Leadership Development at a Youthbuild Program

Written by YouthBuild USA under contract with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
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Preface

Leadership Development at a Youthbuild Program is one of a series of handbooks developed by YouthBuild USA under contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist individuals and organizations in operating Youthbuild programs in their communities. These handbooks, covering education, counseling, construction, leadership development, and graduate resources are thematically linked so that, taken together, they provide a detailed and comprehensive guide to implementing an effective Youthbuild program. The handbooks supplement the Youthbuild Program Manual which provides an overview of the Youthbuild program and its components.

Leadership Development at a Youthbuild Program represents the compilation and distillation of over 15 years of Youthbuild experience in the field. Input from Youthbuild graduates and staff has brought together the best practices we have to offer to date. Additional publications and materials are also available from YouthBuild USA. We encourage you to contact YouthBuild USA or HUD for more information and assistance, or to get additional copies of this handbook.

The primary author of this handbook is John Bell, director of leadership development for YouthBuild USA from 1988 to 1995. Major contributions to the final version were written by Jackie Gelb, executive director of YouthBuild Boston from 1991 to 1996. We would like to thank all the individuals in the Youthbuild network who have contributed to this handbook, including Jill Bottomley, Carol Dirga, Ronald F. Ferguson, John Andrew Gallery, Joyce King, Stacey Simmons, Dorothy Stoneman, Kevin Tarpley, Ayoka Turner, Peter Twichell, and Holladay Weiss. We would also like to thank Ron Herbert, Roy Priest, Mike Savage, and Susan Shinderman at HUD for their support. We would like to give special thanks to Sheila Platoff at HUD for her extensive review of this handbook and guidance in making this handbook possible.

YouthBuild USA
58 Day Street
P.O. Box 440322
Somerville, MA 02144
Tel: (617) 623-9900
Fax: (617) 623-4331
E-mail: info@youthbuild.org
Web: http://www.youthbuild.org
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Introduction to Leadership Development at a Youthbuild Program

Why Leadership Development?

Youthbuild is a community development program that simultaneously addresses several of the key needs of low-income communities in the United States: housing, education, employment, youth development, crime prevention, and the creation of a new generation of young leaders committed to community development.

The engagement of unemployed, under-educated young adults in the process of building housing for the homeless and low-income people immediately changes their relationship to their community. Coupling this productive activity with job training, academic education, personal counseling, and participation in a positive peer group with a set of values that can compete with the lure of the streets, results in a transformation of the feelings, attitudes, lifestyle, and aspirations of the young people who participate. This transformation brings great value and hope to their communities.

Experience has shown that Youthbuild’s focus on developing leadership skills is not only of great benefit to the community, but is also a motivating factor for the young people themselves. When young people are challenged to act like leaders, to make a contribution to their communities, to “take responsibility to make things go right for one’s self, family, program, and community,” (as a commonly used Youthbuild definition of leadership states) then the process of personal transformation follows more readily. The challenge to become one’s best self, to fulfill one’s highest dreams, and to make a difference to other people by acting as a leader and role model brings out the best in Youthbuild trainees.

This poses a challenge to Youthbuild program staff, who must balance the complexities of building housing, while providing academic and employment skills to out-of-school young adults who have entered the program with a variety of urgent needs and self-defeating behaviors. “How,” the typical staff person asks, “can we also develop leadership, when we have so much to do? Don’t all these other objectives precede the development of leadership?”

A large part of what makes the Youthbuild program effective is the attitude, communicated immediately by the staff to the young people as they enter the program, that they are potential leaders and role models whose contribution to the program and the community can and will make a difference. This attitude is often so different from the way disadvantaged young people believe adults view them, that it pro-
vides the opportunity and motivation for the young people to rise to the challenge of transforming their own lives, rebuilding their communities, and taking responsibility for the future of their communities.

The emphasis on leadership development in a Youthbuild program attracts committed staff, who see the importance of this element of the program's purpose and philosophy. Moreover, giving young people the opportunity to take leadership roles within the program, including decision making about appropriate aspects of the program's policies and rules, provides staff with insight from the perspective of the trainees which usually results in a more effective program and sustains trainee motivation.

This emphasis on leadership development within the program also provides young people with the skills that will enable them to become effective community leaders and role models throughout their lives.

**The Purpose of this Handbook**

The actual process of developing the leadership skills and attitudes of trainees requires sustained attention on a daily basis from the program's staff. It also requires training to enable staff to understand how to incorporate leadership opportunities into all aspects of the program.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information on how to plan, organize, and implement the leadership development component of a Youthbuild program. It is directed to three audiences: the Youthbuild director; the program manager and leadership development staff; and all staff of the Youthbuild program.

For Youthbuild directors the handbook provides an overview of the key issues and decisions involved in planning the leadership development component of the Youthbuild program and provides a process for working with staff to develop that plan.

For Youthbuild program managers and leadership development staff it provides an overview of planning issues and specific directions for conducting the leadership development component.

For all staff it provides an introduction and orientation to their role in the leadership development component of a Youthbuild program and specific suggestions for incorporating leadership development into all aspects of the program.

**How this Handbook Is Organized**

*Leadership Development at a Youthbuild Program* has three parts. The first, “Planning the Leadership Development Component,” provides an overview of lead-
ership development as both concept and practice and describes how to staff and plan the component. It is primarily directed to the Youthbuild director. The second, “Organizing the Leadership Development Component,” describes how to engage staff in organizing a leadership development plan and how to introduce the leadership development concept to participants. It is directed to the Youthbuild director, program manager, and all staff. The third, “Implementing the Leadership Development Component,” provides more specific ideas and tools to be used during the program year. It is directed to all staff but most particularly to the staff responsible for the oversight and implementation of leadership development in the program.

**What Congress Says about Leadership Development at Youthbuild**

HUD’s Youthbuild program was authorized in Subtitle D of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992. The Subtitle cited four purposes. The first three relate to affordable housing for low-income and homeless people; work and service opportunities for low-income youth; and self-sufficiency through education and employment skills for low-income youth.

- The fourth purpose is stated thus: “to foster the development of leadership skills and commitment to community development among young adults in low-income communities.” SEC 451

- To support this purpose, the statute includes the following as activities eligible for funding: “Activities designed to develop...leadership skills, including support for youth councils.” SEC 454(b)(4)(D)

- The statute further stipulates that an application for funding contain “a description of the activities that will be undertaken to develop the leadership skills of participants.” SEC 454(c)(2)(K)

- Finally, the law directs the Secretary to establish selection criteria which shall include “the apparent commitment of the applicant to leadership development, education, and training of participants.” SEC 454(d)(5)

Thus the Congress was unambiguous and consistent in its intent to make Youthbuild programs seriously address the need to produce graduates who possess leadership skills and a commitment to community development.
These materials were developed by YouthBuild USA, under a contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The materials contain suggested resource centers, organizations, resource materials, and bibliographies that the authors believe participants may find useful in conducting Youthbuild programs and activities. However, the suggested sources are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all sources, and their inclusion in the materials does not imply their endorsement by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
This handbook is supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The opinions expressed are solely those of the authors. In designing your academic and instructional program, please note Section 456(c) of the Youthbuild legislation, below.

(c) Authority Restriction.—No provision of this subtitle may be construed to authorize any agency, officer, or employee of the United States to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution, school, or school system, or over the selection of library resources, textbooks, or other printed or published instructional materials by any educational institution or school system.
Part I: Planning the Leadership Development Component

The Youthbuild board and director must plan some of the leadership development component of the program even before staff have been hired and participants have been accepted for the program. This first part of the handbook describes the key issues to be considered at this planning stage.
Chapter 1: Vision, Definitions, and Key Elements

Overview

When planning the leadership development component of a Youthbuild program it is important to first envision how leadership development will actually appear as part of the program. This chapter offers definitions of leadership and leadership development, describes the organizational commitment necessary for a successful leadership development component, and describes the key elements of a strong leadership development plan.

A Vision of Leadership Development

The following is a vision of what a well-developed, fully integrated leadership development component might look like. No Youthbuild program to date has achieved all the elements described in this vision, but everything described here has been used by a Youthbuild program somewhere. This is a description of what a leadership development program might look like several years into a program's operation. Not all these aspects of leadership development can be achieved in the first year. Like a house, a solid leadership development program is built in stages. However, it is helpful to have a vision of future leadership development goals to guide the stages of program development.

“Youthbuild Anytown”

The “Youthbuild Anytown” program is six months into its third cycle. Last cycle's graduates helped the staff recruit and select the current participants. They selected people who seemed ready to make a positive change in their lives, who wanted to give back to the community, and who showed some leadership experience or potential.

