

TIPS FOR YOUTH



Get Organized

Set goals. It is important to establish your purpose as a group because it will help you figure out what you want to accomplish. If you do not know what the purpose of your group is, then nobody else will. Developing an elevator pitch you can give to other people is a quick and easy way to determine and communicate why your group exists and the long term goals you wish to accomplish. It is also extremely helpful to establish both long and short term goals for your group. By setting goals, you give your group something to work towards.

Develop a meeting schedule. Consistency is important, especially when working with a new group. By establishing a set meeting schedule, students will be able to block out time in their week dedicated to your meetings. This will help identify a core group of student leaders who are committed and willing to work.

Create meeting agendas. Creating meeting agendas (current meeting and next meeting) is an easy way to ensure that meetings are on task, and productive. It is also very important that everyone in the group receives a copy of the agenda before the meeting begins. This will allow time for students to form thoughts or questions they have beforehand. Having an agenda ready will minimize wasted meeting time because everyone will already know what needs to be accomplished. It is also useful to

assign tasks to be completed in between meetings, so that students are also actively working outside of meetings.

Identify a core group of youth leaders.

Many times there will be tons of people who care and want to help, but not everyone is willing or able to commit the same amount of time. Consequently, it is imperative to have a core group of 4-5 youth who are willing to take the lead. Consistency is important so even if the other youth rotate in and out of the big group, this core group will always be there and the rest of the group can rely on them to know what's going on.



Get Support

Find adults to support your initiatives.

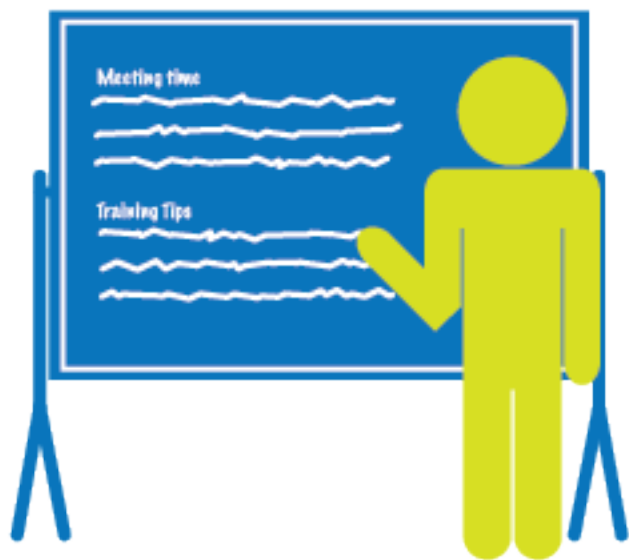
Adults are important for youth groups. Adults are a way to access resources, in addition to being great resources themselves. Look for adults who are willing to listen to you and your ideas. Make sure they don't take over - youth-driven projects or groups need to have youth leading them. Ask teachers, administrators, or any other adults that you trust to help you organize your group and complete your project.

Set expectations - for involved youth, for adult allies.

It's important that while you're determining the logistics of your group, you all make sure that you know what's expected of you



and what's expected of everyone else as well. Whether it's getting to meetings on time, making sure that your part of the project is completed by a certain date, or only being allowed to miss a meeting once a month, it's up to you. You should also set expectations for adults so that they can help you better by knowing exactly what they're expected to do, and so that they know their limits in your project.



Sustain Your Work

Find regular meeting space & time. In staying organized and on task, it's fundamentally important that you find a space that you know is accessible to you at a time that works. It's better if it's the same time, at a given interval to meet so that your group knows what's going on and where to go. For instance, you could meet every Tuesday at 4pm at your community center, or your favorite teacher's classroom (with approval, of course).

Develop rotating leadership, to keep up momentum/maintaining “institutional memory.” If you have a “leader” of your group such as a president or vice-president, make sure that you train and show the newer people of the group how to do the job. You want to create a system that can thrive even after the founders and leaders have left the group. You could do this by electing two presidents: one who is an older group member, and one who is a younger group member who will be

there long after the older one has left. The younger president is trained by the older president so they know exactly how to run the show.

Documentation. When you have many meetings, or very long meetings, it can be difficult to remember every comment or idea that's come up in the past. Make sure you get it all down on paper, and then make sure that you have a safe place, or an organized group member, that's willing to keep the files of the group. Being swamped in paperwork is no fun, but what's worse is trying to recall the brilliant lightbulb that went off over someone's head two weeks ago.

