EVALUATION OF THE YOUTH INNOVATION FUND: REPORT ON PHASE I

Christina Russell
Dwayne Smith
Kolajo Afolabi
Leslie M. Anderson

April 2006

Prepared for the National Service-Learning Partnership
at the Academy for Educational Development
With support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Contents

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2003, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded one of its signature 75th anniversary grants to the National Service-Learning Partnership at the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to establish the Youth Innovation Fund (YIF), an initiative designed to empower diverse groups of young people to assert themselves as active citizens and create lasting change in their communities. Through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process that generated 215 applicants, the Partnership selected eight sites around the country to collaborate with a consortium of community-based organizations to create Youth Boards to address public issues and problems. Each of the eight sites received $100,000 a year for two years to create Youth Boards composed of a diverse group of youth and adults.

Over the course of the first two years of the YIF, Youth Boards organized a host of tasks and activities intended to educate both Youth Board members and the public about issues and conditions in their communities. Youth Boards engaged in community analysis, grantmaking, local outreach and cross-site networking to better understand and use multiple action pathways to youth engagement. Each Youth Board funded and supported local youth-led civic action projects addressing root causes of pressing community issues. Youth Boards also used knowledge gained during these foundational stages of the initiative to inform a long term impact plan for their communities, which they will implement over the next phase of the YIF. These activities were designed to: (1) increase youth voice in their communities, (2) build youths' civic competency and commitment and prepare them to contribute to democratic life by becoming involved in local decision making and problem solving, and (3) engage underserved youth in the civic process, particularly those youth who have not traditionally been afforded leadership opportunities.

Early in this process, AED contracted with Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (PSA) to conduct a four-year evaluation of the YIF. The evaluation is designed to address two main questions:

- What **conditions, policies, and supports** are necessary to promote (a) the successful establishment and operation of local youth-led boards, (b) the involvement of young people in youth-directed civic action using a service-learning framework, (c) increases in the supply and quality of service-learning, and (d) the local endorsement and adoption of youth involvement in local civic affairs?

- What **results** do local sites foster through the establishment and operation of youth governing boards? That is, to what extent do local projects, through their efforts associated with the YIF,

influence participating youth, service-learning practice, and local institutional culture regarding youth leadership and the provision of service-learning?

The first two years of the evaluation, or Phase I, primarily addressed the first research question about necessary conditions, policies, and supports for Youth Boards. During Phase II of the YIF, Youth Boards will implement the impact plans developed during Phase I, with the intent of spurring increased participation by and recognition of young people as leaders in the civic and political life of their cities. As a result, the Phase II evaluation will focus largely on the second research question, while also following-up on issues that emerged during the initiative's first phase.

For Phase I of the evaluation, in spring 2004, PSA researchers interviewed site coordinators, consortium partners, and both youth and adult members of the Youth Boards. PSA also surveyed site coordinators, consortium partners, and youth and adult board members in spring 2004 and spring 2005. A summary of the Phase I evaluation findings appears below.

Youth Board Structure and Management

The Phase I implementation timeline was ambitious, and several site coordinators felt that it was overwhelming, particularly in the early stages of the YIF. Nevertheless, with few exceptions, sites hired well-qualified site coordinators who could connect with youth because they were relatively young themselves. In addition, they recruited adult board members who were young and could relate to the youth on the boards. With respect to youth members, the Youth Boards reported moderate success in recruiting members who were representative of the communities the boards served. Nevertheless, Youth Board members believed that there was room to improve the diversity of their boards. For example, youth members were least likely to feel strongly that youth were representative of the community in terms of their economic backgrounds. Youth Boards were also challenged to recruit youth who were "non-traditional" leaders and were not deeply engaged in existing opportunities for youth in their communities.

The Work of the Youth Boards

With regard to their work on the Youth Boards, youth members reported learning a great deal from the various tasks and activities in which they participated as part of their board member responsibilities. For example, many Youth Board members found the rallies to be a successful way to kick off the initiative and fortify board members' enthusiasm for the initiative. The community mapping and power analysis exercises—while difficult to implement

within the local community contexts—generally succeeded in informing youth about the most salient issues in their communities. In addition, the cross-site training networks sponsored by the YIF helped Youth Board members develop a broader understanding of the goals and approaches of the YIF as well as to see their work in a larger national context. Both youth members and site coordinators, however, wanted more training in grant-making and grant-monitoring. In addition, although the Youth Board members developed a strong interest in youth-generated media, the added value of video documentation to the work of the YIF and the local Youth Boards was not always clear. Some sites also reported being challenged by the technical complexities of the media tasks. Finally, Youth Boards inconsistently engaged in activities to reflect upon and process their experiences.

Meeting the ambitious goals of the national YIF initiative required a significant time commitment on the part of Youth Board members. Perhaps as a result of this busy schedule, sites struggled to maintain a full roster of youth members in Phase I of the initiative. Some sites, however, developed policies or incentives to maintain active participation among youth members, and to encourage high attendance at board meetings. In Year 2, slightly more youth members reported taking responsibility for board-related tasks than was the case in Year 1 of the initiative. The youth who continued to participate on the Youth Boards through the spring of each year demonstrated a strong commitment of time and effort to the work of the Youth Board.

Defining the roles of the consortium partners and of the adult members of the Youth Boards was a common challenge across the eight sites. Some sites strived to maintain a balance between the goals of the YIF initiative and the interests and goals of their lead agencies and consortium partners. Site coordinators also felt challenged by the structure of the boards, and said that they were not sure who they were accountable to because there was no clearly defined oversight for their work locally, and they sometimes received contradictory feedback from consortium partners. Consortium partners also struggled with positioning the Youth Boards in the local context of youth programming and initiatives, particularly in the sites that had a long history of youth engagement prior to the YIF. For the most part, the consortia addressed this positioning challenge by emphasizing a unique aspect of the Youth Board. In many communities, youth to youth social change philanthropy was a new concept. Perhaps as a consequence of the difficulty in defining a role for the adult board members relative to that of consortium partners, sites had difficulty retaining adult board members' active participation.

The youth-led focus of the YIF initiative meant that many of the adult board members and consortium partners had to adapt their approaches to contribute effectively to the board. Rather than telling youth what they needed to know and be able to do, adult board members and consortium partners found themselves learning how to mentor youth in subtle ways that break through

traditional economic, racial, and class barriers. Overall, youth expressed appreciation for this mentoring role of the adults affiliated with the boards, whether consortium partners or adult board members.

Youth Board Experiences and Outcomes

YIF Effects on Youth Board Members

In Phase I, the activities of the YIF initiative were designed to help youth members of the boards better understand their communities, gain leadership skills, increase their civic awareness, gain confidence about youth voice in the community, and better appreciate the value of youth-adult partnerships. Data from surveys and focus groups of participating youth suggest that the YIF initiative was successful in helping youth gain these skills and attitudes in its first phase. Examples include the following:

- The Youth Boards exposed youth members to diverse individuals and experiences that broadened their perspectives on their communities.

- Over time, more youth members took initiative in leading or helping to lead various board activities. In focus group sessions, youth described becoming more comfortable viewing themselves as leaders.

- Youth members reported increased civic knowledge and awareness as a result of their participation on the Youth Boards.

- Participation in the YIF did not significantly change Youth Board members' perceptions of youth-adult relationships: youth members already had positive perceptions of adults when they began their board membership.

- Youth and adults learned from each other. Adults offered youth guidance and provided access to their connections and experience in the community and youth offered adults a different perspective on the problems communities confront.

YIF Effects on Communities

- As a result of the boards' work in the community, many organizations began to reevaluate their commitment to youth voice and have included more youth involvement in their operations.

- The mini-grant projects benefited communities by affecting the lead youth who worked on the projects. After participating in the mini-grant project, lead youth indicated that they gained valuable skills, felt more confident about making change in the community, and became more aware of issues in the community.

Overall, the first phase of the YIF initiative was successful in helping youth better understand their communities, gain leadership skills, increase their civic awareness, gain confidence about youth voice in the community, and better appreciate the value of youth-adult partnerships. Over time, more youth members took initiative in leading or helping to lead various board activities and grew more comfortable viewing themselves as leaders. Ultimately, youth and adults learned from each other. Adults offered youth guidance and provided access to their connections and experience in the community and youth offered adults a different perspective on the problem that communities confront. With these successes behind them, the YIF sites are ready to move forward into Phase II of their work, during which they will begin to implement the long-term impact plans for youth engagement developed at the end of Phase I. In these plans, each Youth Board identified three to four campaigns specific to their community that are geared towards increasing and institutionalizing effective service-learning and opportunities for meaningful youth civic engagement, thus addressing the long-term goals of the YIF.

I. Introduction

In the summer of 2003, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded one of its signature 75th anniversary grants to the National Service-Learning Partnership at the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to establish the Youth Innovation Fund (YIF). Through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process that generated 215 applications, the Partnership selected eight cities around the country to collaborate with a consortium of community-based organizations to create Youth Boards to empower diverse groups of young people to assert themselves as active citizens and create lasting change in their communities. Each of the eight sites received $100,000 a year for two years to create Youth Boards composed of a diverse group of youth and adults.

Over the course of the two years of Phase I, Youth Boards organized a host of tasks and activities intended to educate both Youth Board members and the public about issues and conditions in their communities. Youth Boards engaged in community analysis, grantmaking, local outreach and cross-site networking to better understand and use multiple action pathways to youth engagement. Each Youth Board funded and supported local youth-led civic action projects addressing root causes of pressing community issues. Youth Boards also used knowledge gained during these foundational stages of the initiative to inform a long term impact plan for their communities, which they will implement over the next phase of the YIF. In addition, these activities were designed to: (1) increase youth voice in their communities, (2) build youths' civic competency and commitment and prepare them to contribute to democratic life by becoming involved in local decision making and problem solving, and (3) engage underserved youth in the civic process, particularly those youth who have not traditionally been afforded leadership opportunities.

In Phase I, which spanned the initiatives first two years, the Youth Boards tackled an ambitious implementation timeline. In the first few months, the Youth Boards formalized their infrastructures, completed recruitment and selection of their board members, and organized a public youth rally to generate local interest in their work. Soon after, the Youth Boards began implementing a series of Phase I activities to create understanding of YIF's goals and to provide a common timeline and programmatic structure for the program nationally, as well as to establish a foundation for the skills that youth members would need to successfully carry out their work. Specifically, the Youth Boards conducted community mapping and power analysis activities to identify the root causes of the most salient issues affecting their communities and to understand the formal and informal power structures therein. To document the process, youth collected video footage of their work and engaged in activities to reflect upon and evaluate the process. In addition, youth members received training from consortium partners, adult board members, and outside experts to increase their capacity to recruit, select, and monitor youth-led projects in their community. Board

members also attended several cross-site training networks, which contributed to boards' capacity building and allowed sites to share information about best practices.

With a solid infrastructure in place, boards developed RFPs to solicit youth-led projects in issues ranging from school improvement, teen health and well being, and drug use and prevention to discrimination and diversity and increasing student voice in schools. In the first phase of the project, the eight boards awarded 69 mini-grants of $1,500 to $2,500 each. After their involvement in Year 1 of the initiative, youth members of the boards, as well as youth grantees, reported enhanced leadership skills, increased civic awareness, increased confidence about youth voice, and an increased appreciation of youth-adult relationships.

Early in this process, AED contracted with Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (PSA) to conduct a four-year evaluation of the YIF. The evaluation was designed to address two main questions:

- What **conditions, policies, and supports** are necessary to promote (a) the successful establishment and operation of local youth-led boards, (b) the involvement of young people in youth-directed civic action using a service-learning framework, (c) increases in the supply and quality of service-learning, and (d) the local endorsement and adoption of youth involvement in local civic affairs?

- What **results** do local sites foster through the establishment and operation of youth governing boards? That is, to what extent do local projects, through their efforts associated with the YIF, influence participating youth, service-learning practice, and local institutional culture regarding youth leadership and the provision of service-learning?

Phase I of the evaluation focused primarily on addressing the first research question about conditions, policies, and supports for Youth Boards. During Phase II of the YIF, Youth Boards will implement the impact plans developed during Phase I, with the intent of spurring increased participation by and recognition of young people as leaders in the civic and political life of their cities. As a result, the Phase II evaluation will focus largely on the second research question, while also following-up on issues that emerged during the initiative's first phase. This report describes the results of Phase I of the evaluation.

YIF Mission

The overarching goal of the YIF is to support emerging youth leaders in their efforts to improve the quality of life in their communities through civic action innovations. That is, YIF seeks to:

- Catalyze youth-directed civic action innovations that can serve as a springboard for similar efforts in other communities;
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of youth philanthropy boards in fostering youth-directed civic innovation with support from a consortium of key institutional stakeholders;
- Increase and refine service-learning practice to make it more youth-driven and civic-focused;
- Create a national network of highly diverse youth leaders for service-learning;
- Generate new knowledge about how young people can use "multiple action pathways" in service-learning; and
- Advance systemic changes in youth-serving institutions and communities to foster the practices, structures, and policies that support young people's effective participation in civic and political life.

In short, the YIF attempts to energize and mobilize the relatively untapped resource of youth-directed civic action to help young people contribute to the nation's civic infrastructure and build a foundation for a lifelong civic competency and commitment.

YIF Boards

In June 2003, the National Service-Learning Partnership selected eight communities from 215 applicants to participate in the YIF initiative and create model Youth Boards. The RFP for the YIF highlighted five criteria in selecting the eight sites:

- Quality of ideas, vision and goals for propelling and sustaining youth-directed civic action innovation through service-learning in both school and community institutions;
- Commitment of senior leadership within each partner organization of the proposed consortium to empower young people as leaders

and problem-solvers, including increasing opportunities for youth participation in meaningful civic and organizational decision-making;

- Depth of experience of proposed consortium of partner organizations with the action pathways of the YIF, including youth philanthropy, youth governance, youth social entrepreneurship, youth organizing, and youth media;

- Participation of a strong and diverse cadre of youth leaders representing a broad cross-section of the community who can work together effectively inside and outside local institutions;

- Capacity of individual partner organizations and the proposed consortium to overcome systems barriers and build public will for structural change that fosters greater youth participation in local institutions.

The final eight sites were selected from across the nation, and represented a range of environments, types of communities, and levels of experience with youth leadership and youth philanthropy. The eight sites selected to participate in the YIF initiative were in Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Mississippi; Hampton, Virginia; Nashville, Tennessee; Portland, Maine; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco, California; and Ypsilanti, Michigan.

A site coordinator led each Youth Board, managing the site's overall operations. Each board was linked to the community through its consortium partners, which were youth-oriented, community-based organizations or institutions that worked with the board on a wide range of activities. Typically, 20 youth from the community and five adult members served on each board. The following briefly describes the various players in the Youth Board network.

Site Coordinators

Full-time site coordinators were responsible for the day-to-day management of each board and for recruiting youth and adult board members. They were typically recruited and hired by the lead agency that applied for the YIF grant, in collaboration with other partner organizations. In some sites, founding youth members of the boards also interviewed and helped select their site coordinator. The role of the site coordinator was multi-faceted. Coordinators engaged youth in the implementation of the YIF, and guided Youth Boards through the process of learning about their communities, social change philanthropy, and civic action. Site coordinators were also responsible for building relationships with and generating support for the YIF among adult board members and consortium partner organizations. To fulfill these multiple

responsibilities, site coordinators were generally well-versed in youth-adult partnerships, had the ability to connect with young people and promote their leadership, and were able to work effectively with organizational and institutional stakeholders.

Consortium Partners

Consortium partners typically included three or four local organizations or institutions with a proven track record and commitment to empowering youth as active citizens. They were invited to participate because their organizational expertise or networks could provide the Youth Boards with knowledge based on prior experience and access to local resources. Ideally, at least one partner organization had experience and expertise in using service-learning to engage youth in community action. Most importantly, the consortium partners had the ability to work with other partner organizations and with the board members in achieving the site's goals.

Adult Board Members

Each board had up to five adult members, who had a background and expertise in working with youth in the community. The site coordinator and consortium partner organizations generally identified prospective adult board members, who often had pre-existing relationships with the organizations involved in launching the Youth Boards. Adult board members were strategically recruited to provide diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives to help Youth Boards in key areas.

Youth Board Members

One of the boards' main goals was to recruit demographically diverse groups of youth, ages 12-19. Youth members were selected to reflect the diversity of their communities with respect to race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, peer groups, and school performance. In particular, boards reached out to youth who had not traditionally been afforded leadership opportunities—young people from families, neighborhoods, and cultures that lacked resources and power; young people whose leadership potential had been overlooked by school, community, and government leaders; and young people who regarded more customary leadership venues as irrelevant or unappealing.

