE MORE YOUTH



THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS FOR SAG NEEDS TO BE RE-EXAMINED



# Youth-Adult Partnership

## Youth Voice on Communities (Y-VOC)

### Adapted Assessment

Youth MOVE National collaborated with researchers at Pathways RTC (Portland State University) to develop the assessment tool of Youth/Young Adult Voice on Communities and Councils (Y-VOC). The Y-VOC is a validated tool intended to measure support for the participation of youth and young adults in advising and decision-making on committees and councils. This assessment tool was co-developed with youth and young adults and identified the following themes for youth-driven best practices on communities and councils:

### Eight Critical Themes

**Overall Vision and Commitment:**

Are overall policies and procedures in place to support meaningful youth engagement?

**Collaborative Approach:**

Are young people treated as valued partners in the decision-making process?

**Empowered Representatives:**

Are young people supported in a way that will maximize their potential?

**Commitment to Facilitation and Support of Youth Participation:**

Is the organization investing resources to support youth voice?

**Workforce Development and Readiness to Ensure Meaningful Participation:**

Are staff trained to work collaboratively with youth and young adults?

**Participation in Developing Programming and Program Policies:**

Is there evidence young people are having an impact on how programs and services work?

**Participation in Evaluation and Ensuring Program Quality:**

Are young people engaged in how well the agency is doing its work?

**Leading Initiatives and Projects:**

Does the agency support youth and young adults to take the lead on projects they design?

# Best Practice for State Advisory Groups

The following checklist has been adapted to support State Advisory Groups' assessment and improvement of their overall partnerships with youth members. Individuals can use the checklist to identify what's missing and keep track of changes made to increase authentic partnerships with young people

## Include Youth as Equal Partners Within the Decision-Making Process

- Young people are offered the same opportunities as other committees/council members to take on leadership roles (e.g., leading meetings and being part of the executive committee, committee/sub-committee members or chairs, etc.)
- Young people's responsibilities should be documented as role/position descriptions that **(1)** outline how Youth and Young adults are expected to participate on committee/council, **(2)** describe training or coaching resources to support them, and **(3)** explain any related reimbursement, incentives, or recognition
- Young people should be involved when developing and revising these role descriptions
- The committee/council has created opportunities for young people to develop their leadership and participation skills within a community of supportive peers (e.g., *Youth and Young adults' leadership group, Youth and Young adults advisory board, Youth and Young adult's subcommittee, and leadership training*)

## Clearly Define Roles and Responsibilities for Youth Engagement Within State Advisory Groups

- Create a formal policy (Bylaws, rules, or guidelines) to ensure that young/young adult participation is equal to other members
- Young people should be included in developing this policy, and periodically updated to reflect new circumstances
- The policy is written in both the language that the young person speaks and in plain terms that are easy to understand
- Solicit feedback on participation efforts to ensure meaningful youth and young adult participation is happening
- Assessment data is gathered in a way that does not reveal young people's responses and they do not experience negative consequences as a result of giving honest feedback

# Best Practice for State Advisory Groups Continued

## **Cultivate a Culture of Partnership With Youth and Young Adults**

- The committee/council uses best practices to ensure that young people are fully involved in the committee/council's work. For example, there is plenty of time for discussion, learning, and exploring options before making any decisions
- Youth and Young adults are regularly engaged in both early work, such as choosing the issues and long-term goals to focus on, and later work, such as making decisions about how to address these issues and goals
- Committees/council makes changes based on young people's ideas about how to be more supportive of youth and young adult voice and participation
- Committee/council members and other attendees are consistently respectful and responsive to Youth and Young adults' ideas and suggestions
- The committee/council has demonstrated a willingness to act on Youth and Young adults' input and recommendations

## **Facilitate Youth Friendly Meetings**

- The committee/council has established good meeting practices encouraging young people to engage in meeting activities
  - Good meeting practices include providing meeting materials in advance, keeping meetings short and efficient, beginning with icebreakers or sharing time, explaining acronyms and jargon, providing food, and taking regular breaks
- Meetings are scheduled at times and locations that Youth and Young adults can attend