During orientation, the new students were told that they were expected to be leaders in the program and in the community. To get into “Youthbuild Anytown”, each person had to agree in writing to register to vote, to vote in every election during the program cycle, to attend the meetings of at least three different community organizations, to report back to the whole group about the community organizations, to serve on a leadership committee in the Youthbuild program, and to do three hours of community service per week in addition to housing construction. Each student took a pre-program leadership assessment survey to use as a
benchmark against which to measure progress.

The staff and young people abide by a set of principles or core values that staff and youth from the first program cycle worked out together. The principles, as expressed in a daily pledge which the whole community recites each morning, are:

“We, the members of Youthbuild Anytown, pledge that we are working together

• to improve and rebuild our community;
• to relate to each other in cooperative ways;
• to develop our potential as leaders;
• to educate and improve ourselves and help others along the way;
• to respect our peers, neighbors, and all life; and
• to be part of a great movement for justice, equality, and peace.

All this we will do with love and dignity.”

From day one of the program, the young people learned that the first part of leadership is taking responsibility for oneself. The staff supported and challenged them to be on time, to attend every day, to refuse to make excuses, to be positive, to deal with anger constructively, to kick negative habits, to do the schoolwork, to take care of tools, to speak to others respectfully, and to develop other positive personal behaviors. Responsibility was taught as the foundation of good leadership.

A few months into the program, the Policy Committee was elected. The Policy Committee is a key governing center composed of eight elected young people, the director, and a staff representative. The Policy Committee meets weekly. Participants elected the most responsible of their peers for this job. The Policy Committee began with a weekend retreat where Policy Committee members trained to prepare themselves for increasing responsibilities such as understanding the overall organizational structure; learning the role of the Policy Committee; and learning how to form an agenda, chair a meeting, read a budget, interview a job candidate, make consensus decisions, and use good group process.

Because of this solid foundation, the Policy Committee was well respected by students and staff. It participated in disciplinary decisions, resolved conflict, hired staff, set program policies, and debated community issues. Two different non-Policy Committee members sat in on each meeting as observers. In this way, all Youthbuild members had contact with the committee. The committee used a standard meeting process, and in the beginning each member got a chance to chair a meeting.

Now there is a permanent youth chair who sets the agenda with the director and leads each meeting. The director and staff person are careful not to dominate. During a meeting, one student takes minutes on a laptop, prints them out, and distributes them at the end of each meeting. Members post them in the classroom
or on the worksite the next day after they give a verbal report and get feedback about the results of the meeting.

Leadership training and opportunities are not limited to those on the Policy Committee. Staff and youth participants discuss issues, set policies, and plan activities in monthly community meetings. Many young people have learned to lead small group discussions through these community meetings. Temporary committees form to take on special projects. A review committee handles discipline and grievances. All the participants and staff have been trained in mediation and conflict resolution and anyone can call for a mediation session with youth and staff mediators. There is also a Community Leadership Committee for those who want to get involved in community action or advocacy beyond the Youthbuild program. The Anytown Community Leadership Committee members have given presentations in local public schools about subjects like staying in school and avoiding drugs. They have also set up a tutoring program, coached Little League, and sponsored a city-wide youth conference.

Beyond these formal leadership committees, there are leadership jobs on the worksite and in the classroom. Young people serve as hosts by escorting visitors through the building and explaining the program. Participants take turns assisting the receptionist, answering phones, and learning bookkeeping.

The whole program reflects Youthbuild’s concern for young leaders. There are prominent displays of quotes and pictures of leaders—from everyday leaders like the participants’ mothers to public leaders like Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Mahatma Gandhi, Colin Powell, Martin Luther King, Jr., Sandra Day O’Connor, Millard Fuller, and Marian Wright Edelman. The Youthbuild definition of good leadership is posted in the classroom and on the worksite: “Good leadership is taking responsibility to make things go right for yourself, your family, the program, and the community.” The classroom teacher uses a leadership curriculum that teaches basic skills while covering topics like the history of the community and its peoples, social change movements and their leaders, theories of change, public speaking, writing skills, and community organizing methods.

The program has developed leadership “competencies,” a specific set of practical skills and information which each participant is required to master by graduation such as: how to keep a weekly schedule calendar, set a personal budget, listen well, take good notes, lead a small group discussion, explain helpful group process techniques, use the phone system effectively, research to find information, and access local government.

Weekly leadership workshops are held every Friday morning. Some of these workshops teach a leadership competency. Others feature an outside speaker, community leader, or local public official. Still others get the Youthbuild members, staff, and young people to explore issues of cultural diversity in an ongoing effort to increase understanding and combat oppression. They have classes on current political and economic issues to sharpen their critical thinking skills and help them form useful analyses. These kinds of experiences give the participants a larg-
Chapter One: Vision, Definitions, and Key Elements

er world view. Some of Youthbuild young people write a regular column in the community newspaper on the world from a youth perspective.

Youthbuild Anytown ensures that the youth perspective extends beyond its own program boundaries. The director regularly takes participants and graduates to visit foundations and government agencies in order to assist with fundraising. Young people speak to the press and testify at city council meetings. Staff often take young people with them to their own community meetings. Several young people attend a Youthbuild national youth conference in Washington, D.C., attend leadership workshops and meet youth from Youthbuild programs all over the country.

However, no program always runs smoothly. There are conflicts, flare-ups, contract violations, staff and student disrespect, negative behavior, and occasional terminations. Even outstanding leaders struggle with such issues as acting responsibly on the Policy Committee, resisting peer pressure to act out in the classroom, and feeling guilt about leaving behind friends from their previous street-life. Personal crises sometimes cause a young person to slip backwards. However, the program has worked out ways to handle such stressful times.

Everyone is continually reminded of the principles as guiding ideas. The students take responsibility for handling common negative behavior among themselves. The review committee formally handles grievances or serious violations. The counselors teach methods of anger management and conflict resolution. The program uses peer counseling and support groups to gradually increase trust levels, allow for caring and healing, build community, improve listening skills, and challenge negative behavior and attitudes. The program recognizes that further leadership development is often blocked by internalized attitudes and stored emotional pain collected over a lifetime. Personal development and leadership development go hand in hand. The staff expects participants to do both.

The key component of “Youthbuild Anytown’s” leadership program is the commitment of the director and staff. The director, with the backing of the board, sees the program as a training ground for solid citizens and community leaders. The director has hired and trained a staff who view young people as leaders helping to run the program rather than as clients needing services. (Over the past two years, she has also fired several staff who could not respect young people in practice.) The director has helped the staff build a vision for leadership development. There are ongoing, regular staff development trainings in leadership development. The program has determined desired outcomes of its leadership development component.

As a result, each staff member, whether through teaching, counseling, or training, sees himself or herself as a leadership developer. Each staff member sets leadership goals and objectives for which he or she is held responsible. Twice a year the staff does a formal written and verbal evaluation of the leadership program. In addition, the staff position of leadership developer is responsible for scheduling workshops; lining up speakers; planning leadership retreats; keeping track of leadership competencies; supporting the Policy Committee and other youth committees; and helping
other staff keep leadership development high on their agendas.

As a result of this approach, most participants graduate with confidence in themselves and their ability to change their lives and create a positive future. They have a knowledge base and a tool kit of leadership skills. They have had a year of various leadership experiences. They have seen the connection between their own neighborhoods and the wider world.

Many graduates are now members of their children’s PTAs and other community organizations. Some serve on community boards and keep informed about politics and public issues. These graduates vote regularly. One graduate was hired by the Youthbuild program as an assistant construction trainer. Two graduates are on “Youthbuild Anytown’s” board. Another graduate plans to run for the local school committee. The majority of graduates are serving as role models for those around them because they are positive people who are responsible parents, steady job holders, and mentors for younger people.

Many graduates are in college. Some have become or aspire to become youth workers, AIDS counselors, or community leaders. Most stay active with the Youthbuild Anytown Alumni Club and Graduate Program, which provide job and personal counseling, further educational opportunities, positive social activities, and ongoing leadership roles. The community views “Youthbuild Anytown” as a real resource. Employers are eager to hire graduates because of their good work skills and responsible attitudes. Consequently, local foundations, churches, agencies, businesses, and media consider Youthbuild Anytown a community treasure and give it support in many forms.

**What Is Leadership Development?**

Leadership development is both a concept and a practice. As a concept, leadership development consciously stresses young people’s untapped and underestimated insights and leadership gifts. Using this approach with Youthbuild participants can change the way they perceive themselves. In addition, it changes the way they think adults have traditionally perceived and treated them. For young people, this builds self-confidence and self-esteem and enhances motivation in a manner that substantially contributes to their ability to change their own lives. Leadership development as a practice can play a fundamental role in helping Youthbuild participants transform their lives by providing structures, trainings, and opportunities for participants to exercise progressively increasing leadership responsibilities within the safety of the program and with the support of the program staff.