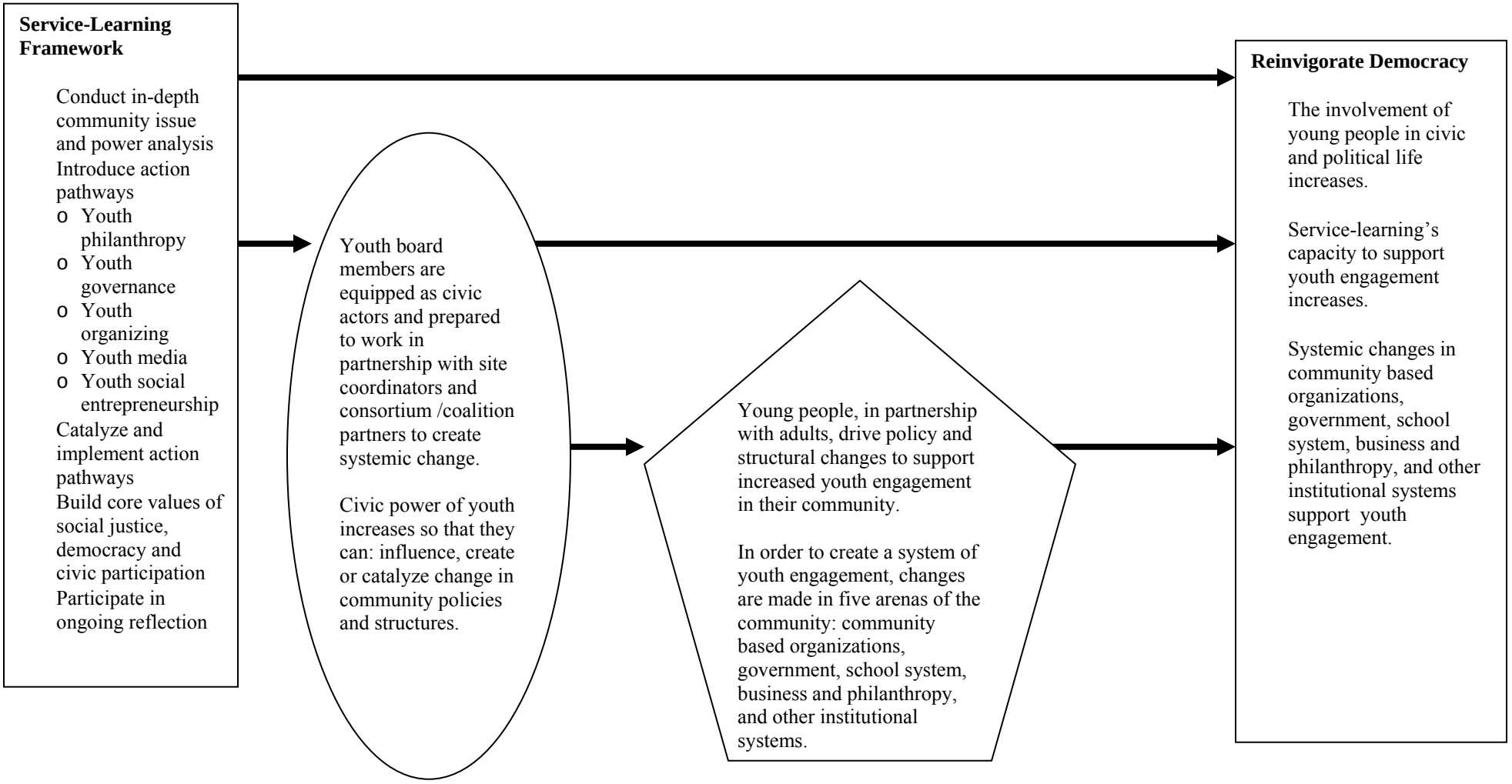
YIF Theory of Change

The YIF's central goal is the development and promotion of youth civic engagement, as illustrated in Exhibit 1. It uses a service-learning framework to promote youth civic experience and learning and instill in youth the values of social justice, democracy and civic participation. In the YIF context, service-learning goes beyond its traditional emphasis on connecting and integrating with schools' academic curriculum. Service-learning encompasses youth-directed community action that aims to promote both civic improvement and also intentional learning and growth in students' understanding of civic and political issues.

Youth civic engagement is essential in a vibrant democracy because it promotes increased public engagement in civic action, the improvement of civic institutions (as engaged youth stimulate and implement civic change), and deep personal commitments to civic life and community change (as young leaders mature into adult leaders). The YIF is structured around three long-range strategic priorities: (1) to reinvigorate democracy by fostering youth civic engagement; (2) to strengthen service-learning's capacity to build youth engagement; and (3) to catalyze institutional change to foster youth civic engagement.

In Phase I, the YIF took the first steps towards achieving these goals through the formation and operation of youth governing boards that worked to increase the supply and quality of service-learning through a variety of pathways, including youth to youth social change philanthropy, youth governance, youth organizing, youth media, and youth social entrepreneurship. Through ongoing reflection and learning activities and partnerships with adult allies, Phase I of the YIF initiative began to equip youth participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to, in the long-term, influence change in community policies and structures. In Phase I, philanthropy also served as an effective focus for Youth Boards because it leverages financial power to convene, motivate, and develop local civic strategies. If optimally designed and implemented, local projects supported by the YIF may be expected to promote measurable change in (1) the civic knowledge, attitudes, skills and actions of the young people participating in the initiative, (2) the relevance and quality of service-learning practice in strengthening effective citizenship, and (3) the opportunities for youth civic engagement in local institutions, systems, and communities.

Exhibit 1
W.K. Kellogg Youth Innovation Fund
Theory of Change



Data Collection

From September 2003 to August 2005, PSA collected data for Phase I of the YIF evaluation. To gather background information and deepen its understanding of the initiative, PSA researchers attended YIF cross-site training networks, including the kick-off meeting in Washington, D.C., in August 2003, the youth media training in New York City in December 2003, and the cross-site training networks held in Orlando, Florida, Nashville, Tennessee,, and San Francisco, California (in March 2004, August 2004, and February 2005, respectively). PSA researchers also engaged in on-going communications with the national YIF team and periodic conversations with each site coordinator.

In addition, each site selected a youth evaluation liaison to coordinate with PSA researchers. These evaluation liaisons received an honorarium of $250 for each year in which they served as liaison, and one liaison was invited to participate in an internship in the PSA offices in July 2005. Throughout Phase I of the YIF initiative, the evaluation liaison was responsible for providing PSA researchers with key documents and data about their Youth Board (e.g., rosters, mini-grant RFPs, and recruitment materials) as well as for assisting with setting up interviews during site visits in spring 2004, and coordinating survey administration at their site in spring 2004 and spring 2005.

Data collected through site visits and surveys during Phase I included:

- ***Spring 2004 site visit interview data.*** In each of the eight sites, PSA researchers interviewed site coordinators, Youth Board members, consortium partners, and adult board members.

- ***Spring 2004 and Spring 2005 survey data.*** With the assistance of evaluation liaisons, PSA surveyed each of the key stakeholder groups engaged in the work of the Youth Boards.

    - **Youth members of the Boards.** In spring 2004, 103 youth from across the eight sites responded to a survey about their experiences on the Youth Boards. In spring 2005, 99 youth from eight sites responded to the survey. This represented a response rate of 80 percent in Year 1 and 83 percent in Year 2. Fifty-seven youth responded to the survey in both years.

    - **Site coordinators.** Eight of nine site coordinators responded to a survey in spring 2004, when one site had two co-site coordinators. Nine of ten site coordinators responded to a survey in spring 2005, when two sites had co-site coordinators.

- **Consortium partners.** Twenty-five consortium partner representatives from seven of the eight sites responded to a survey in spring 2004; 27 representatives from seven sites responded in spring 2005.

- **Adult board members.** In spring 2004, a total of 14 adult board members from seven of eight sites responded to the survey. In spring 2005, PSA received 15 surveys from adult board members in seven of eight sites.

Organization of the Report

The remainder of this report summarizes the evaluation findings for Phase I of the Youth Innovation Fund initiative. Chapter 2 describes the management and structure of the Youth Boards, focusing on the characteristics of the site coordinators, consortium partners, adult board members, and youth members. Chapter 3 discusses the work of the Youth Boards, including the implementation, quality, and effectiveness of board activities intended to prepare youth members for the work of awarding mini-grants, as well as Youth Boards' work related directly to awarding and administering the mini-grants themselves. Chapter 4 concludes the report by analyzing the experiences of the Youth Boards in implementing Phase I of the YIF initiative, helping to answer questions about the Youth Boards' successes and challenges in fulfilling their intended goals. Chapter 5 concludes the report, summarizing the findings and presenting a set of recommendations for YIF leadership and for individual sites as they move into Phase II of the initiative.

II. Structure and Management of the Youth Boards

As originally conceived by the national YIF leadership, a consortium of three to four community organizations were to help establish each new Youth Board. In addition, a site coordinator would oversee a Youth Board's everyday functions. The Youth Board was to consist of about five adult members and 20 youth members, representing the diversity of the community. The YIF initiative emphasized that the boards were to be youth-led, with the adults helping to guide and support board activities.

Through mail surveys, the evaluation collected information about the demographic composition of the Youth Boards, their adult members, youth members, consortium partners, and site coordinators. The evaluation also collected survey and interview data on the organizational structure and management of the Youth Boards.

Site Coordinators

The national YIF initiative required that each Youth Board hire a full-time site coordinator to mentor the youth members of the board, oversee the work of the boards, and provide an administrative infrastructure for the Youth Board. The role of the site coordinator was multi-faceted and integral to the success of the Youth Boards. Coordinators engaged youth in the implementation of the YIF, and guided Youth Boards through the process of learning about their communities, social change philanthropy, and civic action. Site coordinators were also responsible for building relationships with and generating support for the YIF among adult board members and consortium partner organizations. In order for coordinators to fulfill these varied roles, the YIF Request for Proposals said that site coordinators should be well-versed in youth-adult partnerships, be able to successfully connect with young people and foster youth leadership, and be able to work effectively with organizational and institutional stakeholders in the community.

Several sites experienced turnover in site coordinators during Phase I of the initiative; site coordinators in four sites left their positions before the end of Phase I. Site coordinators generally left their positions to pursue other education- or youth-related job opportunities, or to pursue their own education. Additional changes in site leadership were anticipated between Phase I and Phase II.

Sites configured their site coordinator positions in differing ways. The site in Portland, Ore., for example, chose to employ two co-site coordinators in both years, splitting the responsibility of running the board between an adult and a college-age youth. In Year 2, San Francisco informally adopted a similar arrangement. As a result, the analyses that follow describe 12 different site

coordinators who responded to the survey, including eight site coordinators from Year 1 and an additional four site coordinators who were new to the YIF in Year 2.

With few exceptions, sites hired site coordinators who were relatively young themselves and whose professional experiences prepared them for their roles with the Youth Boards. Across both years of the initiative, two of the 12 site coordinators who responded to the survey reported being between 20 and 24 years old, seven of the 12 site coordinators were between 25 and 29 years old, and only three site coordinators reported being over 30. The site coordinators also tended to be white women. Out of the 12 responding site coordinators, 10 were female and only two were male. Eight of the 12 site coordinators reported being White or Caucasian, three reported being Black or African American, and one reported being American Indian or Native American.

All 11 site coordinators who reported their educational background had at least a 4-year college degree and five of the 12 site coordinators had a master's degree or higher. An additional three had completed some graduate work short of a master's degree.

Site coordinators reported varied experience working with youth prior to the YIF initiative. Eleven of the 12 site coordinators had at least one year of prior experience as youth workers. In addition, three had experience as classroom teachers and three as social workers. Only one site coordinator reported no prior professional experience working directly with youth. PSA also computed the estimated total number of years of prior experience working with youth for each site coordinator by summing their number of reported years in various positions: four of the 12 site coordinators had fewer than five years of prior experience, five site coordinators had five to ten years of experience, and three site coordinators had more than 10 years of experience working with youth.

Consortium Partners

The YIF required each of the eight sites to partner with three or four local organizations with experience and commitment to empowering youth as active citizens. Consortium partners were invited to participate because their organizational expertise or networks could provide knowledge, experience, and access to local resources. Some consortium partners had a commitment to service-learning, while others had a track record with youth empowerment strategies, including youth philanthropy and leadership. Consortiums were formed to represent a diverse set of institutions as well as to provide the Youth Board access to both formal and informal power structures within the community. As a result, typical consortium partners for a Youth Board included the local school district, other local government institutions, and community-based

agencies, as illustrated in Exhibit 2. In each site, one partner organization served as the lead agency and fiscal agent for the Youth Board.

A total of 35 representatives of consortium partner organizations responded to a survey in Phase I of the YIF initiative from seven of the eight sites, representing 31 of the 36 YIF partner organizations. As Exhibit 3 illustrates, these partners most frequently responded that they represented a community-based organization (24 percent), a local school district (24 percent), or a college or university (21 percent). In six of the seven sites, at least one of the consortium partners represented a community-based organization and at least one partner represented a school district. At least one partner represented a college or university in three of the seven sites.

Reflecting specifications for consortium partners set out by the national YIF initiative, across the seven sites that responded to the survey, most partners reported that they became involved in the consortium as a result of their experience in the action pathways (or strategies) of the YIF and because of their ability to provide access to local resources. In particular, Exhibit 4 shows that 43 percent of consortium partners reported that they became involved because of their access to community resources, 37 percent reported that they became involved because of their experience in service-learning, and 34 percent reported that their recruitment stemmed from their organization's history of youth engagement.

In all seven of the reporting sites, at least one consortium partner reported that they became involved because of their access to community resources. In six of the seven sites, at least one consortium partner was able to provide specific technical skills to the board, had connections to key community power players, had a history of youth engagement, or had a role in the community issues important to the Youth Board. At least one partner organization had prior experience in service-learning in five of the seven sites.

Exhibit 2
Summary of Phase I Consortium Partners, by Site

Type of Consortium Partner	Chicago	Cleveland	Hampton	Nashville	Portland, ME	Portland, OR	San Francisco	Ypsilanti
School District	Chicago Public Schools	Cleveland School District	Hampton City Schools		Portland Public Schools	Portland Public Schools		Ypsilanti Public Schools
Local University		Delta State University Foundation/Delta Center for Culture and Learning*				Portland State University		Eastern Michigan University
Community Organization	Mikva Challenge Constitutional Rights Foundation Illinois Center for Violence Prevention	Bolivar County Community Action Agency Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce	Alternatives, Inc.* InSync Partnerships Hampton Coalition for Youth United Way of Virginia Peninsula	Oasis Center* Girl Scout Council of Cumberland County Community Impact! Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee	Portland Partnership* KIDS Consortium United Way of Greater Portland	Portland Schools Foundation* KBOO Community Radio	Youth Leadership Institute* Infusion One	Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation* Neutral Zone
Local Government Agency			Hampton Parks and Recreation	Mayor's Office of Children and Youth		Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families, and Community City of Portland	San Francisco Youth Commission	

Lead partner

Organization has its own youth advisory board

Exhibit 3
Organizational Affiliation of Phase I Consortium Partners (n=34)

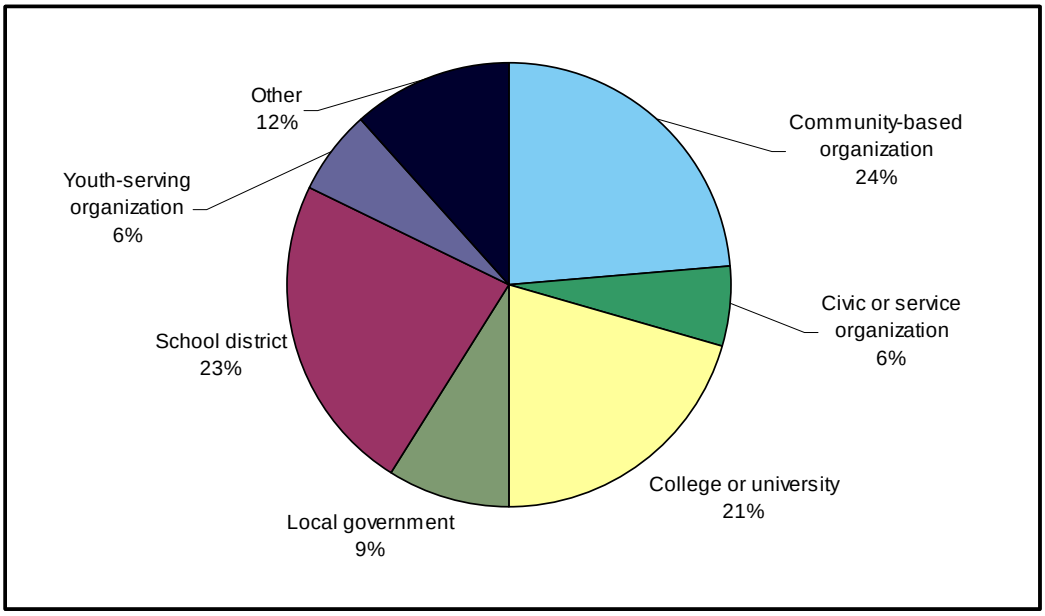
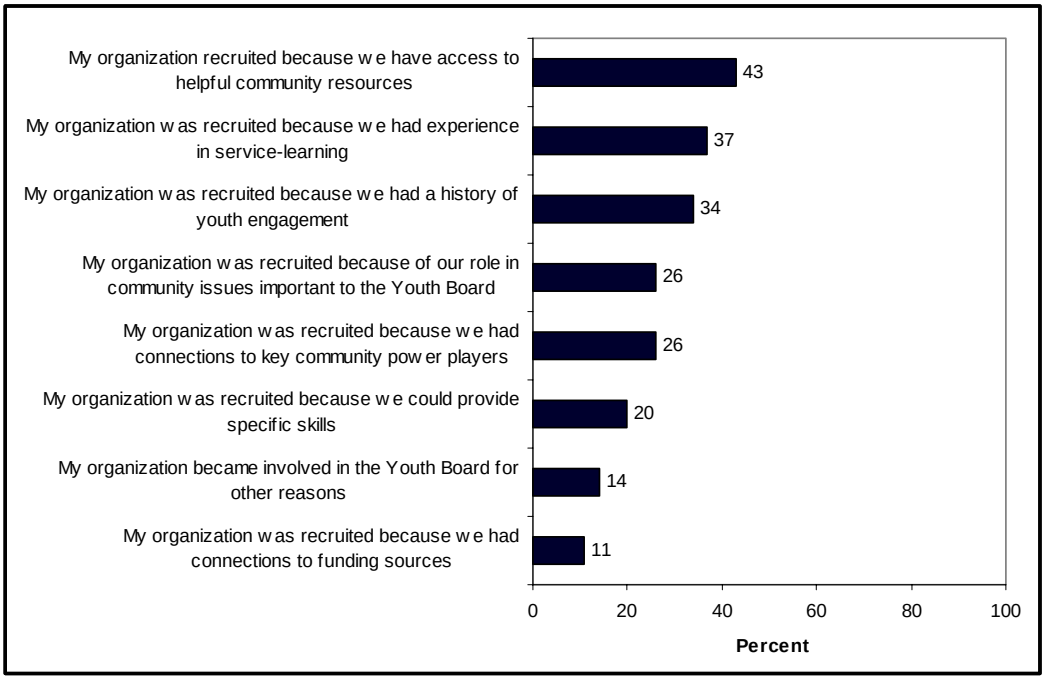


Exhibit 4
Reasons for Consortium Partner Involvement, Phase I (n=35)



Support for the YIF Youth Board required an institutional commitment on the part of a consortium organization. Seventy-one percent of consortium representatives who responded to the survey said that their involvement in Youth Board activities was part of their regular job responsibilities. In addition, consortium partners demonstrated prior commitment to youth engagement, with 91 percent reporting that their organization supported youth engagement to a great extent or to some extent prior to their involvement with the Youth Board. In all seven of the reporting sites, at least one of the consortium partners reported that their organization supported youth engagement. In five of the sites, at least one partner reported that their Youth Board involvement was part of their regular job responsibilities.