## **Create Clear Communication Pathways Between Young People and State Advisory Group Leadership**

*(Connects to 2D - Information sharing and communication)*

- There are well-defined ways that committee/council members, including Youth and Young adults, use to communicate and share relevant information outside of formal meetings
- This communication is Youth and Young adults-friendly and accessible. It provides Youth and Young adult leaders with accurate and sufficient information to support their meaningful participation on the committee/council
- Youth and Young adults have access to the same information as other committees/council members



# Best Practice for State Advisory Groups Continued

## **Increase Transparency Within Decision-Making**

*(Connects to 2E - Transparency in decision-making)*

- Decision-making processes are transparent
- When Youth and Young adults have collaborated on a decision, the committee/council shares what actions were taken
- The committee/council explains to young people how and why their participation and ideas may (or may not) contribute to system changes. For example, young people are informed if a suggestion requires a policy change involving external approvals that may delay or reject a Youth and Young adults-involved decision

## **Provide Young People Support to Promote Meaningful Participation**

- Provide Young People Support to Promote Meaningful Participation
- Young people are provided training and mentoring to understand committee/council meeting processes and to learn about topics that will be discussed
- An identified point person or mentor is responsible for providing Youth and Young adults committee/council members with information and support before and after meetings
- Meetings follow an agenda that young people have received and are prepared for
- Discussions during meetings are easy to understand, and committee/council members are encouraged to ask questions whenever they want clarification
- Expanded or new topics are not introduced without context
- Youth and Young adults committee/council members are not asked to advise on unfamiliar topics or make decisions without adequate information or preparation
- A point person or mentor provides information and support for young people during committee/council meetings and debriefing after meetings

# Best Practice for State Advisory Groups Continued

## **Develop Strategies to Promote Sufficient and Consistent Representation**

- Committee/council creates or partners with a group of young people, such as a Youth and Young adults leadership group, Youth and Young adults advisory board, or Youth and Young adults committee. Young people lead this group
- This group meets regularly and includes young people who have received services from the systems that the committee/council advises
- The young people in this group represent the diversity (e.g., racial/ethnic, geographically, gender, ability, etc.) of the youth and Young adults served by the systems that the committee/council advises
- This group provides opportunities for young people to interact and to generate ideas that the Youth and Young adults members of the committee/council can bring to the committee/council. This means that the committee/council can get the perspectives of a larger group of young people who have received services
- The Youth and Young adults committee/council members bring the ideas from this group to the committee/council meetings and report back to the group afterward

## **Address Barriers to Participation**

- Committee/council partners with a youth-/young adult-run organization to support Youth and Young adults' participation on committee/council and related activities and pay them for their efforts
- If such an organization does not yet exist, the committee/council actively works with the systems it advises and with Youth and Young adults with lived experience to develop one

# Best Practice for State Advisory Groups Continued

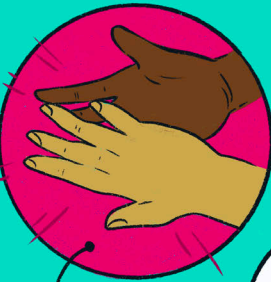
## Address Barriers to Participation Continued

- Until this kind of organization is developed, the committee/council hires someone to help support Youth and Young adults participants. This person is either a Youth and Young adults with lived experience or someone with relevant expertise selected by Youth and Young adults members of the committee/council
- The committee/council makes meetings accessible to young people by actively addressing the barriers that prevent meaningful Youth and Young adults participation. This can include meeting times, transportation, childcare needs, language barriers, meeting location, etc.
- A point person for the committee/council communicates with Youth and Young adults about the meeting details (e.g. locations, cancellations) and helps resolve barriers for youth and young adults
- Stipends or incentives for Youth and Young adults' participation adequately reflect the time Youth and Young adults invest in meeting activities. This includes preparation before and after the meeting, travel time, transportation, and lodging costs
- The committee/council works with young people to explore options for stipends/incentives that reflect young people's preferences. Youth and Young adults endorse non-monetary incentives. These incentives may include education credits for internships, recognized volunteer or community participation hours, or access to community resources through system partners