**What Is Leadership?**

Many Youthbuild programs use this definition of leadership:

> Good leadership is taking responsibility to make things go right for yourself, your family, the program, and the community.”
This simple definition of leadership helps young people to recognize the leadership roles they play in their present lives and to envision larger leadership roles in the future. For some young people, the first steps toward greater leadership are getting up in the morning, coming to Youthbuild on time, and acting responsibly. Students who have children have the additional responsibilities of supporting and caring for their families. These basic but critical accomplishments can be viewed as first steps in developing leadership skills, and should be recognized and appreciated by the program as students prepare to take on larger leadership roles.

Within the Youthbuild program, young adults may take on larger leadership roles such as serving on leadership committees or serving in a leadership role on the construction site. Through the construction of affordable housing and other community service projects, trainees have the opportunity to take responsibility for rebuilding and improving their community. Some young people will want to stay involved on their own time in broader community issues, helping to improve life in the neighborhood, the city, and the world.

By recognizing all these levels of leadership, staff and participants alike can gain a deeper view of the development of young adults. They realize that even their day-to-day activities are examples of taking leadership in their lives.

**Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:**

How did Youthbuild help you develop leadership skills?

“I feel that my leadership skills were always there. Youthbuild helped to bring out the potential that’s within.”

“By being a program that’s interested in the youth’s voices, and by pushing me to the limit as a woman.”

“By giving me opportunities I never had before to network with other young people.”

“By teaching me that leadership is not just about yourself.”

**The Two Sides of Leadership Development**

The evolution of leadership within an individual participant often falls into
two stages. The first stage focuses on personal transformation and leadership within one's own life and family. The second stage focuses on an outward expression of this personal transformation by extending leadership activities into the program and community.

It may be helpful to think of leadership development as summed up by the following formula:

\[
\text{Personal Transformation} + \text{Outward Expression} = \text{Leadership Development}
\]

**Personal Transformation: Responsibility for Self and Family**

Initially, most of the leadership development activity in a Youthbuild program focuses on helping students learn to take responsibility for themselves and their families by confronting self-destructive behaviors that limit their lives and opportunities on a daily basis. The staff engage students in learning new skills and attitudes. They challenge negative behavior, attitudes, and addictions so that the young people can begin to transform their personal lives. The young people and staff work to end their involvement in “street life,” their reliance on violent solutions, and the cycle of failure and hopelessness.

This work is manifested in many practical daily activities such as coming to work on time, learning strategies for peaceful resolution of conflicts, confronting addictions, developing the life skills of handling money and time, examining self-defeating beliefs, setting and achieving goals, and learning to maintain good relationships with friends and loved ones.

In this first phase, the emphasis is on taking responsibility for making one’s life work well. This stage can be viewed as fundamental preparation to play larger leadership roles.

**Outward Expression: Program and Community**

As participants begin to resolve some of their most serious personal problems, they grow more able to take on greater levels of responsibility. Providing opportunities for increased levels of responsibility and leadership motivates participants to continue to resolve personal issues. The process is interactive, not linear. Consequently, it is important for Youthbuild programs to offer progressive levels of leadership opportunities that will enable participants to discover new skills and talents that result in greater self-confidence and an increased willingness and motivation to take on greater levels of responsibility.

An effective leadership development program provides a wide range of opportunities for participants to take leadership in the program itself—in both day-to-day activities and in program governance. It is equally important to provide leadership activities within the larger community to give participants confidence in their ability to act effectively in the world beyond the program.
The Benefits of Leadership Development

Leadership development benefits the trainee, the program, and the community. Leadership development contributes to the growth of each young person by countering feelings of powerlessness, liberating positive energy, generating respect from others, and opening the door to wider possibilities for the future. Leadership development results in:

- Strengthened self-confidence. Successful experiences in leadership provide trainees with the self-confidence needed to move beyond the familiar and try new things.
- Increased skills. Leadership experiences provide young people with skills that can be applied in the work world, in the community and in a wide range of settings.
- Increased knowledge. Leadership experiences open doors to ideas and information that were previously closed to many Youthbuild participants.

Young adult leadership helps the program function better. Involving young people in the decision-making process leads to decisions that are better informed, decisions that make sense to the young people, and decisions that are ultimately better for the program. Leadership opportunities keep students interested and engaged in the program, thus keeping program attendance and retention rates high. Training young people to represent the program brings positive public attention and often results in more funding. Involving young people in community service can bring increased community support for the program.

Leadership development strengthens the community. As Youthbuild participants give back to their neighborhoods, they develop a deep commitment to community involvement and look for opportunities to stay involved after they graduate. Some become effective community advocates, board members of community organizations, or volunteers. Others may choose community-oriented careers, such as becoming social workers, youth advocates, and staff of non-profit community-based organizations. Others may go on to college to pursue careers as counselors and teachers. Still others may eventually become entrepreneurs and business leaders in the community. Regardless of the career path, leadership development during Youthbuild fosters and encourages long-term engagement with community issues and community service.

Prerequisites for Successful Leadership Development

To be successful, leadership development must be part of the overall vision of the program. Effective leadership development requires the full commitment and support of the organization’s board, director, and staff as well as a clear and explicit implementation plan.
Board Commitment

The board of directors is responsible for the organization's vision and mission. The board’s commitment to youth leadership development is central to the organization’s ultimate success in this work.

In addition, the board of directors is responsible for recruiting and hiring the agency director, who will be responsible for implementing the Youthbuild program, and ensuring that leadership development is a central focus of the program and the work of other staff.

The board can also provide access to a variety of leadership opportunities for the young people. Most importantly, the board can designate positions on the board of directors for Youthbuild graduates and then work with those graduates to further develop their leadership skills. Individual board members can also help identify leadership development opportunities for public speaking, community involvement, and internships.

Executive Leadership Commitment

Executive commitment to leadership development is critical to its ultimate success. If the Youthbuild program is located in a multi-service agency, the executive director of that agency will hire the Youthbuild director. The executive director must select someone who has vision and commitment to Youthbuild as a leadership development program and not just as a social service program. The executive director must also support the Youthbuild director's day-to-day decisions about youth leadership development in the program.

The Youthbuild director has key responsibilities for implementing Youthbuild's leadership development component with regard to staff philosophy and training, program design, youth involvement in decision making, and the provision of leadership opportunities. The Youthbuild director must insure that staff are hired who believe in the leadership capabilities of young people and can see that a key aspect of their jobs is leadership development.

Staff Commitment

To implement a leadership development component within a Youthbuild program, the Youthbuild director and staff must work together to design and implement a program that is built upon leadership structures, activities, opportunities, and trainings. All staff members must define and understand their roles in leadership development.

A Leadership Development Plan

Youthbuild programs are most successful in maintaining a strong leadership development component when they have an explicit plan developed by the entire
staff in advance of the program and revised on an annual basis. The leadership development plan defines the structures, activities, trainings, and opportunities the program will use. The plan defines how leadership development will be woven into all aspects of the program, including:

- The classroom
- The construction site
- The counseling program
- The daily operations of the program like reception, communications, and maintenance
- Youth participation in governance and decision making at both the management and board levels
- Involvement in the community
- Trainings and workshops for staff and participants
- Opportunities after graduation

A strong leadership development plan includes staff goals and objectives for leadership, leadership curriculum and competencies, leadership committees and jobs, a leadership development attitude on the part of the staff, and plenty of opportunities both in the Youthbuild program and beyond for the participants to exercise leadership.

The Elements of a Strong Leadership Development Component

To create a solid Youthbuild leadership development component, the leadership development plan must address each of the following areas. Each of these areas is discussed in detail in Part III of this handbook.

1. Leadership skills or competencies. Each program needs to determine what leadership skills or competencies are most important for trainees to learn and which skills the program will teach. A sample list of competencies is included in Chapter Four. Workshops that teach these skills are included in Appendix C, the Leadership Competencies Handbook.

2. Leadership development within each program component. To be successful, leadership development as a concept and as practice must be integrated into all aspects of the program. This includes making sure that a wide range of leadership opportunities exists on the construction site, in the education component, and in the counseling component of the program.

3. Youth involvement in decision making and governance. A critical expression of the program's commitment to leadership development is the creation of a specific set of structures and activities which provide opportunities for participants to exercise leadership in the operation
of the overall Youthbuild program.

4. Leadership development training and workshops. Throughout the program year, workshops and trainings can be offered to teach both staff and participants specific leadership skills and provide opportunities for students to practice leadership skills.

5. Leadership development experiences and opportunities. These can include a variety of hands-on experiences in which trainees discover the excitement of personal, program, and community leadership.

6. Leadership opportunities after Youthbuild. A strong leadership development plan will also include vehicles for graduates to stay involved in the community and the Youthbuild organization after they have completed the program.

7. Measuring and tracking leadership skills. Development of leadership skills should be measured just as the development of skills in education and construction are measured. Students need to know how well they are doing if they are to take this component of the program seriously.

Common Problems and Pitfalls

Leadership development is not an easy process to undertake. New Youthbuild programs often have difficulty implementing the leadership development component. The following are some of the common problems and pitfalls.