Adult Members of the Youth Boards

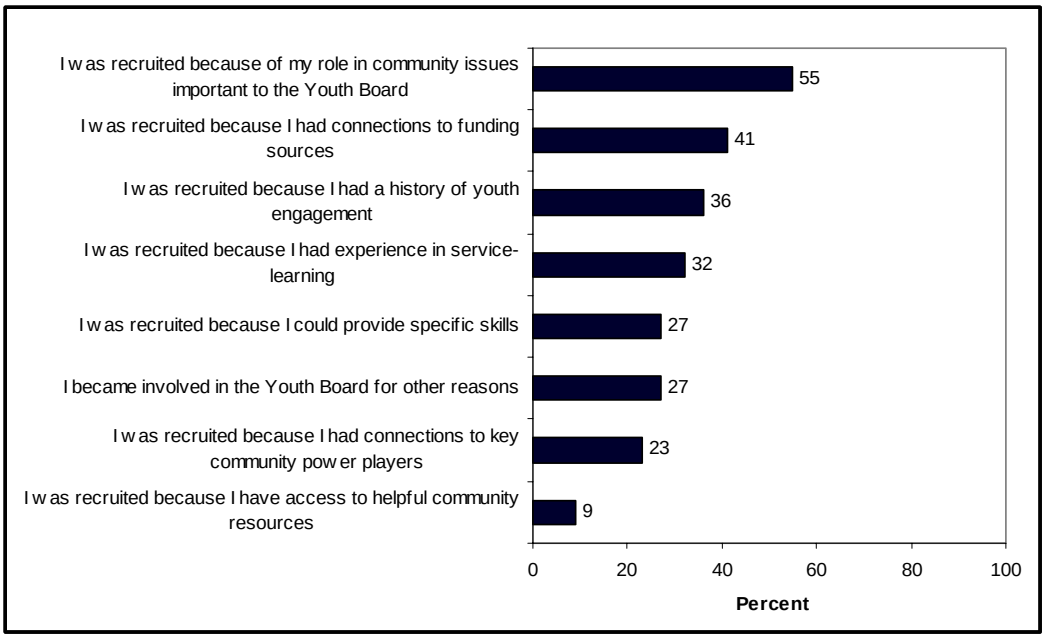
The national YIF initiative sought five adults to participate as members of each of the eight sites' Youth Boards, highlighting the YIF commitment to genuine youth-adult partnerships. Each site strategically recruited adult board members to provide diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives to work directly with the Youth Boards through meetings and on-going learning opportunities.

Over the two years of Phase I, 23 different adult board members from the eight sites responded to a survey. Across the eight sites, only 19 percent of the adult board members reported that their involvement on the Youth Board was part of their regular job responsibilities. In addition, 18 percent reported no organizational affiliation, while 14 percent reported that they were affiliated with a college or university, and 14 percent with a local business. The most frequently reported affiliation was "other," suggesting that adult participation on Youth Boards appealed to individuals who had a personal interest in the issues their board addressed, even if their professional pursuits were not in youth- or community-related fields. In four of the sites, no adult board members reported an organizational affiliation. Similarly, involvement on the Youth Board was not part of the regular job responsibilities of any responding adult member in four of the sites.

This individual experience and expertise reflects the adult board members' reported reasons for being invited to become a member of the Youth Board, as illustrated in Exhibit 5. Across the eight sites, 55 percent of adult board members reported that they were recruited at least in part because of their history with youth engagement; 41 percent had access to helpful community resources; 36 percent reported that they played a role in community issues important to the Youth Board; and 32 percent had experience in service-learning. These responses did not vary substantially by site. In all eight sites, at least one adult board member became involved because they had access to helpful community resources or had a history with youth engagement. In six of the sites, at least one adult member was recruited because they had connections to key community

power players, and in five of the sites at least one adult reported having prior experience in service-learning. In addition, 44 percent of the adult board members across sites reported having experience working or volunteering with youth prior to their involvement with the Youth Board.

Exhibit 5
Reasons for Adult Board Member Involvement, Phase I
(n=35)



The demographic characteristics of adult members of Youth Boards suggest that most sites tended to recruit relatively youthful adult members. Exhibit 6 summarizes the characteristics of adult board members. Across the eight sites, 23 percent of adult board members reported that they were 20 to 24 years old; another 23 percent reported being between the ages of 25 and 29. Thirty-two percent of adult board members were at least 40 years old. Most of the older adults were from a single site, which chose to select a more experienced cadre of adult board members than did other Youth Boards. In only three sites did any adult board members report being at least 40 years old; in contrast, in five sites all adult board members reported being under 30.

Overall, the average educational attainment levels of the adult board members suggest that the sites selected highly qualified adults to share their expertise with the Youth Boards. Forty-one percent of adult board members had completed a Master's degree or higher, and an additional 32 percent had done some graduate work short of a Master's. At least one responding adult board

member in all eight sites had done at least some graduate work. At least one adult member in six of the sites had completed a master's degree.

Exhibit 6
Adult Board Member Characteristics
(n=22)

Adult Board Member Characteristics	Percent of Adult Board Members
Race/Ethnicity	
White or Caucasian	50
Black or African American	36
Latino/a or Hispanic	5
American Indian or Native American	5
Other or mixed race	5
Gender	
Female	59
Male	41
Age	
20-24	23
25-29	23
30-34	18
35-39	5
40-44	18
Over 45	14
Highest Educational Attainment	
High school or GED	5
Some college	9
Two-year college degree	9
Four-year college degree	9
Some graduate work	32
Master's degree or higher	41

Youth Members of the Youth Boards

According to the YIF initiative, the purpose of having adult board members and consortium partners on Youth Boards was to connect the boards to key institutions and stakeholders in the community, to provide Youth Boards with access to training and expertise relevant to their work, and to encourage intergenerational collaboration between youth and adults. The national YIF

initiative stressed, however, that Youth Boards would be youth-led and not led by the site coordinators, consortium partners, or adult board members.

The national YIF initiative encouraged each of the eight local Youth Boards to recruit approximately 20 youth members. The youth members of the Youth Boards were to represent the diversity within their respective communities in terms of race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, peer groups, and school performance. The initiative also encouraged Youth Boards to reach out to youth who did not participate in traditional student leadership roles in an effort to bring a different perspective regarding ways to increase youth voice in their communities.

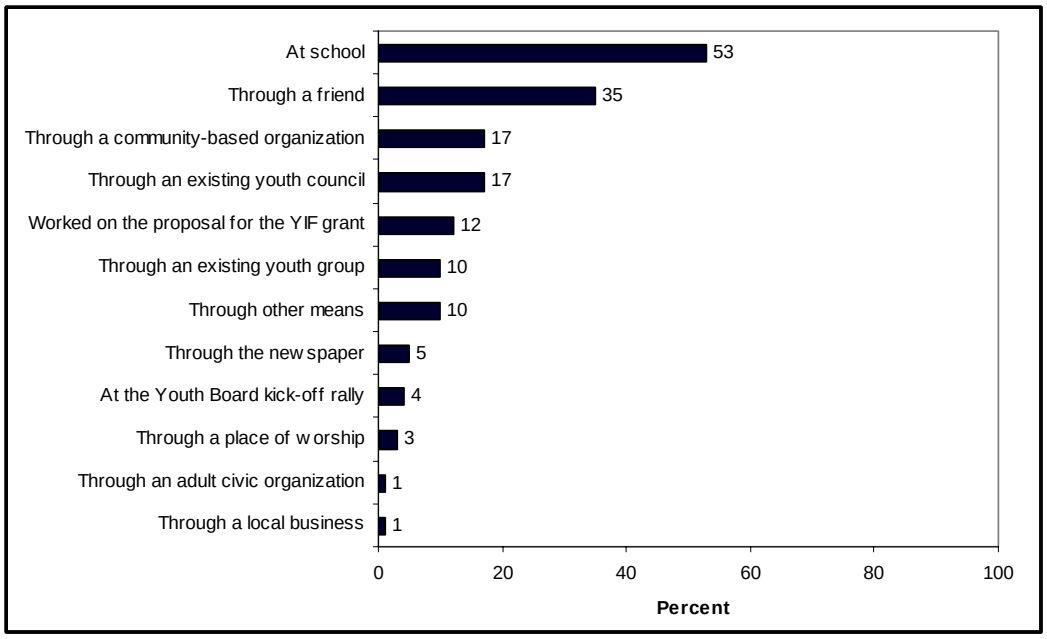
The Youth Boards employed a variety of recruitment strategies in their efforts to achieve a membership that was representative of their community. Sites most frequently recruited youth through schools (all 8 sites), existing youth councils (7 sites), local community-based organizations (6 sites), and at the fall 2003 Youth Board kick-off rallies (6 sites). These rallies were designed to inform the local community about the boards' upcoming work, energize board members and other community youth about civic engagement and youth voice, and potentially recruit adult board members and mini-grant applicants. One site coordinator described the recruitment process as "pounding the pavement" in order to "get name recognition and form long-term connections to help us recruit in the future" with existing community groups and youth-serving organizations. In an effort to reach out to typically disenfranchised youth, some sites also employed creative, informal recruiting methods. For example, one site coordinator described a "street outreach" process of going to places in the community where youth congregated to speak with them about becoming a member of the Youth Board.

All eight sites developed a formal application procedure for youth interested in joining the Youth Board; in seven sites the application process was competitive, with more youth expressing interest than were invited to join. In Year 1, all eight sites required youth to participate in an interview with Youth Board stakeholders as part of the application process. Five of the sites required that prospective youth members be interviewed by current Youth Board members, and three sites required that prospective youth interview with both consortium partners and adult board members. In addition, seven sites required interested youth to complete a written application.

A total of 103 youth from all eight sites responded to a survey in Year 1; 99 youth responded in Year 2. The number of youth respondents in each site ranged from 7 to 22 in Year 1 and 7 to 16 in Year 2. Youth survey responses, summarized in Exhibit 7, suggest that recruiting youth through school and their existing social and extra-curricular networks was most effective. Across Years 1 and 2, youth most frequently reported learning about the Youth Board at school (53 percent), through friends (35 percent), and through youth councils (17

percent) and existing community-based organizations (17 percent). There was some variation among sites in how they recruited youth. Some youth in all eight sites found out about the initiative through friends; youth in seven sites found out about it at school. However, youth learned about the board through an existing youth council in only two of the sites.

Exhibit 7
Youth Board Member Recruitment Methods, Phase I
(n=139)



The Youth Boards reported general success in recruiting members who were representative of the communities the boards served. At the start of Phase I, consortium partners and site coordinators engaged in the task of recruiting youth who reflected the diversity within their local communities to participate on Youth Boards. According to the YIF model, Youth Boards intentionally tried to engage young people who had not traditionally been given leadership opportunities, including young people from families, neighborhoods and cultures that lack resources and power; young people whose leadership potential was overlooked by school, community, and government leaders; and young people who have regarded more customary leadership venues as irrelevant or unappealing. As one Youth Board member described:

> *In the beginning, with the four original founding members, we decided that we wanted variety… so it's not just straight-A students. We want to target everyone because that one person that's quiet in class or doesn't get along with other people, that person might have the answer to everything or [may have] the big ideas.*

As shown in Exhibit 8, in both years of Phase I, the Youth Boards consisted primarily of youth ages 16 and above who were in the upper high school grades. Overall, in Year 1 of the initiative, across the eight sites, Youth Board members ranged in age from 11 to 21 years old; in Year 2, Youth Board members ranged in age from 13 to 21 years old. In Year 1, 9 percent of Youth Board members reported being under 15 years old, compared to 3 percent in Year 2. In general, Youth Board members tended to be older in Year 2, with 67 percent being 17 or older, compared with 55 percent in Year 1. In part, this reflects the aging of some of the original members of the Youth Boards from Year 1. This pattern might also reflect the difficulty in engaging younger members in the boards' fairly complex and independent work. There was some variation between sites in terms of whether younger youth or older youth participated on the Youth Board. Only four of the eight sites had any members under 15 years old, and only four sites had any members older than 18.

Across both years of Phase I, the majority of Youth Board members were either white or Caucasian (42 percent in Year 1, and 46 percent in Year 2), or black or African American (37 percent in Year 1 and 34 percent in Year 2). In Year 1, 11 percent of Youth Board members reported being Asian American, as did 12 percent in Year 2. More girls than boys were Youth Board members in both years: 61 percent of youth members in Year 1 reported that they were female, as did 64 percent in Year 2. The demographic characteristics of Youth Board members varied across sites. In three of the eight sites, at least half of the youth were white or Caucasian in both years. In contrast, in two of the sites, fewer than a quarter of the youth reported being white or Caucasian. In three of the sites, more than two-thirds of youth in both years were female. Other sites were more gender-balanced.

Exhibit 8
Youth Board Member Characteristics

Youth Board Member Characteristics	Percent in Year 1 (n=102)	Percent in Year 2 (n=96)
Race/Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	42	46
Black or African American	37	34
Asian American	11	12
Latino/a or Hispanic	2	1
American Indian or Native American	1	1
Other or mixed race	7	5
Gender		
Female	61	64
Male	39	37
Age		
Under 15	9	3
15	15	12
16	22	19
17	34	30
18 and above	21	37

Despite their achievements in creating demographically diverse boards, Youth Board members believed that there was room for improvement. In both Years 1 and 2 of the initiative, about two-thirds of youth reported that youth members represented a diversity of peer groups and different neighborhoods in the community "to a great extent." About half felt that youth had varying levels of experience in youth leadership and were racially/ethnically representative of the community "to a great extent." Youth were least likely to feel strongly that youth were representative of the community in terms of their economic backgrounds. However, youth perceptions of how representative their board was varied by site. In six sites, at least half of the responding youth felt that their board represented the diversity of peer groups in their community in Year 1; youth in all eight sites reported this diversity in Year 2. In contrast, in both Year 1 and Year 2, less than half of the youth reported that youth members were representative of the community in terms of their economic backgrounds in six sites. Also, in four sites less than half of the youth reported that the boards were representative of race/ethnicity both years. Finally, less than half reported that youth members were representative of the schools in the community in four sites in Year 1 and in five sites in Year 2.

In general, site coordinators agreed with the assessment that the Youth Boards were moderately representative. Overall, the sense was that the Youth Boards had been more successful in achieving diversity than were other youth organizations in the community. One site coordinator reported, "It's more diverse than most groups I've seen." However, site coordinators were also critical of their own success in achieving diverse boards and reaching out and retaining hard-to-reach youth populations. One site coordinator noted the challenge of reaching out to underrepresented communities. "There's a lack of racial and cultural diversity [on our board]. We've been able to get it, but not keep it."

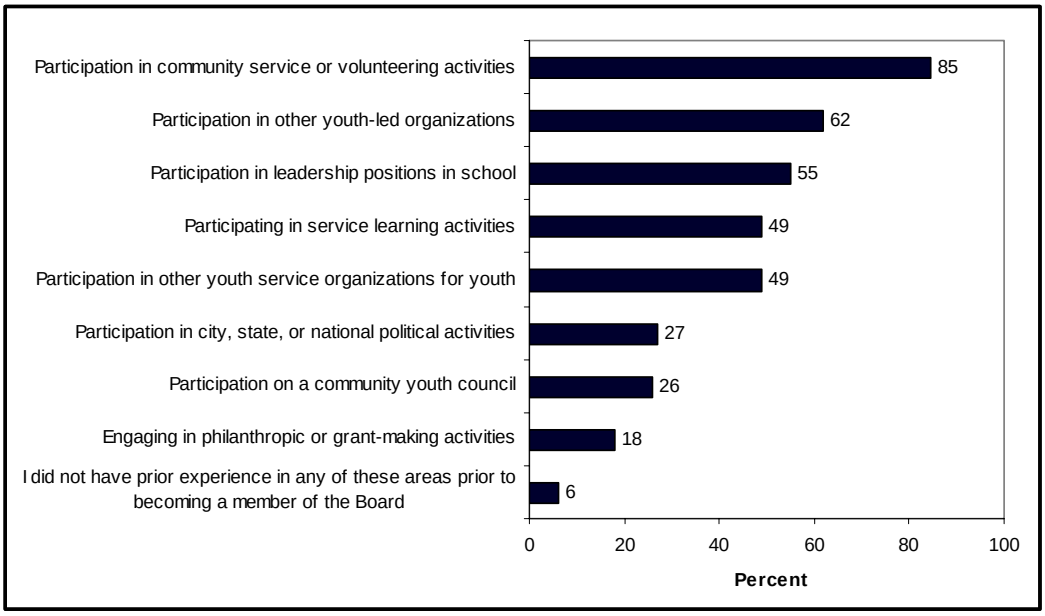
In particular, Youth Boards were challenged to recruit youth who were "non-traditional" leaders and were not deeply engaged in existing opportunities for youth in their communities. Exhibit 9 illustrates the prior leadership experiences that youth reported. Across both Year 1 and Year 2, Youth Board members most frequently reported having prior experience in community service or volunteering activities (85 percent), with other youth-led organizations (62 percent), and in leadership positions in school (55 percent). Only 6 percent of Youth Board members reported not having any prior leadership or community engagement experience prior to becoming a member of the board.

In seven sites, more than three-quarters of responding youth had prior experience in community service or volunteering activities; in the eighth site nearly two-thirds of youth had this experience. In all eight sites, more than half of responding youth reported some prior experience with youth-led organizations. More than half the responding youth in seven of the eight sites had prior experience in school leadership positions. In only one site did more than 10

percent of youth report not having any prior leadership or community engagement experience.

However, on average, the youth members of the Youth Boards were less likely to have prior leadership experience such as YIF offered. Across the eight sites, 26 percent of the youth reported that they had participated on a community youth council prior to the YIF initiative, and only 18 percent reported having previously engaged in philanthropic or grant-making activities. Youth in some sites were more likely to report experience in these areas than in other sites. In three of the sites, more than a quarter of the youth had participated on a different community youth council prior to joining the YIF initiative. Similarly, in three sites more than a quarter of youth had previous experience with grant-making activities.