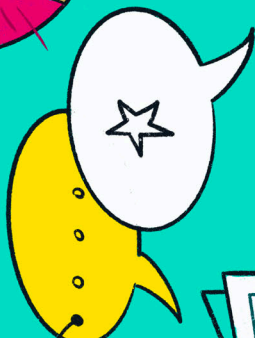
## AWARENESS and ACCESSIBILITY to SAG

## WHAT HELPS

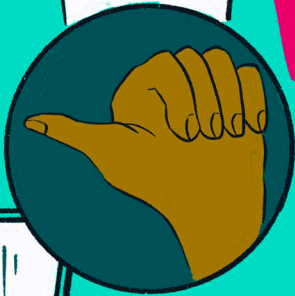
OPPORTUNITIES  
EXIST FOR ADVOCACY  
WORK



SUPPORT  
FROM NON-  
YOUTH MEMBERS



OPEN  
LINES OF  
COMMUNICATION



STAFF MEMBER  
SUPPORT IS KEY



MATERIALS  
HELP US TO  
UNDERSTAND  
BENEFITS



CONSIDER  
HOW WE PRESENT  
YOUTH, PROFESSIONAL  
CLOTHING



A SEAT AT THE  
TABLE TO MAKE  
*change*



COVERING  
TRANSPORTATION  
MAKES  
PARTICIPATION  
POSSIBLE



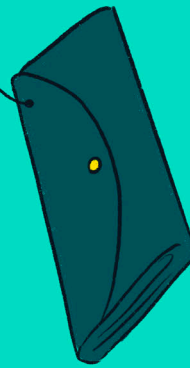
RECOGNIZE  
TRIBAL LAW  
AND SOVEREIGNTY



CONNECT ME  
WITH YOUTH THAT  
UNDERSTAND



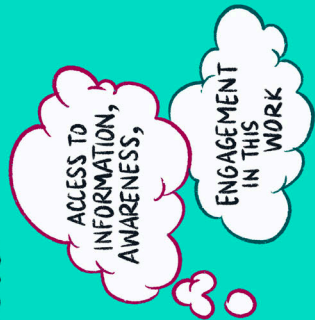
MORE FUNDING  
IN EDUCATION  
AND OUTREACH



MAKE YOUTH FEEL  
MORE INFORMED  
AND CONFIDENT IN  
THE PROCESS



SUPPORT WITH  
BUSY SCHEDULES  
SO VOICES CAN  
BE HEARD



## WHAT COULD BE BETTER



# Hart's Ladder of Youth Involvement

This assessment tool was created by Roger A. Hart and was first published in 1992. Hart's Ladder (the Ladder) serves as a tool for assessment and reflection to assist those working with youth in their efforts to strengthen youth-adult partnerships.

## Ladder of Youth Involvement

### 1. Youth Initiated and Directed

Designed and run by youth and decisions made by youth

### 2. Youth Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults

Designed and run by youth who share decisions with adults

### 3. Youth and Adult Initiated and Directed

Designed and run by youth and adults in full partnership

### 4. Adult Initiated, Shared Decisions with Youth

Minimum Youth Participation, designed and run by adults who share decisions with youth

### 5. Consulted and Informed

Designed and run by adults who consult with youth, Youth make recommendations that are considered by adults