Lack of clarity on goals and objectives: Because leadership development takes many forms, clarity in the program’s leadership development goals and objectives is essential. Staff should have a unified understanding of the leadership development plan and understand their roles in insuring its success. Because Youthbuild programs are so challenging to manage, many well-intentioned programs skip over this planning process, only to discover that their leadership development component has not met expectations.

Insufficient staff development regarding leadership development: Successful leadership development relies not only on planning, but also on the use of a range of strategies. Youthbuild programs often skip over staff training on leadership development because they do not have the time. However, leadership development depends on a unified staff approach that communicates the expectation that young adults are responsible, intelligent people who are capable of making wise decisions. This philosophy can be difficult to sustain in the face of irresponsible behavior and self-serving attitudes demonstrated by some program participants. Ongoing discussion and training in leadership development is essential to learning effective strategies for challenging these behaviors and attitudes while sustaining a leadership development philosophy and approach to youth transformation.

Lack of agency, director, or staff commitment to leadership development: A unified message from all areas of the organization is central to the success of a leadership development component. If the organization is struggling internally
about its commitment to leadership development, the young people will sense it and will learn to distrust the stated commitment of the organization.

**Lack of will or skill to share power and decision making with young people:** Resolving staff concerns and fears about youth involvement in decision making is critical to creating a successful leadership development component. Some directors or staff members may be concerned that young people do not have enough experience to make wise decisions. Directors and staff may also fear that they will lose control of the program if they involve young people in decision making. Such fears may result in a leadership component in which staff resist sharing important decisions regarding the program. The trust of young people can rapidly disintegrate if they perceive that their involvement in decision making is “not for real”—and that they only have input into marginal issues.

**Too much willingness to share power and decision making:** On the other hand, some directors and staff initially turn over too much “power” to the young people, and then get frustrated at the decisions that the young people make. In their enthusiasm for leadership development, these directors or staff may not play an active enough role in providing trainees with the guidance and tools needed to help them make good decisions. Without adequate guidance and training, young people can make decisions based on short term self-interest or immediate gratification rather than on the long term interest of all the trainees and the overall program. This long term, broader view should be cultivated through ongoing dialogue with emerging young leaders.

**Lack of adult support for youth:** An effective leadership development program does not leave young people to make decisions on their own. It recognizes that young people lack experience in certain arenas and tries to create a partnership between young people and adults based on mutual trust and respect. In this context, adults can share their experience while providing an opportunity for young people to contribute their own insights to the decision-making process.

For staff, leadership development is a balancing act. Being too rigid or being too lenient can cause a leadership development component to fall apart, providing an excuse for a program to give up on leadership development. Strong leadership development programs evolve over time, through trial and error, engaging both staff and students in evaluating results and trying new approaches.

**Disrespectful attitudes:** Staff frustration at the disrespectful behavior of some students is an inherent part of the job at Youthbuild. However, when staff frustration is communicated by returning trainee disrespect, the program’s impact can be undermined. For a leadership development component to be successful, the organization must hold itself to a consistent standard of respect for young people that is independent of trainee behaviors; the organization must continually and respectfully challenge young people to become their best possible selves. Organizations that do not hold themselves and all staff to this higher standard will have difficulty implementing a leadership development program.
Chapter 2: Hiring and Training Staff

Overview

A Youthbuild program’s leadership development component involves the director and the entire staff. While all staff contribute important aspects of the leadership development component, specific staff members should be designated to take responsibility for formal leadership training.

This chapter discusses the following issues:
- The role of the Youthbuild director
- Options for staffing a leadership development component
- The role of the entire staff in leadership development
- Qualities to seek in hiring staff
- Staff training needs

The Role of the Youthbuild Director

Choosing the Youthbuild director is a crucial first step in creating a leadership development component for a Youthbuild program. The vision and commitment of the Youthbuild director to leadership development will have a dramatic impact on program design, youth governance, and leadership opportunities.

Staff Philosophy and Commitment to Leadership Development

The Youthbuild director is responsible for hiring and training staff. A director committed to leadership development will seek out staff who understand and care about youth leadership development. Once staff are hired, the director plays a crucial role in establishing the program’s commitment to leadership development, in part by setting expectations for the staff’s attitude and approach to trainees. In order to create a strong program, the Youthbuild director should provide staff training in leadership development. Finally, staff should be held accountable for leadership development in their work. The director should require that each staff member set leadership development goals and objectives for each component.

Program Design

The quality and design of the leadership development component, as well as the whole program, will be shaped by the vision and insights of the Youthbuild director. There is a great deal of room for creativity and flexibility within a leadership develop-
ment component. The quality and effectiveness of the program will depend in large part on the director’s vision for the leadership development component.

**Youth Governance**

A central element in leadership development is the trainees’ input on the policies of the Youthbuild program. Usually, this takes the form of a Youthbuild Policy Committee. For a Youthbuild Policy Committee to be effective, the trainees must have regular meetings with the most senior staff member of the Youthbuild program—the Youthbuild director. The success of a Youthbuild Policy Committee is dependent on the attitude of the director. The director must be open to youth participation in decision making and willing to take youth recommendations seriously. The director will need to train the young people on the Youthbuild Policy Committee, hold committee meetings with them regularly, and ensure that committee decisions are implemented.

**Leadership Opportunities**

The Youthbuild director spends a great deal of time meeting with influential people in the community. These meetings can provide excellent leadership development opportunities for trainees. They allow the program’s best spokespeople—the trainees—to publicly represent the program. Involving the youth representatives in meetings with funders and politicians is a way the Youthbuild director can play a role in fostering leadership development.

**Options for Staffing a Leadership Development Component**

Youthbuild programs staff their leadership development components generally in two ways. Those with sufficient funds hire a full-time leadership development coordinator; those without sufficient funds to do that designate a key staff person or staff team to supervise and coordinate the leadership development program. These staff members include the program manager, a teacher, or a counselor.

Youthbuild programs with full-time leadership development coordinators are able to develop much more substantial programming and are able to provide individual attention to each student’s leadership development process. A job description for a full-time leadership development coordinator is included as Item 1 in the Resources section for Part I of this handbook.

Programs that distribute responsibility for the leadership development component among several staff positions should be certain there is a staff person assigned to provide leadership training classes and workshops; to support the youth governance structure or Policy Committee; and to coordinate community service projects, trips, and retreats. Following are some of the ways Youthbuild programs have distributed these responsibilities among staff.
Leadership Training Classes or Workshops

In many programs, a teacher includes leadership training classes as part of the academic program. In other programs, a counselor runs leadership training seminars as part of the life skills curriculum or other group sessions. In still other programs, the program manager plans regular workshops in leadership development. Your program will need to identify the format and staffing for leadership development training that best suits the skills of your staff and the schedule of your program.

Support for the Youthbuild Policy Committee and Other Youth Governance Structures

Youthbuild directors rarely have time to provide personally all the support necessary to ensure that Policy Committees run effectively. The required support includes helping students set meeting agendas, ensuring that students type up the minutes, and working with students to implement decisions reached by the committee. Often, programs select a staff member to serve on the Policy Committee and provide these support functions. The involvement of the counselor is often beneficial to the Policy Committee because counselors have a good overview of the type of student concerns that the youth Policy Committee might discuss. If a Youthbuild program has other student committees such as a social committee or Community Leadership Committee, it is important to have a staff member assigned to work with those committees as well.

Community Service Projects, Leadership Trips, and Retreats

Many Youthbuild programs have students involved in periodic community service projects in addition to building affordable housing. Many programs organize leadership training retreats and trips to city council meetings, the state legislature or other venues that offer exposure to the inner workings of government. All these activities take extensive planning and require that someone be responsible for coordinating all the details. These activities can often be divided among the program manager, counselor, and teacher. Many programs have a Community Leadership Committee that performs community service projects; more information about the Community Leadership Committee can be found in Appendix D.

The Role of the Entire Staff

Although coordination of the leadership development component may be assigned to one staff member, a successful leadership development component must involve the entire staff. As one Youthbuild director told her staff, “Leadership development is not something we do in addition to our jobs. It is the way we do our jobs.” In an effective leadership development program, all staff are expected to incorporate leadership development opportunities into their ongoing work with students and relate to the students in a manner that fosters leadership development.
Incorporating Leadership Development into each Staff Position

A successful leadership development component involves leadership development in all aspects of the program—on the construction site, in the classroom, in the counseling process, and in day-to-day program operations. Each staff member is responsible for incorporating leadership development opportunities and skills into his or her ongoing work with students and is held accountable for maximizing the decision making and leadership opportunities for participants.

Although this topic is discussed in more detail later in this handbook, the following are some examples of how leadership opportunities for youth can be incorporated into the work of each staff position.