Exhibit 9
Prior Experience of Youth Board Members
(n=135)

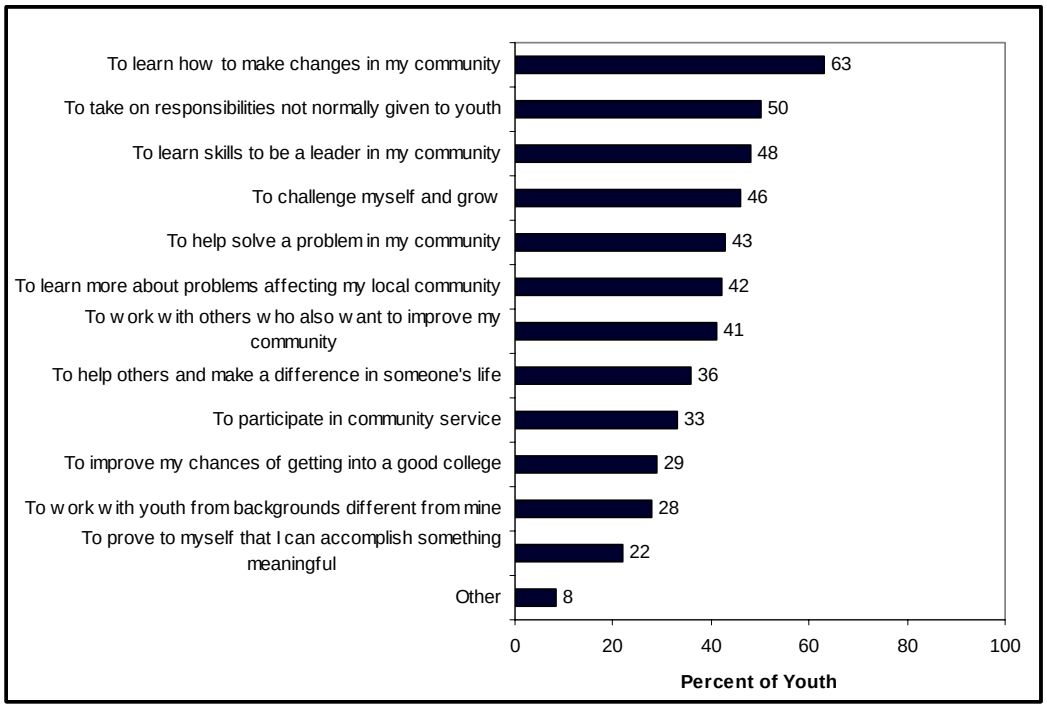


Youth reported that they were attracted to the Youth Boards because they presented a novel opportunity to contribute to their communities. As displayed in Exhibit 10, across Years 1 and 2, youth most frequently indicated that their reasons for joining the board included: to learn how to make changes in their community (63 percent), to take on responsibilities not normally given to youth (50 percent), to learn skills to be a leader in their community (48 percent), and to challenge themselves and grow (46 percent). There was no clear pattern of variation by site in youths' reasons for joining the board. In interviews, youth explained that prior to joining the Youth Board they had never had the

opportunity to participate in a philanthropic enterprise or to make important decisions in their community.

> *[I joined the Youth Board] to have the opportunity to have this grant money and to be able to distribute it and see how it is used.*
> *This was an opportunity to get youth voice in the community. In [my city], we aren't given the chance to participate and speak our mind and get involved with decisions that affect us.*
>
> *I never had anything like this before and always wanted to be involved and take an active role.*

Exhibit 10
Youth Reasons for Joining the Youth Board, Phase I
(n=134)



III. The Work of the Youth Boards

This chapter discusses the work of the Youth Boards, including the implementation, quality, and effectiveness of board activities intended to prepare youth members for the work of awarding mini-grants, as well as Youth Boards' work related directly to awarding and administering the mini-grants themselves. In addition, this chapter discusses the efforts to define the roles and responsibilities of Youth Board members as they related to the tasks and activities of the boards.

Youth Board Activities

After the YIF selected the eight sites in the summer of 2003, the Youth Boards implemented a series of program learning activities to prepare youth for awarding the mini-grants, a major objective in Phase I of the initiative. As described in the introduction, these activities included, in addition to the youth rallies, preparing and training youth members to become grants officers through exercises that focused on community mapping/power analysis, youth media, reflection, and other training and development opportunities.

The Phase I implementation timeline was ambitious, particularly in the early stages of the YIF. One site coordinator commented, "Youth had a lot to learn and the timeline for the community mapping, power analysis, and RFP development didn't give youth sufficient time to go through the learning stages that would be necessary for them to have the understanding of their community and its needs." According to this site coordinator, as a result, youth were unable to achieve the maximum benefits of their YIF experience. Another site coordinator agreed. "We didn't think [the timeline] gave an appropriate amount of time to get youth to understand the difference between direct service and community action. We felt like things were rushed and we were behind." Over time, however, the YIF site coordinators became more comfortable in adapting the Phase I timeline to meet the needs of their sites. "I told [the national YIF] that if they want this thing done right, they're going to have to change some things." This site coordinator noted that the Youth Board needed time to understand and internalize the concepts of the YIF so she adapted the board's timeline to help them do so. In particular, some sites delayed the timeline for awarding mini-grants to ensure that the Youth Boards had developed a strong understanding of community needs and a foundation on which to build their philanthropy and outreach efforts. Survey data from Year 1 indicate that Youth Board members spent most of their time on activities related to community mapping and power analysis, teambuilding, community outreach, and establishing board priorities.

All eight sites established subcommittees to help the Youth Boards carry out their work. In spring 2004, six sites reported that they had established a

grants committee to oversee the grant-making process and to help develop the RFP for mini-grants. Six sites also had a communications committee, five had a public affairs committee, and seven had an evaluation committee. All of the committees met at least twice a month.

Over the two years of the initiative, responses of youth members reflected the expected shift in focus of their board-related activities from community mapping and developing an RFP in Year 1 to working on a long-term impact plan in Year 2. In Year 1, when youth were asked about the tasks on which they spent the most time, 64 percent said community mapping, 42 percent said determining the kinds of issues the board would like to see mini-grantees address, and 34 percent said analyzing community data. In Year 2, half of the youth said they spent a great deal of time participating in team-building activities, 48 percent worked on their board's impact plan, and 40 percent reflected on what board members had learned from participating in Youth Board activities.

Site coordinators concurred with youth about the activities on which they most focused. That is, in Year 2 of the initiative, site coordinators reported that youth were most actively engaged in developing Youth Board goals and policies and developing the Youth Board's impact plan. Site coordinators also reported that, compared with Year 1, Youth Board members were more engaged in providing technical assistance or training to their mini-grantees, developing Youth Board goals and policies, and meeting with local officials.

The following discusses specific board activities and tasks that offered youth these training and developmental opportunities.

Youth Rallies

At many sites, the recruitment process began with the youth rally. Boards invited public officials, community-based organizations, and the general public to attend the rallies, which typically featured speeches from Youth Board members, public officials, and national YIF staff, and included music and entertainment.

Planning for the youth rallies challenged sites early in the implementation of the YIF initiative. Site coordinators expressed concern that the early timing of rallies was overwhelming and limited learning opportunities for youth, who had not had sufficient time to become immersed in the goals of the YIF. In addition, since the YIF was new to each community, the Youth Boards did not yet have any work to showcase at the rallies to generate public interest. As one site coordinator noted, "It's very difficult and artificial to have a rally without having done something. The Youth Board had met once before the rally, so they barely knew each other. We had no way to get high attendance because we didn't know anybody; it kind of felt like a show we put on. I wouldn't have held the rally

first….It was done to comply with the requirements of the grant; [it] didn't make sense to do it." Another site coordinator said, "The rally would have been more effective if we could have laid the ground work. It seemed like we were having an event for the sake of having an event." Some youth members echoed this disappointment. One noted that the rally "got the word out about the grant, but it was a disappointing turnout. People didn't have a lot of reasons to go."

Despite these challenges, many Youth Board members found the rallies to be a successful way to kick off the initiative and fortify board members' enthusiasm. "It was great. We didn't expect a lot of people, but amazingly they did show up," one youth said. Another youth said, "I learned that there are lots of people who want to come and see a youth group succeed, and with a little hard work you can get a lot accomplished." One youth from another board echoed the sentiments of other Youth Board members: "It was our first big activity, and it cemented the idea that this could happen." Another youth said, "We worked so hard to put it together. It was a huge success. It was kind of 'Disneyesque' because all the kids rushed the stage at the end. It was so awesome to see that come off and be a hit. It just kind of reaffirmed that we can do anything we set our minds to." Another youth said, "We organized it, got the media there, and invited the people. It was all youth-driven."

Community Mapping and Power Analysis

The YIF required youth on each board to engage in activities intended (1) to help them better understand the prevailing issues that affected youth in their communities, (2) to frame their grant-making; and (3) to help develop their Impact Plan to guide Phase II of the YIF. These activities included a community mapping exercise that focused on Youth Board members' investigations of the problems confronting their communities, such as teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and homelessness. For the power analysis exercise, Youth Board members examined and learned about the formal and informal power structures in their communities.

The Youth Boards each approached community mapping and power analysis differently, taking into account their local contexts. The Youth Board in Portland, Ore., surveyed 700 youth in the community to identify issues that were most important to them. San Francisco's Youth Board administered a survey to 200 students and developed focus group questions based on the survey responses. The board used this process not only as its community mapping exercise but also to inform students and staff about the YIF, encourage applications for mini-grants, and give students an opportunity to express their concerns. In Portland, Maine, groups of Youth Board members each selected an issue identified in the local United Way's community assessment. Then, youth in collaboration with community stakeholders, researched those issues, including the power structures affecting those issues, and reported their findings back to the board. The Hampton Youth Board built their community mapping activity on the

work of a Youth Commission that had previously done similar work. The board used their consortium partners as their connection to the community's power structure. These partners were referred to as "hook ups," and youth met with them quarterly for assistance in their areas of expertise. The site coordinator said, "Youth have really enjoyed working with hook-ups and have seemed to learn a lot in that area, especially in understanding the importance of connections and networking."

In contrast to Portland, Hampton, and San Francisco sites, the Youth Board in Nashville sent out an RFP for grant applications to local youth and youth organizations, and identified the problems in their communities based on the proposals they received. In Chicago, other organizations had previously completed community mapping exercises, so the Youth Board looked at those results to provide context to their grant-making process. The Ypsilanti Youth Board hired a consultant, who used community and public school demographics, local health statistics, and local election results to facilitate a series of training sessions to help the board members understand the prevalent issues facing youth in the community. The Cleveland, Miss., Youth Board surveyed 120 youth and interviewed a few adults in the community to get their thoughts about the most important issues facing their community.

Community mapping generally succeeded in informing youth about the most salient issues in their communities, and served as a foundation for the power analysis that the Youth Boards later conducted. The data that youth collected provided a foundation for in-depth discussions about community issues, priorities, and ways to affect change. One site coordinator noted that conducting the youth-led community mapping process "gave [Youth Board members] grounding in the needs of young people in the city. [Youth Board members] ended up with a spreadsheet of data. They sorted out the issues and came back to the board and set some priorities. They got a sense of ownership and now they are equipped to provide good technical assistance. They set themselves up for not having a lot of problems they could have had by understanding the value of good research."

Youth on the Portland, Ore., Board believed community mapping clarified the board's priorities. "The issues that kids and adults saw in community mapping, it sorted everything out for me. It made it easier to see what the community thought…" In San Francisco, where the Youth Board focused on school-based issues and conducted extensive focus groups of high school students, one youth member noted that a key lesson learned was the amount of variation that existed among schools in the city. "I really learned a lot, from going to our workshops, and talking to all of these different kids and seeing what their experiences are. There's no uniform thing that's going on, and I wonder why there's so many inequities" among schools.

Although Youth Boards benefited from the discussions that resulted from community mapping and power analysis, the sites frequently struggled to adapt YIF's structured community mapping and power analysis processes to local contexts. For example, one site coordinator noted that the community mapping exercise was difficult and suggested improvements: "I think there were times when there didn't need to be as much structure, for example, with respect to the community mapping exercise. I wish that instead of saying do 'X' they would have given us outcome-based rather than content-based direction, like 'At the end of the project, kids should know and be able to: (1) know the needs of the city; and (2) identify the root causes of problems.' The timeline and structure are all process-based with no clear sense of outcomes."

Youth Media Use

Youth Board members from each of the eight sites received training through the YIF in using media, and were charged with documenting the activities of their board with videos and photographs. Although Youth Board members developed a strong interest in making the videos, the added value of this effort to the work of the YIF and the local Youth Boards was not always clear. Youth Board members at one site were frustrated because while they had taken more than five hours of video, they could only send a small portion to the Educational Video Center (EVC). Indeed, it was their understanding that only three minutes from each site would be included in the YIF video that EVC was creating.

Some sites also reported being challenged by the technical complexities of using media. One site coordinator said, "This aspect of the initiative has been difficult. We want to have a day-to-day partner for specific tasks in youth media. We have a lot of resources in the city, and I don't have the expertise to do that. We've done an OK job at documenting but it doesn't feel empowering." This site was in the process of developing a partnership that could help them better use the media. A youth member from another site echoed these feelings. "We filmed as much as possible. It can be very powerful but we haven't tapped into it as much as we could. We had a struggle with the camera, and it's hard to get the camera when we need it."

Reflection Activities

The YIF encouraged Youth Boards to process their experiences through reflection activities, including journal writing. Sites implemented this type of structured reflection process in different ways and with varying degrees of effectiveness. For example, one site reserved time for written reflection activities at the end of each Youth Board meeting; however, the site coordinator did not follow-up with students to ensure that they were writing. As one site coordinator explained, "We kept trying and ran out of time. In the beginning, I had Youth

Board members do journal writing after every meeting. The journals were more about 'Here's what we did today.' Still, we should be doing more of that." At one site, Youth Board meetings included short opportunities for a "high/low" reflection before the close of each meeting. For example, youth would tell the group a "high" and a "low" of the meeting. Each youth also completed a short reflection sheet, although it was unclear how, if at all, they were used. One Youth Board member said he liked the oral reflections, however: "The written [reflection exercises] are effective, but the oral reflections are nice because you get more people to speak up about what's going on."

Two years of survey data indicate the challenges of effectively implementing meaningful reflection activities. In Year 1, the initial year of the activity, only 9 percent of Youth Board members said that the reflection activities were among the activities from which they learned the most. In the second year of the survey, only 4 percent of the board members believed that the reflection activities were among the activities that helped them learn the most.

Other Youth Board Training

Through the YIF, Youth Board members had the opportunity to participate in a variety of trainings, both at the local level and through national resources. Much of the training focused on increasing the boards' operating capacity, developing the skills of the Youth Board members, and developing members' understanding of service learning, social change, and the action pathways of the YIF, including youth philanthropy, youth governance, youth social entrepreneurship, and youth organizing.

In many sites, the consortium partners played a major role in training members of the Youth Boards and in increasing their capacity to fulfill the goals of the YIF, including grant-making. For example, in San Francisco, the Youth Leadership Institute (the lead consortium partner) provided training for Youth Board members as part of the board's regular meetings and activities. According to the site coordinator, "In this sense, [the board] has relied on the resources and internal knowledge available at [the consortium partner], rather than electing to participate in more formalized training sessions." The site coordinator added that youth received training in how to facilitate meetings and in leading focus groups and noted that it was valuable for training to take place on an on-going basis, so that the youth's skills could evolve and improve over time—"practice makes perfect."

In other sites, consortium partners provided training on specific topics and skills related to the YIF. For example, in Nashville, partner organizations offered training sessions in board development, grant-making, meeting procedures (e.g. how to run a meeting with parliamentary procedures, cultural sensitivity, team building), and on "Exploding the Issue," which focused on teaching youth to find

the root causes of problems. Youth appreciated this specific, hands-on training. One youth described benefiting from a retreat in which Youth Board members "learned how to work with each other and to compromise. We learned how to figure out a meeting schedule because of conflicting schedules. That trained us more than anything." A youth member from another site expressed appreciation for the experience of the consortium partner. "He shows us how we should be doing stuff and how we should be taking notes. He has ideas in every direction. He has really good ideas."

The cross-site training networks helped Youth Board members develop a broader understanding of the goals and approaches of the YIF. Youth and adult representatives from each of the eight sites attended an orientation and three cross-site training networks over the course of Phase I. In August 2003, each board's founding members attended an orientation and training in Washington, DC. Members received training in the action pathways that shape civic action projects capable of leading to social change, including service-learning, youth governance, grant-making, social entrepreneurship, youth media, organizing, and political activism. In March 2004, board members convened in Orlando for the first cross-site training network at the National Service-Learning Conference. Participants shared accomplishments, reflected on their work, and learned new skills. The second cross-site training network was held in Nashville in August 2004 and was the first training to be held at a YIF site. Through a series of workshops and breakout sessions, board members learned about diversity and coalition building, power analysis, participatory action research, and capacity building. In February 2005, board members convened in San Francisco for the third cross-site training network. Participants attended workshops on service-learning, youth media usage, youth voice, and community convening.

Cross-site training networks helped youth members see their work in a larger national context. In focus group interviews, youth members who had attended a cross-site training network indicated that the experience was a turning point for their boards because it put their work into perspective. One Youth Board member said, "Orlando put a lot of things in perspective—service-learning and things about the RFP [for the mini-grants]—it was major useful." Youth from another Youth Board said the training helped the board understand the big picture: "In Orlando, it gave me an understanding about what was going on and I could compare and contrast the process to see if we could incorporate new ideas." Another youth said he got a sense of empowerment from attending the Orlando meeting. His fellow board member added, "Going into it, I wasn't familiar with what we were doing, but it was good to see what other boards were doing and to bring those ideas back to our board." A youth from another board also benefited from the cross-site training networks. "Now I have an idea of what other people are doing. It was really fun. I met a lot of people and shared a lot of ideas." Survey data showed increased benefit to Youth Board members from the cross-site training networks from Year 1 to Year 2. In the first year, for example, 54 percent of Youth Board members indicated that YIF's cross-site training networks

helped increase their knowledge on a wide range of topics, including: (1) ways that youth can be leaders in their communities, (2) ways to work together as a team, and (3) ways that youth and adults can work together effectively. In Year 2, 65 percent of Youth Board members said the cross-site training networks helped increase their knowledge of various topics. The most commonly reported topics in Year 2 focused around the same leadership and teamwork topics reported in Year 1.