### 6. Assigned and Informed

Youth do not initiate, but understand and have some sense of ownership

### 7. Tokenism

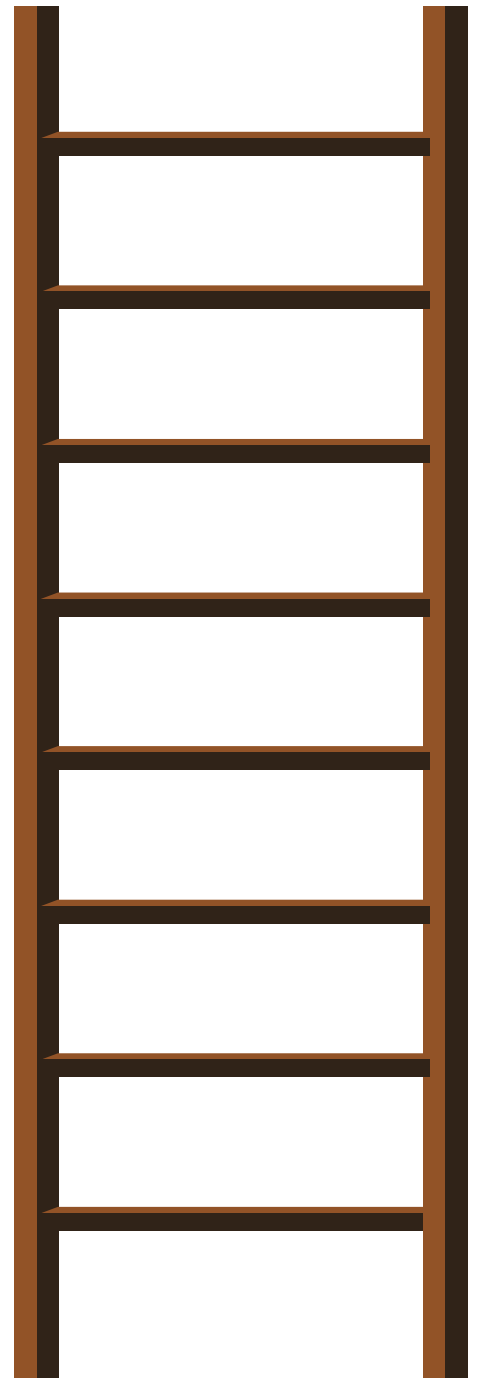
Symbolic representation by few, may not have genuine voice, may be asked to speak for the group they represent

### 8. Decoration

Adults use youth to promote or support a cause without informing youth

### 9. Manipulation

Youth are not involved in design or decisions.  
Youth involvement used by adults to communicate adults' messages



*Adapted from Hart, R. (1992).*

*Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship, UNICEF*

Adults and youth members should rate the overall youth involvement individually and discuss results as a collective. This is an opportunity to honestly understand what youth involvement looks like and work collectively towards progress

## Degrees of Participation

### 1. Youth Initiated and Directed

This step is when young people initiate a direct project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role, this rung of the ladder can be embodied by youth-led activism.

### 2. Youth Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults

This happens when young people initiate projects or programs, and decision-making is shared between young people and adults. These projects empower young people, while at the same time enabling them to access, and learn from, the life experience and expertise of adults. Youth/adult partnerships can embody this rung of the ladder

### 3. Youth and Adult Initiated and Directed

Designed and run by youth and adults in full partnership. This step is when young people initiate a direct project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role: this rung of the ladder can be embodied by youth-led activism.

### 4. Adult-Initiated Shared Decisions with Youth

It occurs when adults initiate projects or programs, but the decision-making is shared with the young people. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by participatory action research.

### 5. Consulted and Informed

Happens when young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by youth advisory councils.

### 6. Assigned but Informed

This is where young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are involved. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by community youth boards.

## Degrees of Participation Continued

### 7. Tokenism

When young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate. [This rung of the ladder reflects adultism.](#)

### 8. Decoration

Happens when young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults pretend that the cause is inspired by young people. [This rung of the ladder reflects adultism.](#)

### 9. Manipulation

It happens when adults use young people to support causes and pretend that young people inspire the causes. [This rung of the ladder reflects adultism.](#)

## Note from the Author

“ This tool should be used to evaluate how organizations are supporting youth involvement, not as an assessment to test how smart or “trained” young people are...

- Hart, Roger. (2008). Stepping back from "The ladder": Reflections on a model of participatory work with children..

[Read More](#)

The document linked above includes a report from the author addressing the misuse of the ladder and offering a reframe for people using to guide their work with young people.

## Benefits and Challenges Workshop:

This workshop aims to help participants consider the challenges and benefits of working in partnership with young people.

[Download it Here](#)

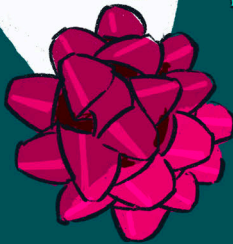
“ When young people come into these groups, we may feel left out of the conversation because there's not enough of a connection between the youth and non-youth.

- Deliberate Discussion 2022 Youth SAG Member

## INCENTIVIZING PARTICIPATION

### WHAT HELPS

GIFT CARDS,  
BUS PASSES,  
REMOVE  
BARRIERS



CERTAIN GRANTS  
PAY YOUTH  
FASTER

WHAT  
COULD  
BE  
BETTER

MORE  
STATEWIDE  
REPRESENTATION



SCHOOL  
CREDIT, VOUCHERS,  
GIFT CARDS FOR  
SHOPPING,  
APPRENTICESHIPS

LESS WORD-OF-MOUTH—  
MORE  
ACCESSIBLE  
PATHWAYS



WE CAN'T FULLY  
COMPENSATE  
YOUTH...