**Director**

- Meet regularly with young people on a Policy Committee
- Invite young people to staff meetings and board meetings
- Involve young people in foundation visits or other fundraising activities
- Fund leadership activities and staff
- Take young people to observe local planning boards, city councils, state legislatures, or Congress
- Engage Youthbuild young people in community speak-outs and forums
- Take youth to as many community meetings as possible
- Take young leaders to conferences and workshops
- Hold all staff accountable for leadership development work on their annual evaluations
- Engage the staff in periodic formal review of the leadership development work

**Program Manager**

- Train young people to take on administrative responsibilities like answering phones, handling reports, and showing visitors around
- Insist that staff and young people utilize the Policy Committee structure for bringing proposals, solving problems, and airing grievances
- Involve the young people in planning program-wide events, meetings, and trips
- Insist that teachers and counselors build leadership objectives into their work
**Construction Manager**

- Be sure all the young people are made aware of the overview of the entire construction process and timetable
- Provide opportunities to learn about the economics of low-income housing
- Encourage dialogues about homelessness, the need for housing, and community development
- Take young people to negotiating meetings with unions or subcontractors

**Site Supervisor and Crew Chief**

- Develop rotating leadership jobs on the worksite such as crew leader, tool chief, and safety inspector
- Engage the trainees in helping each other learn new skills
- Involve young people in planning for improved working conditions and teamwork
- Encourage trainees to find solutions to construction problems

**Teachers**

- Ask the young people to help determine what they study, what goals are set, and how they are evaluated
- Teach specific leadership competencies
- Create rotating leadership jobs in the classroom
- Build formal leadership training into the curriculum
- Study the history and accomplishments of people represented in the program
- Celebrate diverse cultural events
- Host community speakers and artists, exposing students to a wide variety of role models
- Have students teach each other
- Teach content and methods that enhance the students’ ability to take responsibility
- Have students participate in evaluating each other and the teacher

**Counselors**

- Train some of the young people to run discussion groups
- Teach peer counseling
• Make an individual leadership development plan or life-skills plan with each young person

• Assist individual young people with the emotional work that often blocks the next step in their development

Relate to Students in a Manner That Fosters Leadership Development

Qualities in the staff that contribute to a strong leadership development model include: profound respect for the intelligence and capacity of young people; consistent patience, encouragement and validation; the ability to be firm yet flexible; the recognition of growth as a process; an awareness of how to provide experiences of success; the ability to model leadership in every moment; and high expectations of young people coupled with a realistic assessment of their skills. The following actions can help create an environment for leadership growth:

• Communicate respect in all your interactions with the young people. Though there are times when staff need to use their authority, they should seek to avoid being authoritarian. Rather, seek to be firm and respectful.

• Validate and appreciate the young people all the time. This goes a long way toward countering the emotional scars they carry with them. Try to communicate that you like and approve of the trainees as people, both individually and as a group.

• Show personal interest in the trainees. Greet them at the door whenever possible. Ask trainees about their lives. Spend time with them during the breaks. Let them know you personally. Let them begin to see you as a role model.

• Interrupt all put-downs, from the first day. This is one occasion when you need to use your adult authority to set a correct policy. Try not to scold, but still be firm.

• Encourage laughter and humor to lighten things up, change the mood, and cheer people up, however never accept laughter at someone else’s expense.

• Reconnect. Begin each meeting, class, or workday with a chance for each person to share something that has happened since you were last together. Just a minute for each person allows trainees to feel that they’ve been heard and to re-establish contact with one another and with the staff.

• Practice offering full attention to students when they are talking. Explain to the young people that how we use the power of our attention makes a big difference in developing self-confidence. For example, if we give our full attention to learning a new move on the basketball court, using a new tool, or writing a new rap song or poem, it usually goes better. Likewise, when we give our full attention in a
positive way to another person, that person tends to do better. When someone is speaking and others in the group are looking bored, making snide comments, interrupting or doing something else, it makes the speaker feel unimportant and uncared for and inhibits their best thinking. Many Youthbuild participants have had this experience often and the program should work to counter that experience.

**Qualities to Seek in Hiring Staff**

Since the success of the leadership development component will be dependent on the staff of the program, finding staff with a commitment to and understanding of leadership development is critical. The following are key qualities to look for in prospective staff:

- The ability to view young people as leaders, not as clients or problems
- The understanding that leadership development is part of the job
- The ability to demonstrate respect in their interactions with young people
- The willingness to fully support leadership structures like Policy Committees and youth caucuses
- An eagerness to participate in leadership trainings
- A track record of seeking opportunities to help young people progress in their leadership
- An understanding of the difficulties faced by young people who take on leadership responsibilities
- A demonstration of leadership in their own lives
- An interest in developing their own leadership abilities, skills and experiences

**Include Leadership Development in Job Descriptions**

Leadership development should be represented as a component in all job descriptions. Sample language to include in a job description might be:

*Responsibilities*: Incorporates youth leadership development into the (construction training, education, counseling) component.

*Qualifications*: Demonstrates respect in interactions with students. Has experience in developing the leadership skills of young adults.

**Find Staff Who Are Committed to Youth Leadership Development**

Leadership development should also be a key focus of interviews with staff candidates. The following are some tips and questions for use during the interview
process to help identify staff with the best potential for implementing leadership development as part of their job.

- Have all final candidates interviewed by a group of young people as part of the standard hiring process. This level of youth involvement helps the program select staff who treat trainees with respect, and sends an immediate message to all potential staff about the organization's approach to leadership development. Even if your program isn't operating yet, involve a group of young people from an advisory committee or from another organization.

- Ask candidates to read and comment on *Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff* which is included as Appendix A at the end of this handbook.

- Check to see if the candidate is already engaged in other community activities or organizations and would be willing to help Youthbuild trainees get involved, if appropriate.

- Ask the candidate's references whether she or he has involved youth in decision making and leadership in previous positions.

- During the interview, ask the candidate to do a roleplay with the young people to get some sense of how she handles herself in a “live” situation.

- Ask the candidate to write a set of goals and objectives related to leadership development.

- Ask management candidates what kind of staff they would hire. This will give some indication of the leadership development experience and qualifications this candidate seeks.

- Hold out for staff who demonstrate experience or genuine interest in youth leadership. Check references in this area.

**Questions for Candidates**

The following questions could be asked of candidates for Youthbuild staff positions as a way to assess their commitment to leadership development.

1. Youthbuild programs focus on leadership development of young people as a central component of their work. What experience do you have in developing the leadership skills of young adults?

2. Are there any particular attitudes or approaches to young people that you believe are more likely to foster leadership development?

3. If you are hired, how would you incorporate leadership development opportunities into the job you will be doing here at Youthbuild?

4. Do you think that young people in Youthbuild should be involved in hiring staff?

5. How have you played a leadership role in your community?
Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

Leadership is . . .

“...getting an opportunity to produce and express your character and your talents.”

“...putting your two cents into something. Stepping up to the challenge, with the talent that God gave you, for a better world.”

“...taking responsibility for your own actions first. Taking on problems that affect not only you, but your family and community.”

“...something that constantly changes. The more you learn and the more things you experience. The things that stand out in a leader are when she makes sure that her voice is heard, and brings out leadership ability in other people.”

“...being a role model to other people.”

Staff Training in Leadership Development

The concept and practice of leadership development is unfamiliar to many staff of a new Youthbuild program. Formal staff training has proven critical. This training starts with the staff orientation and continues throughout the year.

Staff Orientation in Leadership Development

A formal staff orientation in leadership development is essential to a solid leadership development program. This orientation is the place to introduce the basic concepts of leadership development and the general way those concepts are applied in a Youthbuild program. To facilitate discussion and provide a resource for this training, the key leadership development concepts have been summarized in Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff which is included as Appendix A at the end of this handbook.

Before the program cycle begins, an initial orientation for staff on leadership development usually takes one half day and is organized in terms of a series of workshops addressing aspects of the leadership development concept and approach. A sample staff training workshop in leadership development containing the following seven workshops is included as Item 2 in the Resources section for
Part I. This training is usually offered in conjunction with trainings on planning the leadership development component and Policy Committee included as Item 3 in the Resources section for Part II.

1. Conditions Facing Young People
2. What is Leadership?
3. What is Leadership Development?
4. Creating an Environment that Supports Leadership Development
5. Maximizing Group Participation and Learning
6. Elements of a Strong Leadership Development Plan
7. Appreciations

Ongoing Staff Training and Support in Leadership Development

The entire staff can benefit from ongoing training offering leadership development information and skills. These trainings can take place periodically throughout the program year or as part of staff retreats. Training sessions may be offered in how to:

- Create general program conditions that promote good learning and decision making
- Nurture leadership among young people
- Create and sustain an effective Policy Committee or youth decision-making process
- Build more cooperative relationships between youth and staff
- Lead effective meetings
- Use effective group process
- Sustain an effective Community Leadership Committee
- Listen well to young people

In addition to formal trainings, other ongoing assistance to staff by supervisors or senior management can include:

- Setting specific leadership development objectives with periodic assessment of the objectives
- On-the-job observation and feedback
- Role-playing difficult situations and alternative methods of handling them
- Sharing leadership development successes with other staff
Chapter Three: Leadership Issues in Recruitment and Selection of Program Participants

Recruitment

Youthbuild programs recruit prospective participants in a variety of ways—through community organizations; newspaper advertisements; lists of high school dropouts from public schools; and the word-of-mouth of previous Youthbuild graduates.