Site coordinators agreed that cross-site training networks served as catalysts for moving the board's work forward. One site coordinator said, "The cross-site meetings have been effective in energizing the Youth Board members." Another noted that "Orlando was the turning point for our board. When the delegation came back, for the first time they realized this is what they are supposed to be doing. They understood that youth innovation is not a project or a club but a movement. It's been one of the greatest assets we've had as a board." Another site coordinator said that these meetings gave the boards additional opportunities to learn from each other. "It's been great to share information because our timeline is a bit behind everyone else's and we can glean things from their process to make ours work better."

Both youth members and site coordinators identified additional areas for training to help improve the capacity for Youth Boards. In Phase I, Youth Board members reported wanting more training in grant-making and grant-monitoring. A site coordinator said she would like to see the board receive more training on how youth can assist and evaluate projects. "Some of the grant-making groups can give that kind of training, but they are geared more toward adults." This site coordinator also saw a need to provide more support to board members in how to inform potential grantees about the grant-making process. "Some people need change in their areas but don't know how to write. This would help bridge that gap."

A few board members wanted training in how to disseminate information about their philanthropic efforts. One youth said, "I would like to have more training in media usage. I wish we could draw more attention to our group. We are doing wonderful stuff and I don't feel like people know about it and I really want them to." A coordinator at another site said that the board could benefit from training in how to relate to public officials, public speaking and etiquette, and how to convey their convictions and ideas without getting emotional.

Mini-grant Awards

In Phase I of the initiative, the YIF helped emerging youth leaders combine the principles of youth philanthropy and service learning in innovative approaches to civic action that will improve the quality of life in their communities. Youth Boards, after building a foundation of knowledge and skills

in their program, embarked on the mini-grant award process, the capstone activity of Phase I. Through community mapping and power analysis exercises, training, and cross-site networking, each Youth Board identified the most significant youth-related issues in their communities. These issues became the framework, or program areas, around which Youth Boards awarded seed money to youth-led programs. Exhibit 11 shows the variety of program areas in which Youth Boards awarded mini-grants.

Exhibit 11
Program Areas for Mini-Grant Awards, by Site

Site	Program Areas
Chicago, IL	School improvement, health and well-being, violence, youth employment and activities
Cleveland, MS	Drug use and prevention, teen pregnancy, education
Hampton, VA	Youth opportunities/activities, career readiness
Nashville, TN	School improvement
Portland, ME	School culture, discrimination and diversity, employment opportunities, safety and violence, housing and homelessness
Portland, OR	School improvement, homelessness, youth employment, teen pregnancy/sexual health
San Francisco, CA	School improvement
Ypsilanti, MI	Risky decision making, student voice in schools, increased opportunities for youth in decision making

Requesting Proposals

Each Youth Board used the results of the community mapping and power analysis exercises to create an RFP. The RFPs called for youth-led projects in particular program areas. Most RFPs: (1) explained the program areas that boards intended to fund, (2) included a glossary of YIF terms, (3) outlined how much funding was available, and (4) requested that applicants submit a budget, a timeline, and a detailed description of their project and how it would affect long-term change in the community. The RFPs also requested that applicants submit the names of adult allies (i.e., adults who would oversee the projects) and lead youth (i.e., those youth who would take leadership roles on the project). Three boards included rubrics, based on their understanding of what they wanted to see in the mini-grants, describing how applications would be scored. These boards assigned a maximum point value that an application could receive for several categories, (i.e., youth leadership, impact on the community, creativity and innovation, and self evaluation). The boards publicized their RFPs in a wide range of community outlets, including schools and community-based organizations. Several boards also publicized their grant opportunities through local radio stations, newspapers, schools, churches, and government organizations.

Five of the eight boards held informational sessions, or bidder conferences, to give mini-grant applicants examples of possible projects and advice on the application process. Most of these sessions occurred three to four weeks before the application deadline and lasted approximately three hours. These sessions gave Youth Board members an opportunity to give potential grantees a better understanding of the kinds of grants that would be funded and what would be expected of them if they received an award.

Awarding Mini-Grants

The majority of the Youth Boards created a grants subcommittee, composed of youth and adults, to review the mini-grant applications. In most cases, the committee made recommendations to the full board about which applications to fund based on whether the proposed project effectively addressed an underlying root cause of a problem identified as a priority issue of the Youth Board. Using their best judgment, gained from their new-found understanding of the most important problems in their communities, Youth Board members reviewed each application and then determined which ones best met their priorities and had potential to have a lasting effect. The Chicago Youth Board, for example, did not fund a tutoring program because members did not believe that it would lead to any long-term change in the community. The Nashville Board turned down a project that proposed to teach reading skills to preschool children because they did not believe it would have any long-term affect on the community. Youth Boards also reflected the priorities of youth leadership and engagement in their grant-making decisions. For example, a youth who reviewed proposals at another site reported focusing on how youth-led the proposal was. He said he liked a particular proposal because it "sounded like it was written by people [his] age."

Mini-Grant Overview

As of September 2005, Youth Boards had awarded 69 mini-grants, 38 of which had been implemented and completed. Grantees received awards ranging from $1,500 to $2,500. Below are descriptions of some of the funded mini-grants:

- A group of high school students remodeled a local homeless shelter and created a comprehensive youth mentoring program for the children living there. They also set up a library for residents and decorated the walls with inspirational art. In addition, they lobbied for legislation to protect the homeless and increase the stock of affordable housing.

- Sixth- and eighth-grade students in an after-school program created a coloring book to educate young children about their community's culture and heritage. The group distributed the book to preschools, elementary schools, and pediatricians' offices and lobbied to include it in the school district's K-6 curriculum.

- A university held a week-long civic journalism institute where students received hands-on training in reporting, writing, and producing for radio, television, newspapers, and websites. Each morning the students attended a press conference that addressed a different civic issue and developed stories for their various news projects. Upon completion of the institute, students compiled the materials they produced and distributed them to all the high schools to promote better understanding of youth-led social change in the city.

- A group of youth at a neighborhood-based, non-profit organization researched and wrote a book about the city's involvement in the civil rights movement and lobbied the school board for its inclusion in the curriculum.

- Through a housing advocacy group, youth researched foster homes licensing and the barriers that prevent some adults from becoming foster parents. The group lobbied to change the current licensing rules for foster homes.

- In a mentoring program, a group of students trained 10 high school girls to mentor middle school girls to help reduce teen pregnancy, increase self-esteem, and boost academic achievement by easing the transition into high school.

- A weekly girls' group at a middle school created a school improvement plan that focused on increasing school-wide activities, pep talks, contests, and peer mediation to address student conflicts. The group also met with the principal monthly to ensure that students' concerns were being heard and addressed.

- A youth-led group at a community-based organization that assists youth and families in crisis sponsored spoken word and poetry slams, as well as workshops and events to promote youth voice and youth community involvement. The group held performances at middle and high schools.

Defining Member Roles and Responsibilities Related to the Work of the Youth Boards

During Phase I of the YIF initiative, sites often focused on defining and redefining the roles and responsibilities of the youth members of the Youth Boards, as well as of the adult board members and consortium partners. As Youth Boards began to articulate their goals and objectives, the roles and responsibilities of youth members, adult members, and consortium partners—in relation to each other—emerged clearly and, as a result, the membership on the boards shifted.

Youth Members

Meeting the ambitious goals of the national YIF initiative required a significant time commitment on the part of Youth Board members. In Phase I, the YIF initiative established a set of activities to build successful youth-adult partnerships and increase the capacity of the Youth Boards to effectively lead philanthropy and civic action. To rapidly build these skills and local capacities, seven of the eight sites held full Youth Board meetings twice a month in Year 1. In five of these sites, Youth Board meetings lasted about two hours each. In the other two, they were longer: one site reported that meetings were scheduled to last two-and-a-half hours, the other reported four-and-a-half hour meetings. The eighth site reported weekly Youth Board meetings of about one-and-a-half hours in duration.

Perhaps as a result of this busy schedule, sites struggled to maintain a full roster of youth members in Phase I of the initiative. The average number of youth participating in the initiative fell short of YIF's goal of 20 youths on each community Youth Board. In Year 1, there were an average of 16 youth per board, and an average of 15 youth in Year 2. Youth Board membership ranged from 8 to 25 youth members per site in Year 1 and 8 to 21 youth members in Year 2. These numbers, however, mask the turnover of youth that took place on the Youth Boards between Years 1 and 2 of the initiative, such that many Year 2 participants were new to the YIF initiative.

Reasons vary for this lower-than-expected participation. Some sites reported involving over-extended youth and that made it hard to keep them on the board. Other sites' enrollment remained consistently low across Years 1 and 2, sometimes intentionally. For example, one site put particular emphasis on recruiting underserved youth. Rather than fill the Youth Board with more "traditional" interested youth, the site made the decision to purposefully leave room on the board to recruit a more diverse pool of applicants.

However, the youth who continued to participate on the Youth Boards through the spring of each year demonstrated a strong commitment of time and effort. Of the youth who responded to the survey in Year 1, 58 percent reported

that they attended the Youth Board meetings "almost always," and 30 percent said they attended meetings "all of the time." This translated into a time commitment of 11 to 15 hours per month for 30 percent of youth, and 5 to 10 hours per month for 33 percent of youth. Fifteen percent reported spending 16 or more hours per month on Youth Board activities. In Year 2, youth reported spending a similar amount of time on Youth Board activities, with 57 percent reporting that they attended meetings "almost always," and 28 percent attending meetings "all of the time." In Year 2, 54 percent of youth spent 5 to 10 hours per month on activities related to the Youth Board, and 18 percent spent 11 to 15 hours. There was no clear pattern of variation in the levels of youth engagement with the YIF initiative, based prior level of experience, age, or grade. There were also no substantive differences in reported patterns of participation by site.

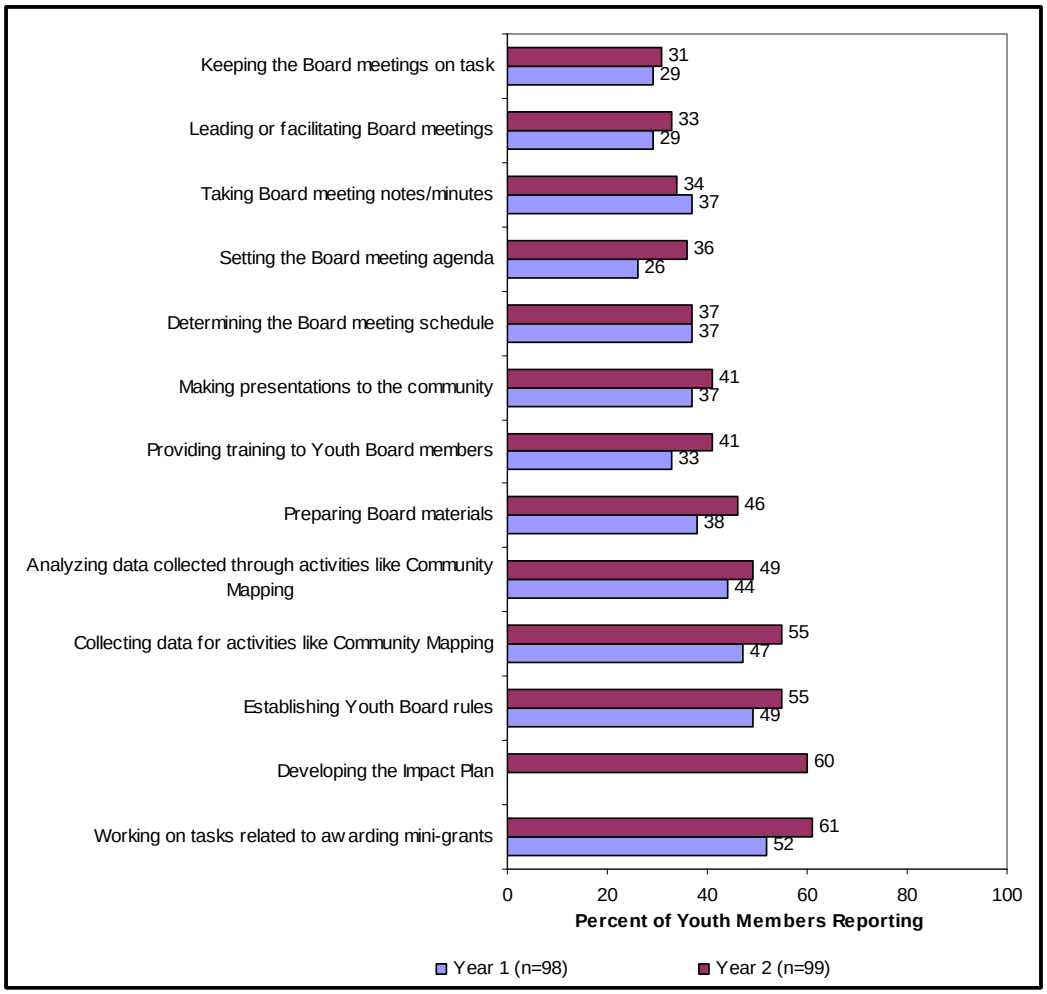
In an effort to encourage high levels of participation among youth members, some sites experimented with policies or incentives to encourage high attendance at board meetings. For example, three sites reported providing compensation tied to meeting attendance to their Youth Board members in both Years 1 and 2. One site gave youth $20 for every two meetings that they attended. Two others awarded annual stipends for participation, in the sum of $300 at one site and $500 at the other site. During Phase I of the initiative the three sites that offered these incentives did not vary from the other sites in terms of the diversity of their boards, or levels of engagement among Youth Board members. However, the site coordinators believed that these incentives allowed their boards to reach a wider group of youth than they would have otherwise, for example by covering transportation costs and by giving youth who might otherwise have pursued an after-school job to be a part of the YIF.

In Year 2, slightly more youth members reported taking responsibility for board-related tasks than was the case in Year 1 of the initiative. That is, in Year 1, when asked who was responsible for a range of activities, youth most often reported that they had been personally responsible for working on tasks related to awarding mini-grants (52 percent), establishing board rules (49 percent), and collecting data for community mapping (47 percent). In Year 2, slightly more youth reported being responsible for the same and more board-related tasks than was the case in Year 1. For example, 61 percent of youth members said that they had worked on tasks related to awarding mini-grants and 60 percent said that they had been personally responsible for helping to develop the board's impact plan. In addition, 55 percent of youth members said that they had been personally responsible for collecting data for community mapping. Similarly, 55 percent of youth reported being responsible for establishing Youth Board rules. Finally, 49 percent of youth members said they were responsible for analyzing data collected through activities like community mapping (Exhibit 12).

In both Year 1 and Year 2, the majority of youth reported being responsible for at least one activity. Only about a fifth of youth reported not personally being responsible for any Youth Board tasks (22 percent in Year 1 and

21 percent in Year 2). The remaining youth reported being personally responsible for an average of 5.57 out of 12 tasks in Year 1, and 7.33 out of 13 tasks in Year 2. This suggests that those youth who took on leadership roles were likely to be highly engaged in multiple facets of the Youth Boards.

Exhibit 12
Youth Member Participation in Board-Related Leadership Opportunities in Years 1 and 2



Site-level analyses revealed some differences in the percentage of youth accepting more responsibilities on the Youth Boards between Year 1 and Year 2. Across the eight sites, four sites showed similar results to the overall findings regarding the slight increase between Year 1 and Year 2 in the percentage of youth members who reported having responsibilities for board-related tasks. In the other four sites, however, fewer youth reported taking responsibility for board-related tasks between Year 1 and Year 2. Indeed, of the 12 tasks in which

boards engaged in both years of Phase I[1], the percentage of youth who reported taking responsibility decreased for 6 of the 12 tasks in two sites between Year 1 and Year 2. The percentage of youth members taking responsibility decreased for 7 of the 12 tasks in the third site, and decreased for 10 of the 12 tasks in the fourth site. These differences in the percentage of youth members participating in board-related tasks between Years 1 and 2 of the initiative may have had to do with the increased emphasis sites placed on developing the Impact Plan in Year 2. In three of the four sites, youth participation in developing the Impact Plan was relatively high compared to other tasks. In addition, these sites had high youth participation in other tasks associated with Year 2 of the initiative, including making presentations to the community, working on tasks related to awarding mini-grants, setting the board meeting agenda, and determining the board meeting schedule.