...PRE-COVID WE  
USED THE CONFER-  
ENCE AS INCENTIVE

## THE GREATEST CHALLENGE

LACK OF  
DIVERSITY AND  
REPRESENTATION



OPPORTUNITY  
TO SHOW YOUTH  
VALUE AND  
IMPACT

NEED FOR MORE

INNOVATION

HIERARCHAL  
BATTLE BETWEEN AND  
LEADERSHIP AND  
YOUTH SAG  
MEMBERS



MEETING PEOPLE WHERE  
THEY ARE—  
REGARDLESS OF  
EXPERIENCE

RESPECT YOUTH,  
RECOGNIZE  
HARDSHIPS

WORK PAST  
PREVIOUS STRAINS,  
BUILD COMMUNITY

DO A  
BETTER JOB  
OF  
LISTENING



UTILIZING PANELS,  
FORUMS, RESTORATIVE  
JUSTICE TO DO  
CONTROVERSIAL  
WORK

## SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

RURAL COMMUNITIES  
CAN REPORT TO  
STATE ADVISORY  
GROUPS



MORE SUPPORTIVE  
ADULTS TO SUPPORT  
THE INVOLVEMENT  
OF YOUTH IN GROUP  
HOMES/DETENTION



UTILIZING  
VIRTUAL WORLD  
AS A TOOL  
(ZOOM, FACE-  
TIME, ETC)



MAKING  
ASSUMPTIONS  
BEFORE BEING  
GIVEN A  
CHANCE



# Youth Engagement Readiness

“As Gregory Lewis succinctly states, “diversity is like being invited to a party, inclusion is being asked to dance, and belonging is dancing like no one's watching.” In other words, it's not enough to simply have more seats at the table for marginalized folks if they don't feel safe, or believe they need to act like someone they're not in order to fit in.

- Boudouris, Yiorgos. (2021). *It's More Than a Seat at the Table: Where Diversity and Inclusion Efforts Fall Short*

## Diversity Equity Inclusion Belonging Barrier Analysis and Assessment Tool

Youth MOVE National supports organizations, agencies, and communities seeking support with analyzing their Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging practices through our contracted consulting services. This barrier analysis tool was originally developed by Louie Gasper for Youth Peer Support and implementation teams to think about Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging to enhance and improve employment and hiring practices. We have adapted the tool to apply to State Advisory Groups. This will examine 5 key areas: Recruitment, Retention, Training and Development, Youth-Adult Partnership, and State Advisory Group Culture. If your State Advisory Group is interested in having us support their growth.

Please reach out to [info@youthmovenational.org](mailto:info@youthmovenational.org)



## Spectrum of Adult Attitudes

In the early 1980s, sociologist William Lofquist began challenging adults to rethink how they view and work with young people. Lofquist developed the Spectrum of Adult Attitudes that places attitudes towards young people into three categories:

- Youth as objects
- Youth as recipients
- Youth as partners

These attitudes influence the ability of youth-adult partnerships to be effective. The attitudes must be addressed to ensure an environment for authentic youth voice and engagement to thrive.

## ENGAGE RURAL AREAS USING ZOOM

# MENTORSHIP

# WHAT COULD BE BETTER

## WHAT SHORT TERM DIFFERENCES CAN WE MAKE? (LEGISLATION TAKES TOO LONG)

**FLEXIBILITY  
ON FUNDING  
USAGE**

**MORE ENGAGEMENT WITH  
INCARCERATED/SYSTEM-  
INVOLVED YOUTH**

QJDF PROVIDE  
GUIDANCE AND  
FUNDING IN  
TRIBAL  
COMMUNITIES

**MORE GUIDANCE,  
TRAINING, AND TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
COMMUNITIES OF COLOR,  
UNDER REPRESENTED  
GROUPS, LGBTQ+**