Some programs specifically try, as part of their overall recruitment strategy, to recruit applicants who have already demonstrated leadership skills. There are several effective ways to do this:

- Build relationships with “pre-Youthbuild” programs such as drug rehabilitation centers, streetworker outreach programs, young parents programs, mentoring programs, urban corps, and church programs. Ask staff to recommend young people from their programs who have demonstrated leadership abilities.

- Build relationships with ministers, parole officers, and other local community leaders who have contact with out-of-school youth and who understand the leadership development concept.

- Encourage referrals from successful Youthbuild graduates who understand what leadership development means and who are able to convey the concept to their peers.

- Include information about leadership development in all recruitment materials distributed to organizations and interested individuals.

Selection

In most Youthbuild locations, there are many more applicants than there is room in the program. Most of the applicants would benefit from the Youthbuild program: most need a job, a skill, an education, counseling, and a second chance. Many Youthbuild programs have specific criteria for selecting trainees, it’s not just “first come, first served.” Applicants are often evaluated in an interview and through other aspects of the application process. Many programs specifically include some form of leadership criteria in selecting trainees for their program.
Criteria that a program might want to consider in trainee selection include:

1. Is this applicant ready for the Youthbuild program?
2. Is this applicant interested in playing a leadership role in the community?
3. Does this applicant understand the leadership expectations and requirements of the program? Can she or he demonstrate a willingness to meet those expectations?

Is the Applicant Ready for the Youthbuild Program?

Youthbuild programs typically seek to recruit young people who want an opportunity to change their lives and become leaders and role models in their communities. But not all applicants are equally ready to take advantage of the full range of resources that Youthbuild has to offer.

- Applicants who are still heavily invested in “street life” will have a more difficult time taking advantage of Youthbuild than those who are actively trying to leave it
- Applicants who have serious addiction problems may need other services before they are ready for Youthbuild
- Applicants who have unresolved, outstanding warrants or major pending court cases may need to be absent from the program for extensive periods of time

As part of the selection process, a Youthbuild program may want to consider the length of the program, the organization’s capacity to provide extensive support services, and the potential of an applicant to make changes in his or her life during that period of time. An applicant who is not ready this year may be ready next year to take full advantage of the program.

Is the Applicant Interested in a Leadership Role in the Community?

While some applicants may have had opportunities to demonstrate leadership potential in previous activities, most have not. The most effective way to judge applicant interest is in a direct interview. An interview process can explore whether an applicant:

- Understands and can demonstrate responsibility for self
- Understands and wants to take responsibility for family
- Is concerned about problems facing the community
- Has any experience in community leadership

Staff members who are interviewing applicants might generate a common set of questions to explore some of these issues. Interview questions might include:

1. Name five times in the past six months that you have taken responsi-
bility for yourself.

2. Do you have children? What is your relationship with them? What do you want your relationship with them to be?

3. What is the most important problem facing your community? What do you think should be done about it?

4. If you were the mayor, what would you do to change things in your community?

5. Have you ever been involved with any organization that was helping to improve your community?

In addition, as a writing sample, applicants might be asked to write a paragraph or two on what they think young people can do to help improve the community, or answer a single question that helps reveal their thoughts on community leadership. (Keep in mind that some applicants are more able than others to express themselves in writing.)

**Does the Applicant Understand the Leadership Expectations and Requirements of the Program?**

Most young people hear about Youthbuild as a construction training program. They seldom know that Youthbuild is also a leadership development program. It is useful to explain in an information session or an interview that trainees will have both leadership opportunities and responsibilities in the program. Describe the leadership development component of the program and the leadership requirements that participants will be expected to meet.

Leadership requirements that could be given as examples during the interview might include:

- Achievement of leadership competencies or skills
- Regular community service
- Registering to vote (if the trainee is of voting age), and voting in all elections for the remainder of the program
- Attending at least one meeting of three different community organizations during the program cycle, and reporting back to the program
- Taking on a leadership role or serving on a committee at some time during the program

Some Youthbuild programs establish simple leadership challenges as part of their requirements for acceptance into the program. These provide a good test of applicant motivation and ability to take leadership on tasks that are relatively easy to accomplish. Here are some examples of leadership challenges that might be part of the application process:

1. Require applicants who are of age to register to vote and bring proof
of registration back to the program.

2. Require applicants to obtain a library card and bring it back to the program.

3. Require a certain number of hours of volunteer community service.

4. Require applicants to identify a sponsor such as a parent, parole officer, staff person from another program, or minister who will agree to serve as a support person for the candidate in their development. Those applicants who can't find a sponsor might be referred to a local mentoring organization.

5. Require a short essay on what the applicant will contribute to the Youthbuild program.

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**Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:**

**What Makes Someone a Leader?**

“The difference between young leaders and young people who are not leaders is confidence.”

“A leader is one that takes the initiative to step forward and leads a group of people who are afraid.”

“Leaders make things happen. They don’t just tag along.”
Resources for Part I

Item 1 - Leadership Development Coordinator Job Description

Item 2 - Staff Orientation Trainings
Item 1: Leadership Development Coordinator Job Description

Program Summary

Youthbuild is a program to involve unemployed young adults in building affordable housing in their communities. It gives youth between the ages of 16-24 skills in the construction trades coupled with academic training leading to the GED. This comprehensive program also includes counseling, peer support groups, driver’s license education, cultural and recreational events and activities, and job placement. Another central element is the building of youth leadership skills through leadership training, program decision making, and involvement in community issues.

Purpose

To assist the young people in setting and achieving their leadership development goals for themselves, their families, the program, and the community. To support the young people as they deal with personal and other issues that are obstacles to success and to aid staff in defining and implementing leadership development goals and opportunities for the young people.

Specific Duties:

1. Help each student set and achieve leadership development goals. In conjunction with a Youthbuild counselor, work on personal life issues that interfere with the leadership development of individual students. Challenge individuals’ negative attitudes and behaviors. Model good leadership and expect good leadership from the young people.

2. Be alert for leadership opportunities suitable for each individual. Look for leadership opportunities in the community for Youthbuild’s young people in such arenas as community forums, media presentations, and visible public service.

3. Attend meetings of the Policy Committee or other youth governance body. Arrange for leadership skills training for Policy Committee members. Facilitate follow-through by young people on agreed upon tasks.

4. Develop an appropriate leadership development curriculum for use by the entire staff. Promote the achievement of leadership competencies. Help staff set and achieve goals and objectives for promoting leadership in their part of the program. Hold periodic leadership assessment sessions with the staff.

5. Develop a Community Leadership Committee for participants who want to volunteer in the community. Coordinate community service for program participants. Relate leadership skills and learning to the service work.

6. Plan and coordinate a year-long calendar of leadership development events for the entire program. Regularly arrange guest speakers, workshop presenters, and field trips on leadership topics.
7. Work with the program director on building leadership goals and objectives into funding proposals.

8. With interested Youthbuild trainees, network with other youth leaders in the local community for possible joint activities. Develop a positive and visible youth presence in the community.

9. Help support young emerging leaders, both in the Youthbuild program and in the wider community.

10. Arrange or conduct staff training in various areas of leadership development. Coordinate, schedule, and manage logistics for YouthBuild USA leadership development workshops, site visits, and youth and staff leadership retreats.

11. Assist with classroom teaching of leadership skills as appropriate.

12. Prepare written reports on activities and accomplishments.

**Qualifications:**

1. At least three years counseling, job development, life skills training, or career counseling with young adults.

2. Bachelor’s degree in counseling, psychology or related field; or equivalent experience and training working with young people.

3. A demonstrated ability to plan, organize, and implement training workshops for young adults and staff.

4. A strong commitment to the philosophy of the program: to help young people succeed and reorient their lives, nurture their leadership skills and enable them to make a difference in their community.

5. An ability to establish rapport with and relate sensitively to a multiracial and multicultural group of young people.

6. A knowledge of human services and the available programs of health services and of the court and criminal justice system. Knowledge of regulations, procedures, and alternative programs.

7. Excellent interpersonal and problem-solving skills and the ability to relate to a wide range of issues, people, and institutions.

8. An understanding of issues facing young people in the community where the program is located.

9. Excellent public speaking, listening, and written communication skills.

10. A sense of humor and a nonjudgmental attitude.

11. A willingness to learn from young people.

12. Team-oriented.

**Salary and Benefits:**

Varies depending on location.
Item 2: Staff Orientation Training:  
Introduction to Leadership Development

This staff orientation training includes the following seven exercises.