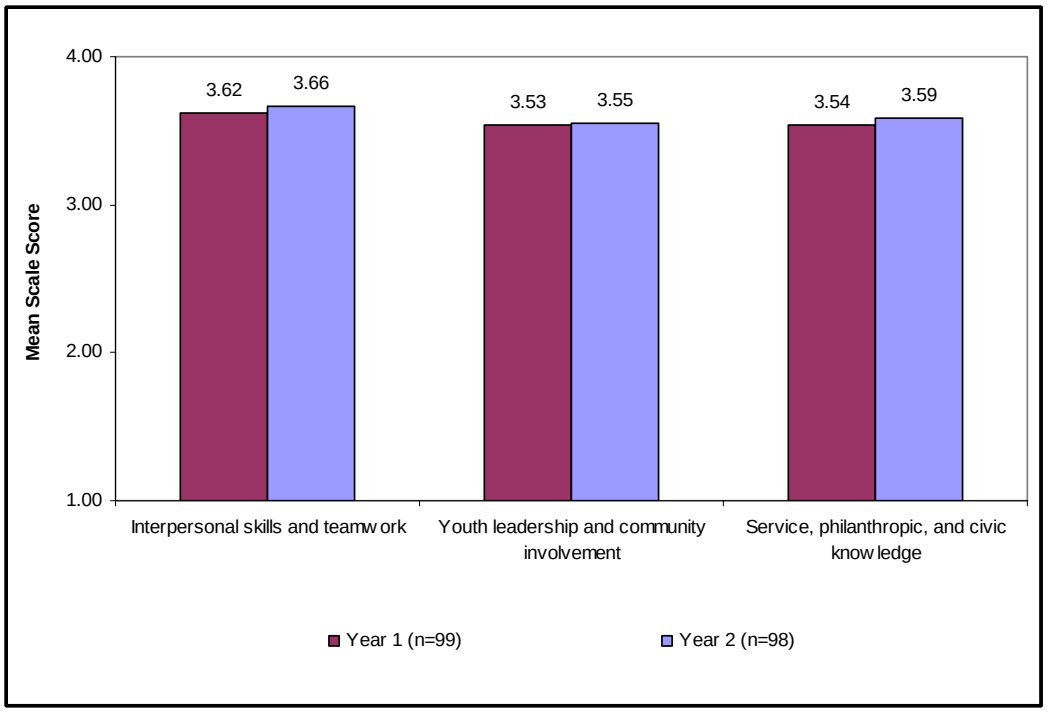
Many of the site coordinators also noted in interviews that during the second year of the initiative, Youth Board members took on more responsibilities in running board meetings and directing the activities of the board. At the start of the initiative, site coordinators primarily assumed these responsibilities. One site coordinator put it this way:

> *[I want] to put it more on them to take ownership and responsibility [to improve the meetings]. I want them to carry it out.*

Most youth members believed that board-sponsored activities and tasks offered them many opportunities to grow as individuals. That is, in both years of the study, 80 percent or more of the youth reported having been given opportunities—to a great extent—to learn about ways in which to improve their community, engage in youth philanthropy, be a leader, and work on a team. Indeed, on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all" and 4 is "to a great extent," youth scored an average of over 3.5 points on the four-point scale in both years of the evaluation, indicating that the vast majority of youth members believed their participation on Youth Boards gave them extensive opportunities to develop (1) interpersonal and teamwork skills; (2) leadership and community involvement skills; and (3) service, philanthropic, and civic knowledge. In addition, analyses of survey data revealed no significant differences by site in the percentage of youth members who said they had extensive opportunities to develop various skills and knowledge through their participation on the Youth Board (Exhibit 13).

[1] "Developing the Impact Plan" was not a board-related task in Year 1of the initiative.

Exhibit 13
Youth Board Reports of Opportunities to Learn



Consortium Partners and Adult Board Members

Some sites strived to maintain a balance between the goals of the YIF initiative and the interests and goals of their lead agencies and consortium partners. In San Francisco, the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI), the YIF lead agency, considered the YIF to be "an opportunity to bring in disciplinary strengths in research and evaluation and grantmaking, and tap into emerging experience in school change work." It intentionally chose to focus YIF work on school-level change, believing this is where it could have the most impact. As a result, the Youth Board's grantmaking focused on projects that could affect the experience of students in San Francisco schools.

In Cleveland, Miss., the lead consortium partner also strongly influenced the Youth Board's direction. The mission of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University is to "promote the understanding of the history and culture of the Mississippi Delta." The director of the Center, who supervised the site coordinator, believed that the Youth Board in Cleveland could help advance this mission. He worried that youth perceived the community's problems as the "homogenized issues" of drugs and teen pregnancy when there were other important issues as well, such as cultural heritage and school consolidation, and

urged the site coordinator and the Youth Board to focus more on these local issues in their grantmaking.

Similarly, consortium partners in Chicago wondered about maintaining a balance between their support for the new Youth Boards and their primary organizational interest, noting that the many youth organizations in Chicago competed for funds as well as for publicity. "There's an opportunity cost problem—are we spending precious time promoting YIF vs. [the partner agency]?" This partner also commented, "Organizations need to raise money for themselves. Why would they want to raise money for YIF? A Mikva funder just funded YIF—does that mean they won't fund Mikva in the future? Am I competing with myself?"

Site coordinators also noted this positioning challenge. They said that sometimes they were not sure who they were accountable to because there was no clearly defined local oversight for their work and consortium partners sometimes gave them contradictory feedback. "I don't know what you want me to do. I don't really work for anybody," said one. Another site coordinator expressed a similar concern, noting that the decisions of the board were heavily guided by the consortium partners and by the national YIF team, rather that by the youth or the adult board members. This had not been clear at the outset. "This isn't a youth-driven project. I'm glad youth support it, but they're not completely on their own….The board is able to set its own goals, but only within a strict set of guidelines."

Consortium partners also struggled to find a place for Youth Boards midst already existing initiatives and youth programming, particularly in sites that had a long history of youth engagement prior to the YIF. For example, many youth leadership organizations existed in San Francisco. One consortium partner commented that these organizations had always struggled with defining a common role for all of their organizations, making sure that they're all at the table together, and determining the individual role for each group in order to further the youth agenda. Adding the YIF Youth Board to the mix further complicated the puzzle. "How does [the role of the Youth Board] differ from the role of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC), of the San Francisco Youth Commission, of Y-MAC?" this consortium partner asked. This was mitigated by the fact that many of the Youth Board members in San Francisco were also members of other youth commissions or boards, and that the YLI also served as the umbrella organization for the SAC, a district-wide body that includes two representatives from each of San Francisco's high schools and two student delegates who sit on the Board of Education.

Nashville and Hampton also benefited from a long history of youth engagement. Consortium partners in each of these places worked to better align the youth-serving organizations and to determine the best infrastructure and position for the Youth Board within the community. One consortium partner in

Hampton asked, "How does this fit into what we already have? Will it work within our existing structure?" Another consortium partner noted, "Initially, there was an awful lot of just trying to figure out where this is and how we're going to sustain it. We suffer sometimes from having too much and we really need to figure out how it all fits together."

For the most part, the consortia addressed this positioning challenge by emphasizing a unique aspect of the Youth Board. In many communities, youth philanthropy was a new concept. For example, while Portland, Ore., had a long history of youth-led civic action, with multiple opportunities for youth voice and input in city and district policies, the YIF initiative presented an opportunity to offer youth financial capital to make change in their communities. In Hampton, the consortium partners focused on the independence of the Youth Board. The YIF board could be a "stand-alone group that wasn't necessarily tied to city government, that had more freedom, that had more flexibility in terms of what issues they wanted to fund and how to do youth philanthropy" than other established youth organizations in Hampton.

In San Francisco, the consortium came to a different solution based on the plethora of youth organizations. "In San Francisco, on one hand it's such a blessing that we have such a rich community in terms of youth engagement and civic participation, but at the same time I think it's made it hard to set [the Youth Board] apart." In San Francisco, the $10,000 that the YIF Youth Board was expected to grant was relatively minor. "In San Francisco, young people have access to about a quarter-million dollars for youth-led projects, maybe even $500,000. YLI runs three different programs in San Francisco that give out grants. There are also other organizations that give out grants to young people." As a result, in the second year of the YIF initiative, the Youth Board merged with the SAC, combining resources and strengthening the school-based focus of the YIF work. The merger was possible thanks, in part, to the institutional legitimacy that the SAC had built up over time in San Francisco.

As a general rule, adult board members had more direct interaction with the boards, while consortium partners served as an advisory panel for the site coordinator. Both consortium partners and site coordinators tended to describe the primary role of the consortium partner as providing access to key community organizations, schools, or funding sources. For example, in San Francisco, the board "looked to community partners to help bring in resources on different levels" saying that partner organizations were able to "help open up doors for us, help recruit young people to be on the board for us, and help educate their stakeholders and folks in their networks about what we're trying to do." Similarly, in Cleveland, the partners provided an entrée to the community and access to local resources and networks. A consortium partner in Nashville said that, "My role is a door opener. They'll come up with ideas and suggestions and I'll try to help them get it done."

Adult board members were typically strategically recruited to provide diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives in overseeing Youth Board committees. For example, in Cleveland, each of the three adult board members was assigned to work with a specific board subcommittee and to host weekly committee meetings. In Nashville, adult board members considered themselves advisors to the Youth Board. "We're like coaches and youth have stepped up and taken leadership and responsibility. I see us being in the background and supporting them at all times." Another adult member said, "We have a wide variety of experiences. When we were placed on committees, it was done by expertise and what we brought to the table." In several sites, adult board members also took on a mentoring role for youth. In Portland, Ore., this mentoring role was explicit; all adult board members were Portland State University students specifically recruited to serve as mentors and regularly attend meetings. "PSU helps with bringing mentorship to our students…it helps them evolve into the next level of thinking."

Survey responses reflected this overall participation pattern in Youth Board meetings. In spring 2005, eight of the 13 adult board members who responded to the survey reported that they attended Youth Board meetings "all the time" or "almost always." In contrast, none of the 29 responding consortium partners reported attending "all the time" and only nine reported that they attended the meetings "almost always." Six of the consortium partners reported that they attended the Youth Board meetings "hardly ever" or "never"; none of the adult board members reported such infrequent participation.

Nonetheless, defining the roles of the consortium partners and of the adult members of the Youth Boards was a common challenge across the eight sites. The YIF model intended that consortium partners bring organizational commitment, resources, and legitimacy to the Youth Boards, while adult board members would bring personal expertise and commitment. In practice, however, determining the involvement and respective roles of consortium partners and adult board members proved difficult for many sites. One adult member said that there was "no real defined role for an adult board member. I really didn't know what I was supposed to do, and I didn't want to just take over from what the youth were doing." An adult member of another board described his role as primarily supporting others. "I try to enhance what's going on instead of creating what's going on," he explained. But he also commented that the most challenging aspect of working on the board was fostering youth leadership. "We're still struggling with meeting deadlines and having the outcomes we want while getting youth to make it happen." He added that it was difficult to gauge how much the adults should get involved. "How much do adults get involved? If we just step back and let the kids do it, would we meet our deadlines?" A site coordinator echoed the challenge of finding appropriate roles for adult members: "One [adult board member] wants youth to lead everything. It's been a learning curve for him to see that adults have a role…. [The other] is a former teacher and because she's an

out-of-the-box thinker she sometimes talks over students. I have to quiet her down sometimes…."

Some consortium partners also noted that their role was unclear. One said, "We need to figure out what those relationships look like and how our organization participates…." For example, this partner was only called upon to participate in periodic meetings or to provide resources "as things come up" but did not have a consistent role. This site's coordinator was working to redefine consortium partner involvement, saying that the role of consortium partners "is something that we are revisiting right now, what is their role, what kinds of resources can they bring to the table and how can they be more enhanced?" Other sites struggled with consortium members that could not contribute as effectively. The Portland, ME site coordinator noted that, "We have a small consortium that's not full of power players. The public schools give me access into the community. But the United Way hasn't been a partner in a substantive way. It makes me more of a solo operator with no real administrative support."

Adult board members also commented on this tension, and on the evolution of their role. "I think between the adult members and consortium partners, there's sometimes a blurring of responsibility. If you asked me directly about the difference, I'd say our role is direction and guidance for youth members, and the consortium partners seem to hold [the site coordinator] more accountable for the things she's doing. Maybe I didn't understand that at the beginning. I guess I thought the function of adult members would be not just guidance but also planning and helping to make decisions about the direction of the program. Sometimes, it felt like the consortium partners swooped in, and their word is then the decisive word if they don't like or approve of something."

In practice, the roles of consortium partners, compared to adult board members, were often more fluid than intended in the YIF model, essentially blurring any distinction between the two and creating tensions in some sites. For example, in one site consortium partners worked directly with youth. "As a consortium partner, my responsibility was to the grants committee of the Youth Board. I consulted with the committee on their first round of grant-making and educated the members on the due diligence process for reviewing grant applications. I also followed up with grantees if the committee requested more information." Adult board members filled a similar role in this site.

In another site, a consortium partner commented, "There really are too many cooks in this." The partner noted that it "would have helped if we had a clearer idea at the beginning of what to tell adult members to do." Another partner in this site agreed that the role of adult board members was too broadly defined at the beginning of the initiative, and did not clearly distinguish between the roles of consortium partners and of adult members. "Adult board members wanted themselves to be more integral to decision-making on the board." In

retrospect, consortium partners from this site believed that, "We should have had issue-based mentors rather than adult board members."

Perhaps as a consequence of the difficulty in defining a role for adult board members relative to that of consortium partners, sites had difficulty retaining adult board members' active participation. In spring 2005, at least five of the nine site coordinators who responded to the survey reported that consortium partners contributed—to some or to a great extent—to a variety of Youth Board activities related to the board's implementation and sustainability, including: (1) serving as a bridge between youth and adults in the community (eight site coordinators); (2) providing access to power players in the community (seven site coordinators each); (3) recruiting Youth Board members (six site coordinators); and (4) helping to develop the Phase II impact plan (six site coordinators). By contrast, there was only one activity that at least five site coordinators noted that adult board members helped with to some or to a great extent: developing the Phase II impact plan (Exhibit 14).

Because adult board members are expected to be engaged in Youth Board activities alongside young people, they could be anticipated to contribute more actively to the day-to-day activities of the Board, compared with consortium partners. However, as Exhibit 15 shows**,** more site coordinators viewed consortium partners as being involved—to some extent or to a great extent—in the everyday activities of the Youth Boards than they did adult board members. For example, more site coordinators viewed consortium partners as being involved—to some or to a great extent—in planning Youth Board meeting agenda and facilitating Youth Board meetings than they did adult board members. Similarly, five site coordinators reported that consortium partners provided them with technical assistance and training to facilitate their work with the board and with strategic guidance in developing Youth Board goals and policies; only one or two site coordinators viewed adult board members as being involved in these activities to some or to a great extent.

Exhibit 14
Site Coordinator Perceptions of the Extent to Which Consortium Partners and Adult Board Members Contributed to the Implementation and Sustainability of the Youth Boards in Year 2 (n=9)

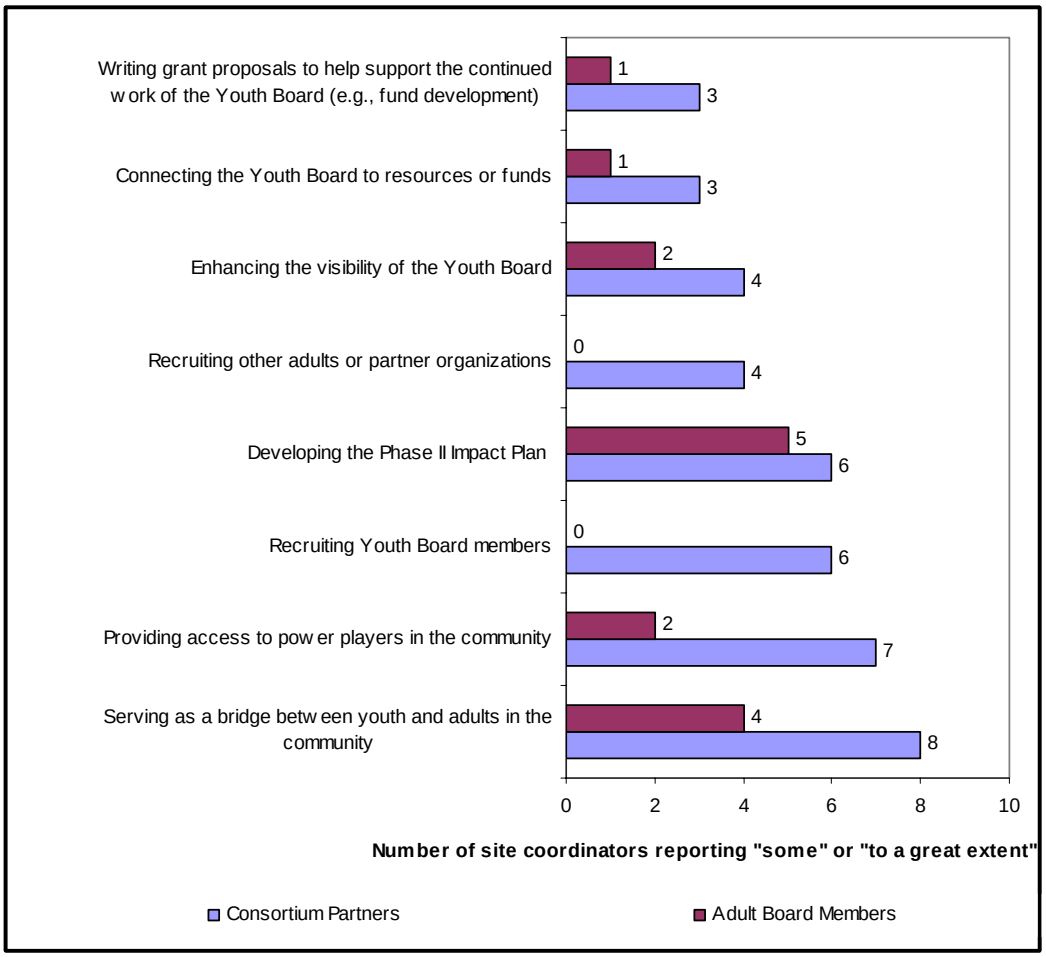
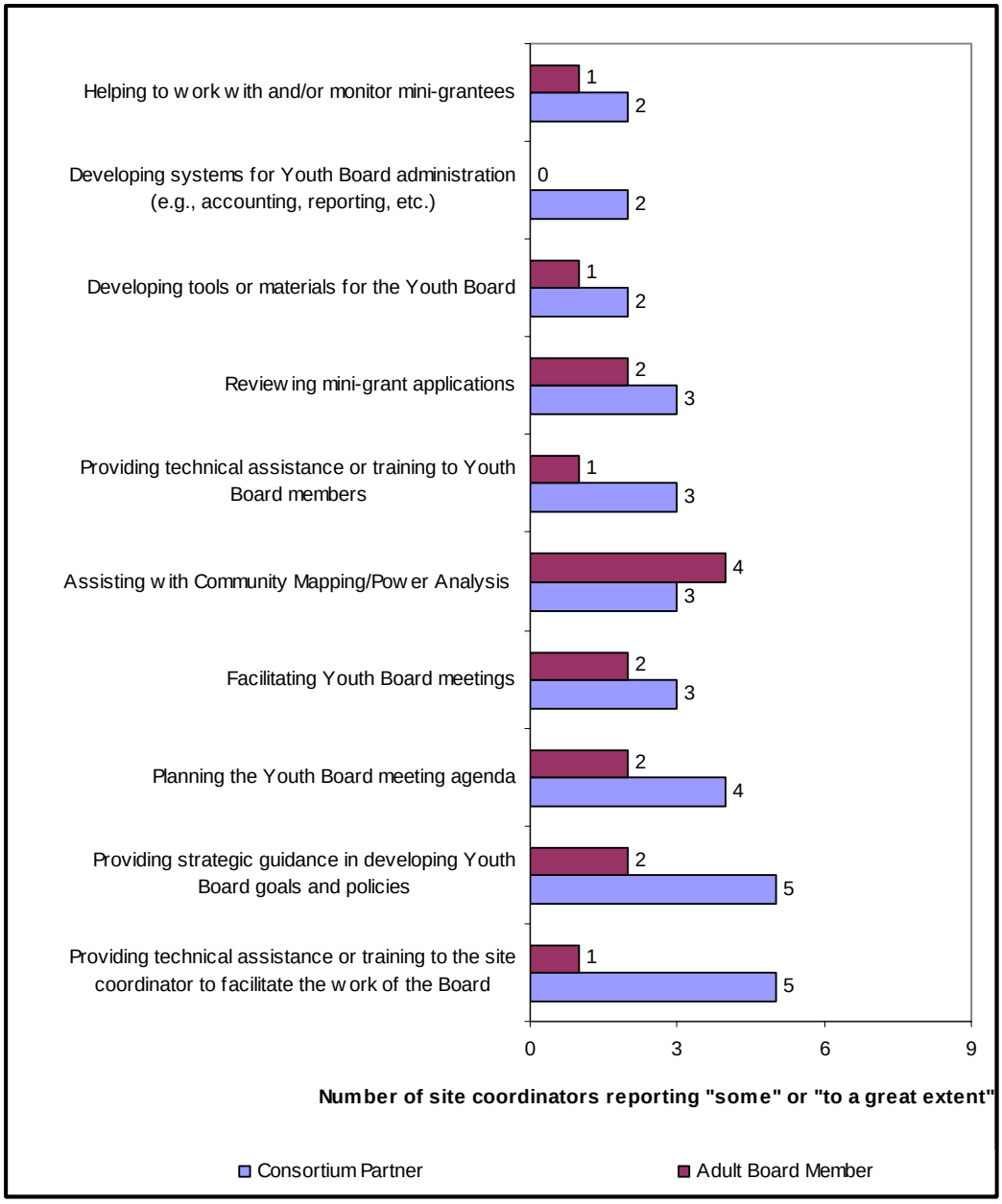