**INCENTIVES  
IN SCHOOL**  
CREDIT, GIFT CARDS,  
APPRENTICESHIPS

STIPEND TO SUPPORT  
YOUTH PARTICIPATION

LEADERSHIP THROUGH  
COMMUNITY MEMBER,  
PASTOR, PUBLIC  
SERVANT

**PRIORITIZE TRAINING  
AND ASSISTANCE TO  
NON-PROFITS FOR  
SYSTEM-INVOLVED  
YOUTH**

**PRIORITIZE  
LIVED EXPERIENCE  
OF CROSSOVER  
YOUTH, SHARING  
OF A RICH  
TAPESTRY**

## TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

**PROGRAMS,  
REC CENTERS,  
LIBRARIES  
NEEDED**

# Spectrum of Adult Attitudes

Lofquist, 1989

Adults know what is best for young people and control situations in which they allow them to be involved

**Youth as Objects**

It is the young person's responsibility to take advantage of what adults have designed for them.

Adults retain control over the majority of decisions, letting young people make trivial decisions because it will be "good for them."

**Youth as Recipients**

Young people have the responsibility to practice for when they become "real people."

Adults respect young people as having something significant to offer, supporting and encouraging their full involvement.

**Youth as Partners**

Young people have responsibility for making meaningful decisions and for working as equal partners with adults.

*Adapted from Authentic Youth Engagement: Youth-Adult Partnerships (2012).  
Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Issue Brief # 3*



[Assessment for Completion](#)

## IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in many public participation plans.

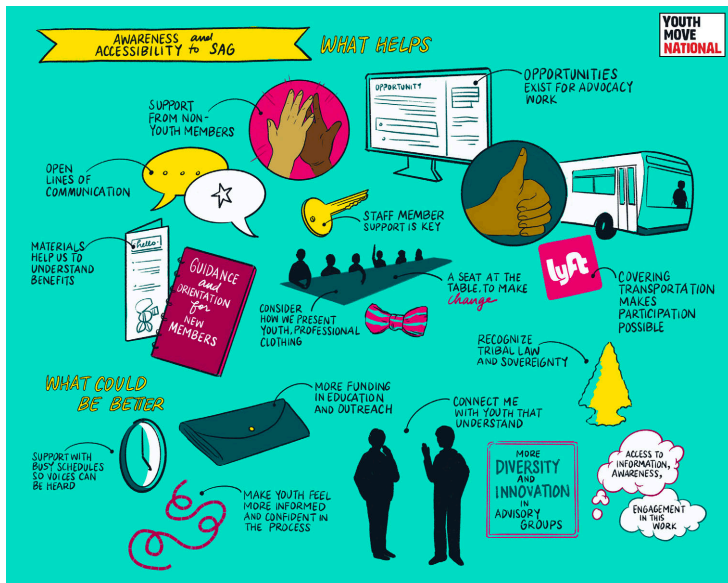
[Download it Here](#)

“ Youth-adult partnerships can level the whole playing field, because we don't have all the answers. We give it a fancy title but we forget that it's about committed relationships, built on trust, uncompromising honesty, and love. These relationships with youth provide adults expert input and validation that improves our practices and our policies while establishing a sense of mutuality and respect.”

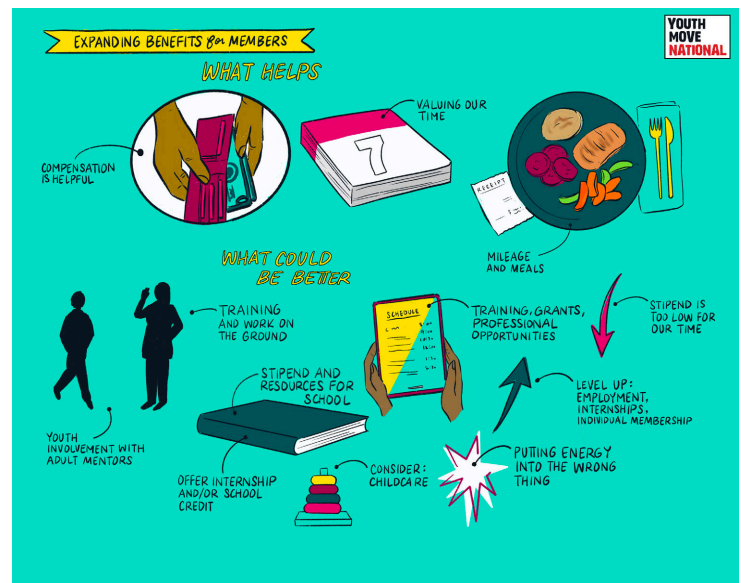
Marty Zanghi, Maine Youth Opportunities Initiative