1. Conditions Facing Young People
2. What is Leadership?
3. Why Leadership Development?
4. Creating an Environment that Supports Leadership Development
5. Maximizing Group Participation and Learning
6. Elements of a Strong Leadership Development Plan
7. Appreciations

(This training is usually offered as part of a three-day staff training that includes workshops on creating a leadership development plan and planning a Policy Committee.)
Item 2: Staff Orientation Training:  
Introduction to Leadership Development

Exercise 1: Conditions Facing Young People

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Newsprint, easel, markers, tape

Purpose: To identify the stresses under which Youthbuild participants enter the program, and to design program elements to address those issues.

Method: This workshop uses the “Brainstorming” group process technique, which encourages people to throw out their ideas freely without censoring them as to whether the ideas are “good,” “bad,” “right,” or “wrong.”

1. Place two large pieces of newsprint up, side by side.

2. On the top of the left page, write “Conditions Facing Young People.” Ask the group to think about the world that Youthbuild participants face. Have a brainstorming session and make a list of what people say. Do not discuss any of the points raised during the brainstorm session, but encourage everyone to throw out whatever comes into their minds.

3. On the top of the right page, write “Program Elements that Counteract Conditions.” Ask the group to put aside most of what they know about schools and youth programs, and start from scratch: If they were going to design a program that deliberately counteracted the conditions facing young people, what would be the elements in their program? As they say things, try to write them on the newsprint exactly opposite the conditions on the left side that they would counteract.

4. Compare the ideas generated with your plans for your Youthbuild program. Point out the ways in which leadership development is central to these ideas.
Item 2: Staff Orientation Training:  
Introduction to Leadership Development

Exercise 2: What Is Leadership?

Time: 30 minutes  
Materials: Newsprint, easel, markers, tape, chart with Youthbuild definition of leadership.  
Purpose: To clarify the staff’s definition of leadership for the Youthbuild program.  
Method: This workshop uses the “report back” group process technique, which allows people to speak freely in a small group, and then provides an opportunity for group representatives to practice speaking in front of the whole group by reporting on their conclusions.

1. Break into groups of three or four people for 15 minutes. Give each group a piece of newsprint and a marker. Ask each group to write a definition of leadership.  
2. Ask each group to report back to the whole group. Allow two minutes for each group’s report.  
3. Ask the group: What is the connection between someone’s personal behavior and leadership?  
4. Display the Youthbuild definition of leadership:  
   “Good leadership is taking responsibility to make things go right for yourself, your family, the program, and the community.”  
   Discuss whether this might be a useful definition of leadership for your Youthbuild program.
Exercise 3: Why Leadership Development?

Time: 30 minutes
Materials: Chart (below)
Purpose: To clarify the importance of leadership development in a Youthbuild program.
Method: Equal time

1. Each person is given one minute to talk about why they think leadership development is important in a Youthbuild program.
2. Display chart and read out loud.
3. Each person is given one minute to share their reaction to the chart. What do you agree with? Is there anything you disagree with?
   If there is controversy, give everyone a second minute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Leadership Development?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The society needs more ethical and effective leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Youth programs and schools would be improved if governed with input from young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Leadership can engage young people intensely and deeply, liberating their best energies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Real decision-making responsibility can heal two serious wounds of our young people:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low self-esteem due to consistent invalidation of their intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feelings of powerlessness and anger, as a result of being consistently disregarded and unheard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 4: Creating an Environment that Supports Leadership Development

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Chart: “Creating An Environment that Supports Leadership Development,” newsprint, easel, markers, tape

Purpose: To help staff to recognize the important role that their daily attitude and behavior can play in affecting the conditions for leadership development.

Method: This workshop will use the “Go ‘Round” group process technique, which ensures that everybody in the group has a chance to contribute.

1. Go around the room, and ask each person to name two things that help create an environment that supports youth leadership. Write the ideas up on newsprint.

2. Display the chart: “Creating an Environment that Supports Leadership Development.” How many of the ideas on the chart were already on the staff list?

3. Go around the room again. Ask each person what personally might stop them from following through with these behaviors and attitudes on a daily basis. Make a list of these obstacles.

4. Ask the group to identify ways that the staff can support one another to combat these obstacles.

Creating An Environment that Supports Leadership Development

- Communicate respect in all your interactions with young people
- Validate and appreciate the trainees at all times
- Show personal interest in the students
- Interrupt all put-downs
- Encourage laughter and humor
- Start each activity with some personal sharing
- Practice offering full attention to students when they are speaking
Item 2: Staff Orientation Training: Introduction to Leadership Development

Exercise 5: Maximizing Group Participation and Learning

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: Chart: “Seven Techniques for Maximizing Group Participation and Learning”

Purpose: To teach staff to use various, simple group process methods designed to maximize group participation and to vary activities.

Method: Presentation

1. Display the chart and review each of the six methods. Point out that three of the methods were used in earlier workshops. The other three will be used in upcoming workshops.

2. Hand out copies of this chart to all staff.

Seven Techniques for Maximizing Group Participation and Learning

1. **Brainstorming**: Make a list of ideas without editing or comments.

2. **Small group/Report backs**: Write down ideas in small groups and have a representative report back to the whole group.

3. **Go around**: Go around the room and give everyone a chance to speak.

4. **Equal Time**: Use a watch to give everyone equal time to speak on a controversial issue.

5. **Rotating Chair**: Have people raise their hands and the last speaker choose the next person who wants to speak.

6. **Empty Chair Discussion**: Place five chairs facing each other in a circle. Have four people sit in the chairs and have a discussion on a difficult topic, while everyone else sits on the outside. When someone wants to join in the discussion, they take the empty chair. Within a short time, someone else vacates a chair.

7. **Twice-Once Rule**: Do not have people speak twice until everyone who wants to has spoken once.
Item 2: Staff Orientation Training:
Introduction to Leadership Development

Exercise 6: Elements of a Strong Leadership Development Plan

Time: 15 minutes


Purpose: To prepare for the next seminar which will focus on planning the leadership development component.

Method: Presentation

1. Display the chart and briefly discuss each of the seven elements of a strong leadership development program. (For an explanation of each element, see Chapter Two and Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff.) Explain that in the next seminar, the staff will be helping to create a leadership development plan for the Youthbuild program.

2. Hand out Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff and ask everyone to read it before the next seminar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of a Strong Leadership Development Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A list of leadership skills all trainees will learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Leadership development in each program component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Youth involvement in decision making and governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Leadership development trainings and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leadership experiences and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Leadership development after Youthbuild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Measuring and tracking leadership skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 7: Appreciations

Time: 15 minutes
Materials: None
Purpose: To establish a practice of regular and frequent appreciations of staff and students, and to demonstrate a specific, effective method for doing appreciations with the students.
Method: Basic method of appreciation.

Note: Most young people in a Youthbuild program are burdened with past emotional traumas. The damage from years of mistreatment shows up in various ways: anger, feelings of self-doubt, a lack of confidence, feeling stupid, unimportant or powerless, disrespect of others, meanness, irresponsibility, hostility, or violence. These interfere with young people's abilities to learn, think, set goals, achieve goals, and play leadership roles.

A Youthbuild program may not be able to help with the deepest of these scars, but a dose of genuine appreciation, validation and approval can go a long way in counteracting some of the damage. Staff will constantly be struggling with the results of this damage and trying every conceivable strategy to counteract it. This intensive work creates stress, frustration and burn-out among staff.

The practice of genuine appreciation helps build a nurturing and positive environment in which both young people and staff can learn well, feel supported and make good decisions.

1. Explain the importance of appreciations:

All people do better when they feel liked and appreciated. No one ever gets enough appreciation. Most people get put down a lot. In Youthbuild we are going to practice building people up! We are going to build a positive supportive atmosphere. It is what we all want, even if we are not used to it. Starting today, we'll be doing a lot of appreciations of each other.

2. Go over appreciation guidelines:

• Make sure that each person receives an appreciation.
• Encourage genuine, personal appreciation, not vague comments like “he's cool.”
• Ask the person giving the appreciation to turn toward the recipient, look at
him, think of something particular about that person to appreciate, and speak directly to that person (not about him).

3. Now try it. Ask the group to go around the circle and, one by one, have each person tell the person on their left one thing that they appreciated about him or her during today’s workshop.
In order to carry out an effective leadership development component, all staff should organize a clear leadership development plan before the Youthbuild program begins with participants. Individual staff members should organize their own leadership development plans and activities. The staff as a whole should organize its approach to youth participation in decision making and governance and be prepared to introduce leadership development during orientation for participants. This part of the handbook describes the staff tasks involved in organizing the leadership development component.

photo: Martin Dixon
The Importance of a Leadership Development Plan

The key to a successful leadership development component is a leadership development plan. There are several reasons why a leadership development plan can make a critical difference in your program’s success:

- There are many approaches to leadership development. Each Youthbuild program must make its own decisions about designing and implementing its leadership development component.