Exhibit 15
Site Coordinator Perceptions of the Extent to Which Consortium Partners and Adult Board Members Were Involved in the Day-to-Day Activities of the Board in Year 2
(n=9)



The youth-led focus of the YIF initiative meant that many of adult board members and consortium partners had to adapt their approaches to contribute effectively to the board. As one adult board member described it: "I thought I had this great basket of skills that I would be able to stand and lecture and impart in an instructor-like way. I learned immediately that that's not the way it would work." In another site, the site coordinator explained that the consortium partners' conception of intergenerational partnerships and decision-making was not compatible with the goals of the YIF. Some of these consortium partners were reluctant to allow youth to make certain decisions because they saw these decisions as being not only their organization's legal responsibility but also potentially damaging to their organization's reputation in the community. "The biggest challenge has been working with the consortium partners and bridging the philosophy that they use, even with partners that are super-engaged in youth work; we come from a different model. They use a top-down approach with students. [The Board] comes from a bottom-up perspective." This site coordinator continued, "The adults felt they needed to jump in and make some decisions; we think the point is to support youth decision-making and youth leadership."

Overall, youth expressed appreciation for mentoring by adults affiliated with the boards, whether consortium partners or adult board members. Youth in Ypsilanti commented that, "If we had an idea, they would ask us how it would work. They mold our ideas into something that we can actually do." Youth in Nashville told of similar experiences with the adults involved with the board. "What was unexpected was how much lead they let us take. They don't interfere much, but they help us out. When we have grandiose ideas, they help us focus. It's a good balance." In Portland, Maine, youth noted the value of having adults active on the board, saying that the adults empowered them to make effective change. "So often you see projects like this that try to work but the adult support is not there and the project gets written off." This youth member added, "It's important for young leaders to be taken seriously in the community. It helps to have adults looking at us as peers in this social change group." Youth in Hampton mirrored this view. "It looks better if there's an adult or a group of adults backing you up and you're trying to create this movement and you have all of these adults that are behind you already, then it would be easier for adults to get onto it. If it's just a bunch of kids…they might not take it as seriously."

IV. Youth Board Experiences and Outcomes in Phase I

This evaluation collected information from individuals involved with Youth Boards about how they viewed the extent to which the boards met their respective goals. These data helped to answer questions about the Youth Boards' successes and challenges in fulfilling their intended purposes.

YIF Effects on Youth Board Members

In Phase I, the activities of the YIF initiative were designed to help youth members of the boards better understand their communities, gain leadership skills, increase their civic awareness, gain confidence about youth voice in the community, and better appreciate the value of youth-adult partnerships. Data from surveys and focus groups of participating youth suggested that the first phase of the YIF initiative was successful in helping youth gain these skills.

Understanding Community

The Youth Boards exposed youth members to diverse individuals and experiences that broadened their perspectives on their communities. The activities of the YIF, particularly the community mapping and mini-grant exercises, gave youth the opportunity to interact with youth from other communities. In on-site interviews, one youth noted that these experiences provided "an amazing opportunity to go into schools and talk to people." Youth members said they became more aware of life-changing opportunities their Youth Board activities made available to them. "[Working on the Youth Board is] broadening my horizons and letting me see different opportunities. Working with other people who are passionate; it's really inspiring. It gets you so motivated that you want to get started [helping the community] right now and keep going until it is finished."

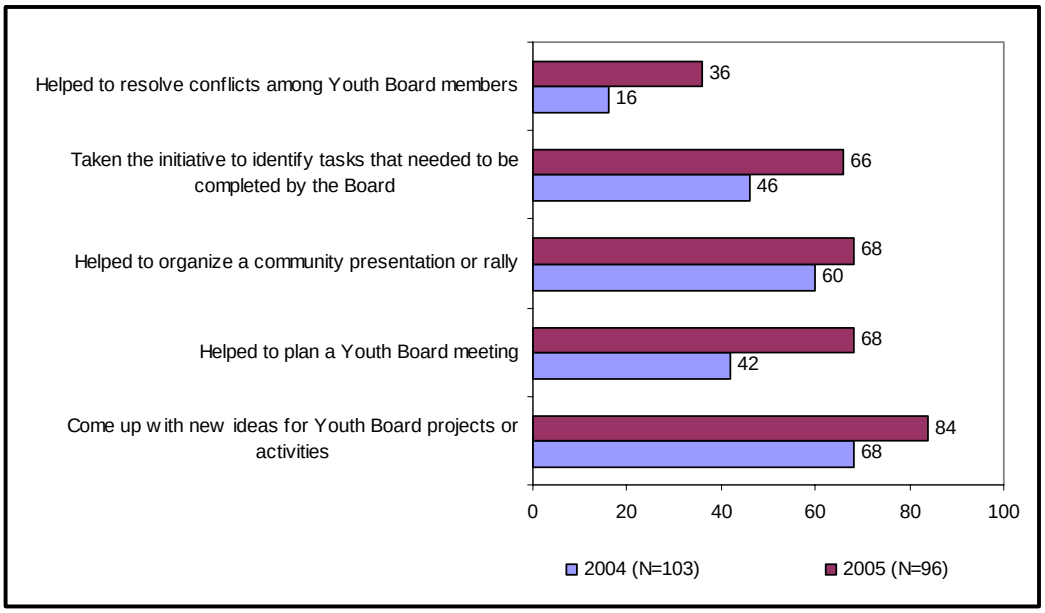
Some youth also changed their attitudes about youth who were different from themselves. One youth said, "There were different types of people that I never really hung around with before. I have a different perspective. I have more kinds of friends now – different ethnic groups and stuff." The site coordinator agreed. "[Youth learned] tolerance and a different perspective. Having [a physically challenged board member] has helped members see things from a different perspective. I think there is no substitute to working side by side with people of different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds." Another site coordinator said she noticed a change in racial attitudes among Youth Board members as a result of close collaboration in board activities.

Effects on Youth Leadership

Over time, more youth members took initiative in leading or helping to lead various board activities. Survey data show that between 2004 and 2005, the percentage of youth taking on leadership roles on the board increased, and that this finding did not vary significantly by site. That is, more youth reported coming up with new ideas for board projects or activities in 2005 than did in 2004 (from 68 percent to 83 percent of youth); taking initiative to identify tasks that the board needed to complete (46 percent in 2004 to 66 percent in 2005); and helping to resolve conflicts among Youth Board members (16 percent in 2004 to 36 percent in 2005). The largest increase in youth leadership was in helping to plan Youth Board meetings. That is, in 2004, less than half the youth (42 percent) reported helping to plan a Youth Board meeting. By the following year, over two-thirds of the youth (68 percent) reported helping to plan a Youth Board meeting in 2005 (Exhibit 16). In focus group sessions, youth described becoming more comfortable viewing themselves as leaders: "I am so much more inspired to be a youth leader and help out and stuff like that," one youth said. Another youth noted, "I have been learning to communicate with other people and tell them what I think about important things. I am trying to become a leader instead of being a follower. I hope that I can become a leader."

Youth comments during focus group interviews also explained some of the ways in which youth developed their leadership skills. For example, one youth reported learning leadership and communication skills by making phone calls for part of her board's outreach committee: "I've called schools and supervisors for all the [school] districts. They ask me questions and I get nervous. But, it helped me develop a lot of public speaking skills." The site coordinator of this particular site added that youth became noticeably more confident in their interactions with adults as the school year went along. "They grew accustomed to calling principals or school secretaries to discuss [board business] and set up focus groups." In another site, a youth member also noted improved communication skills, saying that "I feel more comfortable talking in front of people. Now I can just talk."

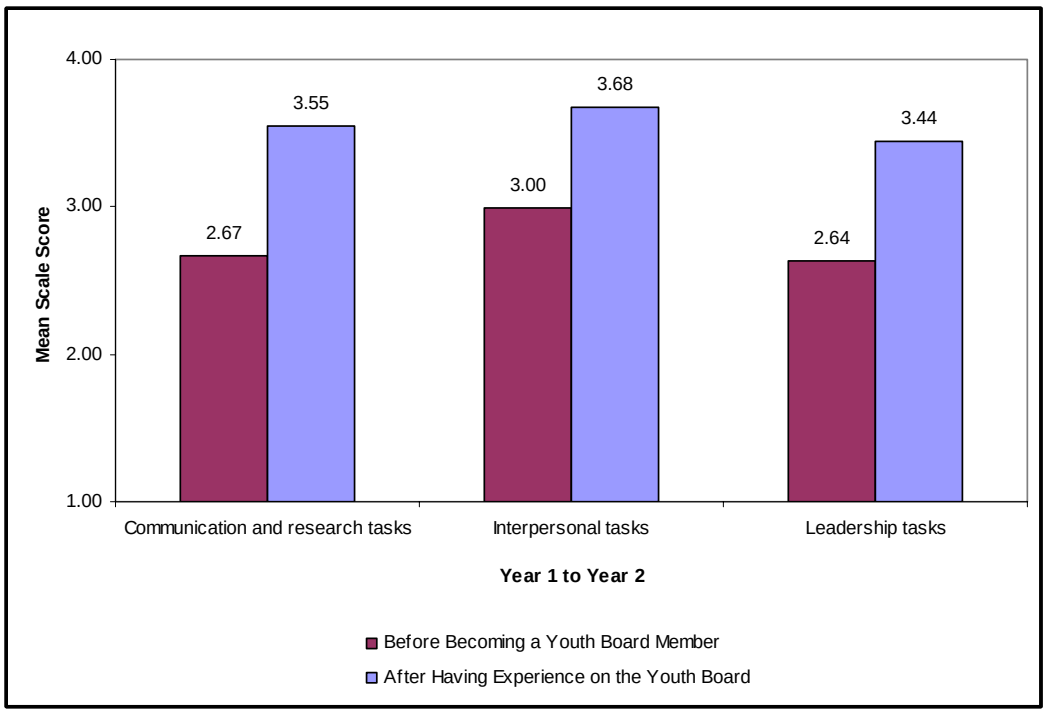
Exhibit 16
Youth Members' Leadership Efforts in 2004 and 2005



During their two-year board membership, youth grew more comfortable carrying out the tasks associated with the work of their board. Indeed, many more youth members reported being comfortable participating in a variety of communication, interpersonal, and leadership tasks associated with the work of their board in 2005 than was the case when they first joined the boards in 2004. For example, on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all comfortable" and 4 is "very comfortable," youth scored an average of 3.55 points on a scale measuring their comfort level in carrying out communication and research tasks. That is, in 2005, youth members reported that they were more comfortable setting an agenda for a meeting, speaking or presenting in front of a group, expressing their ideas in writing, conducting research to collect data, and analyzing data than was the case in 2004, where youth scored, on average, 2.67 points on the four-point scale. Similarly, in 2005, youth members reported that they were more comfortable working on tasks that required interpersonal skills, such as working as part of a team; working with people who had different working styles, attitudes, and ways of communicating; working with adults; building consensus around decisions; and resolving conflicts to help people work together. In 2004, the mean score on the scale measuring youth members' comfort level in engaging in interpersonal tasks was 3 points; by 2005, the mean scale score had increased by .68 points to 3.68 points. Finally, in 2005, youth members reported that they were more comfortable taking on leadership tasks associated with the board (mean scale score=3.44 points) than had been the case in 2004 (mean scale score=2.64 points). Specifically, youth members reported being, on average, more comfortable raising money for a program or cause; taking the initiative to identify tasks that needed to be completed; leading others to complete a task; motivating others to participate

in activities; and contacting government officials about issues that concerned them (Exhibit 17).

Exhibit 17
Effect of the Youth Board on Youth Members' Comfort Level in Carrying Out the Tasks of the Youth Board (n=55)



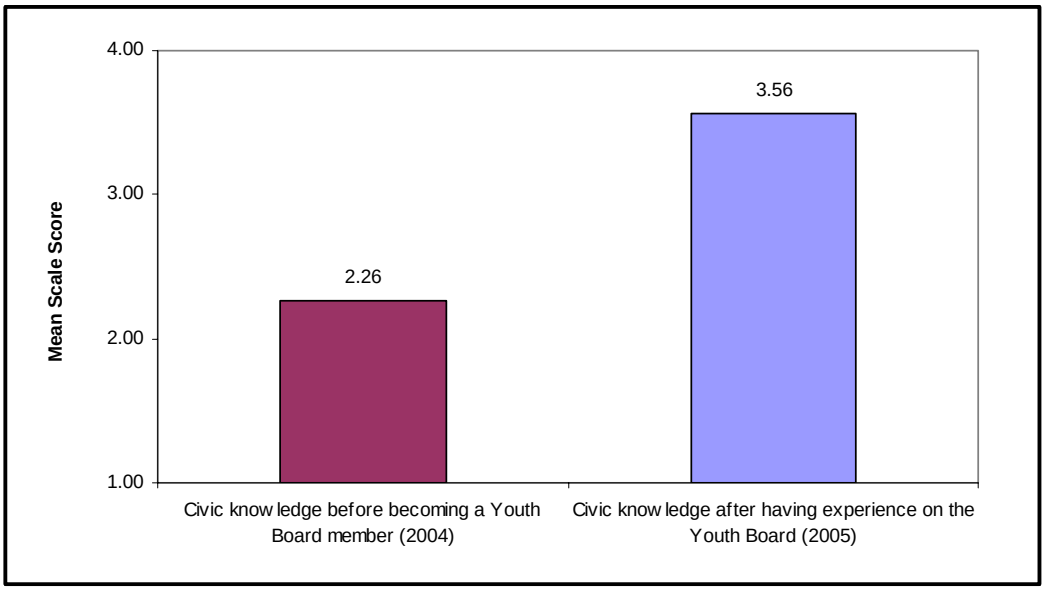
No significant differences were found among the sites in their effect, relative to each other, on youth members' comfort level in carrying out the communication, research, interpersonal, and leadership tasks associated with the work of their board.

Effects on Civic Knowledge

Youth reported increased civic knowledge and awareness as a result of their participation on Youth Boards. In both years of survey responses, youth reported significant increases in their knowledge of community issues and civic opportunities as a result of participating in Youth Board activities. In 2004, before working on Youth Boards, youth members scored a mean of 2.26 points on a scale of 1 to 4 on civic knowledge. By 2005, their mean scale score was 3.56 points, an increase of 1.3 points on the four-point scale. That is, by 2005, youth members believed themselves to be more knowledgeable about: (1) the important

problems affecting their community; (2) the root causes of community problems; (3) ways to identify and access key power players and social/political networks in their community; (4) opportunities for youth to become involved in the community; (5) policies that affect issues that they are concerned about; (6) the role the media play in influencing public opinion; and (7) ways to influence policies to make change (Exhibit 18).