# Deliberate Discussion 2022 Illustrations

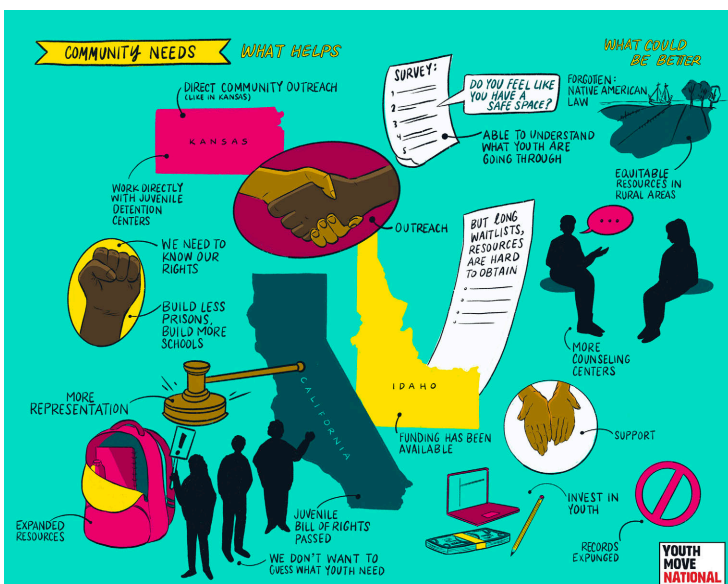
Created By: Yen Chin-Azzaro



Awareness and Accessibility to SAG  
Youth Deliberate Discussion 2022  
Illustrations



Expanding Benefits for Members  
Youth Deliberate Discussion 2022  
Illustrations

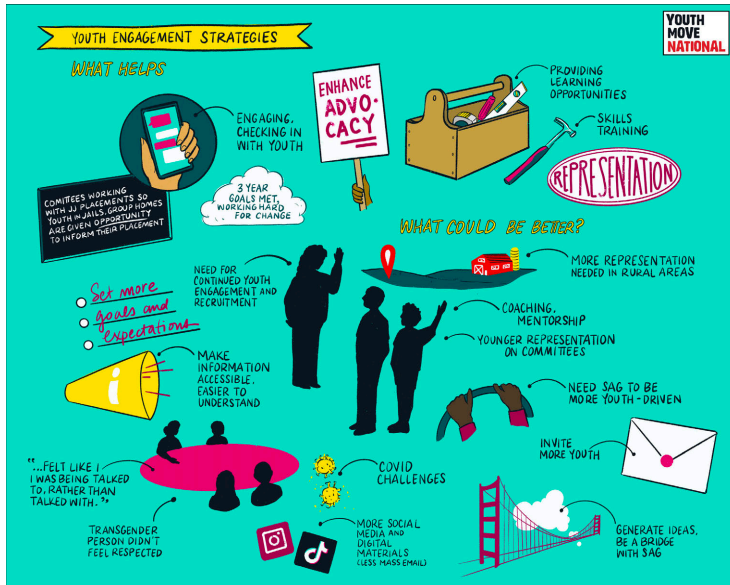


Community Needs  
Youth Deliberate Discussion  
2022 Illustrations



# Deliberate Discussion 2022 Illustrations

Created By: Yen Chin-Azzaro



## Youth Engagement Strategies Youth Deliberate Discussion 2022 Illustrations

## Increasing Support for Juvenile Justice Impacted Communities Youth Deliberate Discussion 2022 Illustrations



## Youth Engagement Strategies Non-Youth Deliberate Discussion 2022 Illustrations

# Deliberate Discussion 2022 Illustrations

Created By: Yen Chin-Azzaro



Community Needs  
Non-Youth Deliberate  
Discussion 2022 Illustrations

Incentivizing Participation  
Non-Youth Deliberate  
Discussion 2022 Illustrations





Advancing Evidence.  
Improving Lives.