Exhibit 18
Effect of the Youth Board on Youth Members' Civic Knowledge
(n=55)



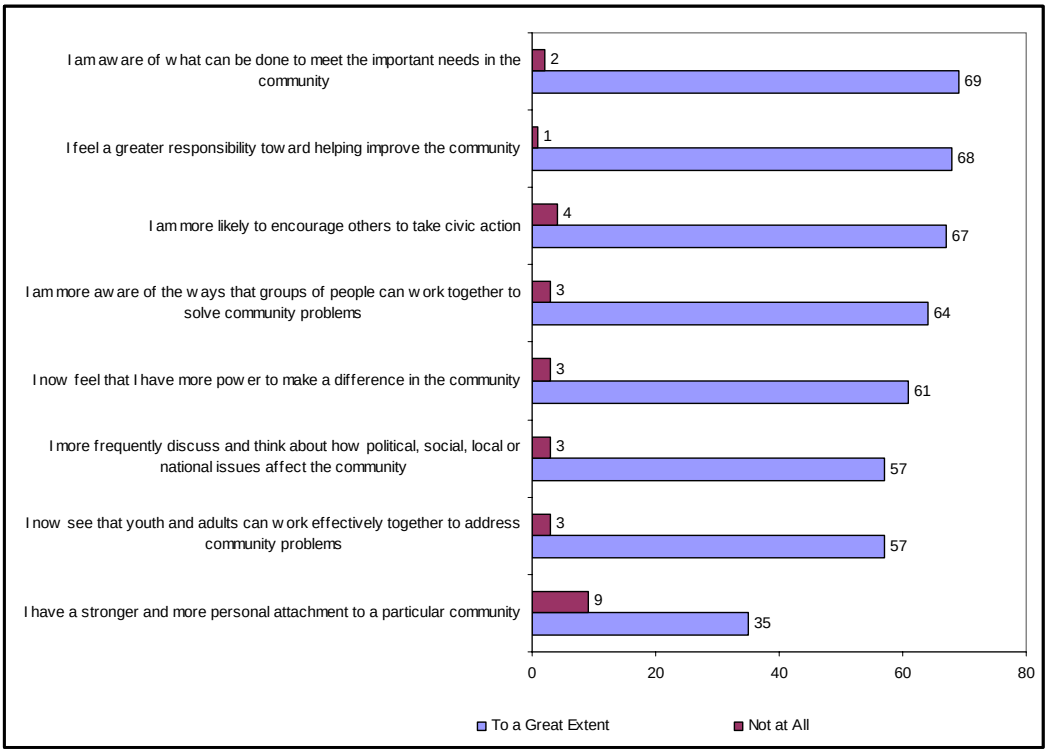
Site-level analyses revealed no systematic differences in the increase in youth members' civic knowledge by site. That is, about the same percentage of youth members' in every site reported an increase in their civic knowledge between Years 1 and 2.

In a focus group discussion, one Youth Board member said, "I've changed in my attitude and outlook…I read the newspaper now. I watch the news now. I also thought that I couldn't change anything. I've started really caring about things that go on." Another board member said, "Now, I care more about voting in anything, not just for the [Presidential] election. If you do have an opinion and you can vote, then you should. Otherwise, you shouldn't complain about things."

Participation on Youth Boards also helped to foster increased awareness of the power of youth voice in contributing to social change. In 2005, when surveyed about the changes they recognized in themselves as a result of participation in the YIF initiative, approximately two-thirds of the youth—to a

great extent—felt a greater responsibility toward helping improve the community (68 percent), that youth and adults could work together effectively to solve community problems (68 percent), more likely to encourage others to take civic action (67 percent), and more aware of the ways groups of people could work together to solve community problems (64 percent) (Exhibit 19).

Exhibit 19
Changes in Attitudes and Beliefs Among Youth Members in 2005 (n=99)



Changes in youth members' attitudes and beliefs did not vary significantly by site. That is, in general, while youth members' responses varied slightly by site, no systematic differences emerged by site in the percentage of youth members' reporting on the effect of the Youth Board on their attitudes and beliefs.

Focus group interviews also suggested that youth gained a sense of self-efficacy and awareness and changed their perception of issues and opportunities in their communities. One youth said, "My attitude changed in knowing there are people out there who want to make things change." Another youth commented, "Before, I didn't know where we could change the community. Now, we know we can make change." A site coordinator agreed that, "Since I've been here, the [YIF] has given [youth] an extreme boost of confidence and it has validated their presence in the community. It's also solidified their ability to work with adults as

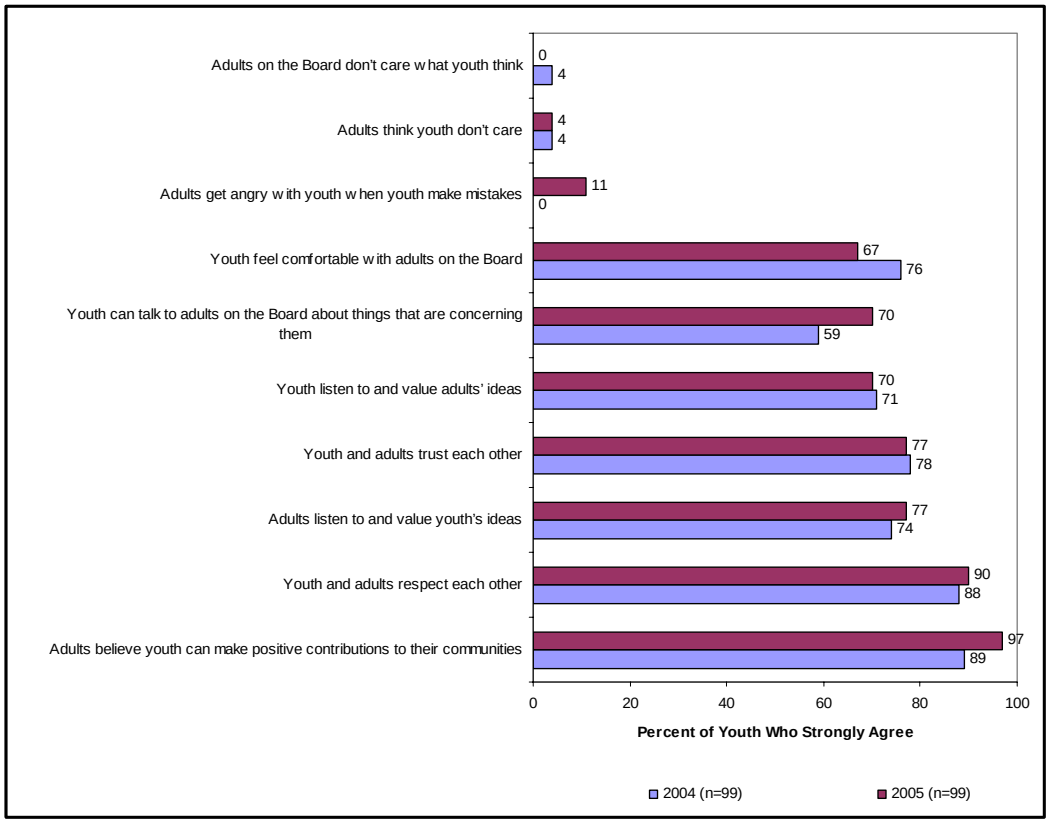
partners. It allows them to go into a level of deeper thinking and cognitive abilities and think outside of their own comfort level." Another youth said that being on the board changed his attitude. "[My attitude] changed because I always thought kids had to hold back their thoughts and ideas. It encouraged me to say what I had to say." The site coordinator from this board added, "They've become social animals and have a sense of how take on change. They feel proud of what they're doing." A youth from another board said, "I think now more about things in the community…about how things could be changed and how things could be better."

Effects on Youth-Adult Relationships

Participation in the YIF did not significantly change Youth Board members' perceptions of youth-adult relationships. Survey data indicated that youth members had positive perceptions of adults when they began their membership and those perceptions did not change much as a result of their participation on the board. For example, youth members generally agreed that adults believe youth can make positive contributions to their communities (89 percent in 2004; 97 percent in 2005), that youth and adults respect each other (88 and 90 percent, respectively); that adults listen to and value youth's ideas (74 and 77 percent, respectively); and that youth and adults trust each other (78 and 77 percent, respectively) (Exhibit 20). These positive perceptions suggest that overall Youth Boards attract youth who are already confident in their relationships with adults, so that the YIF is unlikely to have a large impact on youth's opinions about adults.

Youth members' perceptions of youth-adult interactions between Year 1 and Year 2 did vary somewhat from the overall findings in two sites. That is, while youth members' perceptions of youth-adult interactions remained largely the same between Years 1 and 2 of the initiative in six of the eight sites, data from two sites suggested that youth member perceptions of adult-youth interactions were more negative in Year 2 than in Year 1. Indeed, fewer youth members strongly agreed with the majority of statements about adult-youth interaction in Year 2 than did in Year 1. One possible explanation for this disparity may be unstable leadership at these two particular sites, each of which saw turnover in site coordinators during Phase I of the initiative. Given that site coordinators were the adults with whom youth members tended to spend the majority of their time, the lack of opportunity for youth in these two sites to form longer-term relationships with these individuals suggests that this particular adult-youth relationship can be critical to the formation of positive youth perceptions of adult-youth interactions. However, not all sites that experienced a turnover in site coordinator had more negative youth perceptions of adult-youth interactions in Year 2, suggesting that an ongoing relationship with the site coordinator is not the only factor that may influence youth perceptions.

Exhibit 20
Differences in Youth Members' Perceptions of Youth-Adult Interactions in 2004 and 2005



Focus group data suggested that adults and youth believed that relationship-building was crucial in allowing them to work together on the board and that youth began to see adults as their allies. One youth said, "The relationship is wonderful. When it's time to work, we'll do that. When it's time to relax, we can talk to them like friends. We understand each other." An adult board member from another site said, "It's been about relationship-building, slipping those lessons in, in an informal way as we play foosball after the meetings, really breaking down those barriers." A Youth Board member from another site commented that, [the site coordinator] "is really not an adult to us. She's just like an older sister but not. She doesn't really tell us what to do, she just advises us. We have our consortium partners, so we have a great deal of adult leadership here. But it's not like they're looking down on us—we're looking eye to eye." The Youth Board members at another site indicated that the adults were laid back and encouraging. One member said, "They don't try to overpower us. We feel like we're on the same level as they are."

Adults involved with the YIF, including both adult board members and consortium partners, acted in a support role to guide and provide access to their

connections and experience in the community. One youth said, "What was unexpected was how much lead they let us take. They don't interfere much, but they help us out. When we have grandiose ideas, they help us focus. It's a good balance." In several sites, adult board members were each assigned to work with a specific committee, sharing their knowledge and experience with the youth. "They generally come to a meeting and add some wisdom that we don't always see, and if we need connections, they'll have them." An adult said, "We're like coaches and youth have stepped up and taken leadership and responsibility. I see us being in the background and supporting them at all times." An adult from another board said, "As an adult member, it's an interesting position. I try to enhance what's going on instead of create what's going on. It's difficult, but it's something I strive for. I also see it as an opportunity to use my connections with other organizations to bring in expertise that the board doesn't have."

Learning occurred in both directions. While youth benefited from the experience of the adults they worked with, they also felt that adults learned from them. "They learned more about what kids think about and how much we want to be involved. They've seen a lot more of our perspectives." The lead consortium partner in Portland, Maine, said, "The youth see everything differently and that's what's great about it. Sometimes I feel like I know the answer, and then the kids see it so differently. Adults are blown away about how youth think about issues. This is definitely the youth's board. We know this is a different model and that's why this is exciting. Sometimes you get challenged in a good way."

Youth noted that intergenerational collaboration was important for validating their efforts in the community. One youth said, "It looks better if there's an adult or a group of adults backing you up and you're trying to create this movement and you have all of these adults that are behind you already, then it would be easier for adults to get onto it. If it's just a bunch of kids…they might not take it as seriously." Youth from another board had a similar perspective. "So often you see projects like this that try to work but the adult support is not there and the project gets written off…It's important for young leaders to be taken seriously in the community. It helps to have adults looking at us as peers in this social change group." Youth on the Nashville Board acknowledged they learned several things from adults on the board. "I learned some of the finer points of how to manage money and provide grant oversight." Another youth said he learned how to evaluate each grantee. His colleague said, "I learned how busy adults are and that there are adults who really care and believe in us and that we can make a difference."

Effects of Mini-Grants on Youth Board Members

Planning and monitoring mini-grants stimulated and challenged Youth Board members and spawned a sense of accomplishment. One site coordinator said that through the mini-grant process, Youth Board members "began to do

some critical thinking about how the grants would impact the community. One of my 'bottom line members' asked in deliberation, 'If we give the grant, how would things be changed in five years?'" Most of the youth on that board said the grant-making process was difficult. One youth said, "I sat in on the grant committee meetings and it was a struggle for them. They pushed and worked hard." Another youth added, "More than anything, I learned about how many people want grants and how much it takes for organizations to function. It's hard to prioritize and not give money to people who may want to do well but they aren't abiding by the guidelines."

Implementing the mini-grants helped make the concepts that youth discussed and learned in Year 1 more concrete. One site coordinator observed, "Creating the RFP was successful. They felt a sense of accomplishment. The grantee workshop was successful too and the evaluation forms were great." Another site coordinator said, "The biggest piece was having a tangible product. For a long time we were discussing and planning, creating committees and bylaws. The RFP helped people to see or feel what they were doing. Seeing the fruits of their labor helped engage the youth."

YIF Effects on Communities

As a result of the boards' work in communities, many organizations began to reevaluate their commitment to youth voice and incorporated more youth involvement in their operations. In Cleveland, the Chamber of Commerce began to consider having youth serve on its councils. The Chamber's executive director envisions youth as full committee members, taking on work outside of meetings and having voting privileges. One deterrent, though, is that most of the committees traditionally meet at lunchtime when youth are in school. In the same city, the Bolivar County Community Action Agency invited two youth from the Agency's Adolescent Offenders program to sit in on the policy council and two youth to sit on the board of directors in no-voting positions. The school superintendent expressed interest in having a youth advisory council for the district. In Portland, Maine, the school district allows two youth members on the school committee, the equivalent of a school board. In Portland, Ore., a member of the Youth Board sits on the allocation committee of the Children's Investment Fund, an organization that investments in early childhood, child abuse prevention, and after-school programs. In San Francisco, the YMCA invited youth to staff meetings to help plan programming, scheduling, and changes in rules and regulations. In Ypsilanti, a local community center established a youth advisory board to add youth voice into its decision making.

The mini-grant projects benefited communities by affecting the lead youth who worked on the projects in collaboration with adults. The evaluation surveyed a sample of 15 lead youth in the mini-grant projects to gauge their reactions to the mini-grant experience. Lead youth indicated that they gained

valuable skills, felt more confident about making change in the community, and became more aware of community issues. Fourteen of 15 youth agreed that working on the project taught them new skills. Youths' responses to open-ended survey questions also indicated that they had learned new skills. One youth wrote, "I learned how to write grants for people. I learned to interview people and I also learned when you have great ideas about things you can express yourself." Another youth said, "[I learned] how to manage a budget, how to recognize issues that directly impact youth the most, and how to work in a group and divvy up tasks accordingly." Another noted that, "[I learned] how to compromise. It allowed me to get more interaction with members of my community [with whom] I would have otherwise not spoken."

Collaborating adults from these projects agreed. "I think the collaborative process is something that they learned a little bit better, in particular two youth with very different backgrounds developed a strong partnership and friendship. The process of developing a project and planning (using a timeline) was something they had done a little bit before but never had the sole responsibility of doing." Another adult ally said that there was an increase in students' confidence, especially in public speaking skills for students who participated in the mini-grant project. "That experience of having to speak in front of strangers was invaluable."

Twelve of 15 lead youth surveyed agreed that they felt a great responsibility to help improve their community and that they had the power to make a difference. Ten of 15 lead youth agreed that they more frequently discussed and thought about how political and social issues affected the community as a result of their YIF mini-grant project. Open-ended responses revealed that the mini-grant projects helped some youth feel empowered to make a difference in their communities. One youth said, "I learned that little by little, I could help students in my community to better their education." Another youth recognized the importance of understanding how political and social issues affect the community. This youth explained that through her mini-grant project, she learned the "importance of figuring out the root causes of the issues facing our community and also looking deep into issues and trying to figure out a way to solve them."

Similarly, another adult commented that he thought youth were learning how to take better advantage of community resources as a result of the mini-grant project. Still another said that youth started taking greater advantage of community resources. "They are putting themselves out there more. They are brave and will fight for what they believe is right. Their confidence is up, and they are doing things the typical kids aren't doing. It'll mold their character in the end."

V. Conclusions

In Phase I, the activities of the YIF initiative were designed to help youth members of the boards better understand their communities, gain leadership skills, increase their civic awareness, gain confidence about youth voice in the community, and better appreciate the value of youth-adult partnerships. Although there were implementation challenges along the way, data from surveys and focus groups of participating youth suggested that the YIF initiative was successful in helping youth gain these skills and attitudes in its first phase. In particular, the Youth Boards exposed youth members to diverse individuals and experiences that broadened their perspectives on their communities; over time, more youth members took initiative in leading or helping to lead various board activities and grew more comfortable viewing themselves as leaders. In addition, youth members reported increased civic knowledge and awareness as a result of their participation on the Youth Boards. Ultimately, youth and adults learned from each other. Adults offered youth guidance and provided access to their connections and experience in the community and youth offered adults a different perspective on the problems communities confront.

Many organizations in the communities the boards served began to reevaluate their commitment to youth voice and have included more youth involvement in their operations. In addition, the mini-grant projects benefited communities by affecting the lead youth who worked on the projects. After participating in the mini-grant project, lead youth indicated that they gained valuable skills, felt more confident about making change in the community, and became more aware of issues in the community.

Recommendations

As the YIF sites move forward in achieving the purposes of Phase II, they may want to consider the following ways to improve upon the work of the boards and their internal operations:

- Consider offering stipends for youth to participate on boards. These incentives may increase the success of the boards in attracting youth with greater diversity in terms of their economic backgrounds. That is, there may be potential recruits who cannot participate on the board because they have to work to help support their families. Offering a stipend would partially compensate for the wages of a part-time job.

- Consider narrowing the definition of the roles and responsibilities of site coordinators, adult board members, and consortium partners so that the three groups do not overlap in purpose. One site has

considered inviting adult board members to act as mentors to youth members, but not sit on the boards or actively participate in board meetings. This was a solution to the problems the site had in defining the purpose of the adult board member given that the consortium partners were fairly directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the youth board.

- Consider requiring that every youth member cycle through each of the leadership positions on the boards—e.g., the chair of the board, the chair of a committee or subcommittee, the video liaison, organizing a community presentation or rally, etc.—so all youth leave their boards having gained some leadership experience in a variety of roles.

- Review the role of the consortium partners in light of boards' goals and objectives for Phase II. Consider whether the current consortium partners are well-suited to assisting boards in achieving their goals for Phase II. In addition, consider whether current consortium partners' internal goals and objectives continue to be consistent with the stated mission of the boards.

- To reduce the risk of turnover, consider offering site coordinators retention bonuses after completing the full two years of Phase II.

With Phase I successes behind them, the YIF sites are ready to move into Phase II of their work.