- Unlike the other components of the Youthbuild program (construction, counseling, education), leadership development is integrated into all parts of the program and involves many staff people. In a sense, leadership development competes with the other program components for attention. At the same time, the outcomes of the leadership development component aren’t as immediate or easy to see as building a house, or passing a GED test, or dealing with a homelessness crisis. Without a plan that includes assigned responsibilities and advance thought, leadership development won’t automatically happen.

- Leadership development is usually new to most staff, and it is a departure from typical practices in schools and job training programs. Because it involves the entire staff, the entire staff needs to grapple with what it means to “do leadership development.”

- Leadership development isn’t easy to do. It can be the source of a lot of frustration, and only succeeds through a good deal of trial and error. A leadership development plan helps the organization sustain the leadership program throughout the year, and then provides a vehicle for evaluating what worked and what should be changed for the coming year.

- Once a program is up and running, the ongoing demands of the construction site, the classroom and the personal needs of the students quickly consume the staff’s time and focus. To ensure that leadership development is integrated into all program components, the staff needs to decide up front on specific leadership development strategies that will be included as part of the program.
**Who Should Create the Leadership Development Plan?**

Because leadership development should be a pervasive philosophy throughout the program and present in all program components, the creation of the leadership development plan should include the entire staff. Each staff member should make a specific plan for how leadership development will be included in his or her component on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Some aspects of the plan should be developed by the staff as a whole, while others are best developed by a small group of staff, and certain key elements will need to be defined by senior management.

**The Role of Senior Management**

In order to emphasize the importance of the leadership development component and the commitment of the executive leadership to leadership development, it is preferable for the Youthbuild director to run the staff planning workshops on leadership development. The Youthbuild director will need to establish a framework for the leadership development plan that defines the organization's commitment to leadership development and defines the expectations for including leadership development in all program areas.

**The Role of a Leadership Development Team**

Some components of the leadership development program are best developed by the individuals or small groups that are responsible for implementing them. Leadership workshops and trainings to be given during the course of the program generally fall into this category. It may be helpful to designate a leadership development team who will spend more time developing these aspects of the leadership development plan. Minimally, a leadership development team should include the program manager and leadership development staff or one or two program staff members particularly interested in this area of work.

**Elements of a Leadership Development Plan**

Youthbuild programs with strong leadership development components tend to include each of the seven following elements in their leadership development plans:

1. A list of the basic leadership development skills or competencies participants will be expected to learn
2. A plan for how leadership development will be carried out in each program component
3. A plan for youth involvement in decision making and governance
4. Identification of the types of leadership trainings and workshops to be carried out during the year
5. Identification of the types of leadership experiences and opportunities the program hopes to offer participants

6. An approach to assisting participants to continue their leadership development after graduating from Youthbuild

7. A procedure for measuring and tracking leadership development accomplishments of participants

**Leadership Skills All Trainees Will Learn**

Each Youthbuild program needs to determine what leadership skills or competencies are most important for the trainees and which skills they plan to teach. This can be decided in brainstorming sessions with the entire staff, or in a smaller group of staff responsible for the leadership development component. Following is a sample list of leadership development competencies that reflect the kinds of skills taught in many Youthbuild programs. (Specific workshops that teach many of these skills can be found in the *Leadership Competencies Handbook* included as Appendix C.)

**Sample Leadership Development Competencies**

**Behavioral and Attitudinal Skills**
1. Demonstrates self-confidence and self-esteem in interactions
2. Demonstrates consistency and responsibility on a daily basis
3. Advocates effectively for oneself
4. Resolves conflicts
5. Has a sense of identity as part of a larger community (including cultural, racial, and gender identities)
6. Listens and communicates effectively
7. Has clarity on basic personal values

**Personal Development Skills and Knowledge**
1. Keeps and uses a weekly schedule and calendar
2. Sets and achieves personal development goals
3. Manages anger constructively
4. Makes and uses a personal budget
5. Can explain the basics of sexual reproduction, pregnancy prevention, and AIDS and STD prevention
6. Demonstrates readiness to secure and hold a job

**Group Leadership Skills**
1. Listens well to others in class, in meetings, and on the worksite
2. Takes useful notes in class, in meetings, and on the worksite
3. Can explain and participate in the following group process methods: brainstorming, two-way or three-way sharing, equal time, go-arounds, appreciations, and the twice-once rule
4. Can lead an effective small group discussion
5. Can participate in a self-evaluation process as a way to evaluate his or her own progress
6. Can define the functions, skills, and attitudes of good leaders

**Community Leadership Skills and Knowledge**
1. Can effectively use a phone system
2. Can find information through researching
3. Can explain the basics of how local, state, and federal governments work

**Leadership Development in Each Program Component**

The plan should identify how leadership development will be carried out in each component of the program. Staff should develop plans for their individual components and for the organization as a whole. The construction site, the classroom, and the counseling sessions are all rich opportunities to convey leadership development skills. In order to ensure a consistent and complementary approach, it is most effective if the entire staff is involved in developing this aspect of the plan.

**Youth Involvement in Decision Making and Governance**

The Youthbuild director will need to decide whether the program will use a Youthbuild Policy Committee or some other structure for involving young people in decision making. It is important to involve the entire staff in defining what scope of responsibility for decision making participants will have, so that they understand and support the young people in these roles. This “scope of responsibility” should be described in the leadership development plan. The plan should also identify when and how this element of the program will work, including a timeline and staff responsibilities. If a program Policy Committee already exists, new staff will need a thorough orientation to its purpose, powers, and functions.

**Leadership Development Trainings and Workshops**

Most Youthbuild programs offer specific leadership development trainings and workshops to students throughout the year. They are done on a wide range of topics, and in a wide range of settings—including orientation, retreats and weekly classes. (Other chapters in this handbook describe some of the ways that other sites organize their training workshops and outline a variety of specific workshops that might be offered.) A leadership development plan should identify the topics
of priority to your program and lay out the schedule of sessions for the year. This part of the plan is usually developed by the staff members responsible for offering these workshops and classes in partnership with the program manager.

**Leadership Development Experiences and Opportunities**

Youthbuild trainees tend to learn at least as much from hands-on experience as they do from workshops. There is a wide range of avenues that Youthbuild sites have developed to provide leadership development experiences and opportunities for participants. Many of these are described elsewhere in this handbook. A leadership development plan should identify those leadership experiences that will be structured into the program, and should clearly designate which staff members are responsible for implementing this aspect of the leadership development program.

**Leadership Development After Youthbuild**

The Youthbuild director will need to determine the staffing and budget that will be available for developing a Youthbuild follow-up program and/or an alumni program. Follow-up programs provide assistance and support to graduates for at least the first six months after graduation. An alumni program represents the intent of the organization to provide longer term support and leadership opportunities to graduates.

A broad conception of Youthbuild incorporates two phases. Phase one is the program phase—full-time, paid, skills training, academic classes, leadership training and opportunities, and graduation. Phase one is more like the formal preparation for leadership.

Phase two includes transition to full-time employment or college outside the program but with a strong continuing connection to Youthbuild as long as graduates want it through job support, counseling, organized community service, leadership activities, political study groups and actions, and social activities. Phase two would be attractive and flexible enough to accommodate graduates at whatever level of time and interest they have. It would have staff and a budget. It would be a center of activity, learning, new challenges, support, and that “family feeling” graduates had while in the program phase of Youthbuild. “Once in Youthbuild, always in Youthbuild!” Graduates would know Youthbuild is still their home.

During phase two, graduates would build on the growth they achieved during the program phase. This would include: completing the GED if needed, continuing with support groups, and help with job interviews. Graduates could also: continue tutoring second graders in reading, get support for starting their own business, have a mentor themselves, join with other graduates to take action to change something in the community. Graduates would have access to the phones, computers, e-mail and internet access, copy machines, and fax machines for redoing resumes, writing letters, proposals, college essays, or flyers for a community rally they are organizing. The integrated themes are self development, community development, and continued involvement in Youthbuild.
It is helpful to get input from all staff in defining a vision for a graduate program, because it can shape the work that is done with young people while they are participants.

**Measuring and Tracking Leadership Skills**

Development of leadership skills needs to be measured and tracked just as much as the development of skills in education and construction. Students need to know how well they are doing if they are to take this component of the program seriously. The plan needs to identify the tools the staff will use to measure completion of leadership development competencies or other leadership skills and how these will be used throughout the program year.

Programs have used the following methods for tracking the leadership development skills that the trainee can demonstrate.

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**Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:**

**What Advice Would You Offer Youthbuild Staff?**

“Incorporate the youth in the everyday, overall operations of the program. That way you will hold their attention. Don’t have that “Do this!” mentality. Show them that everything they do is a learning experience.”

“Set aside certain times that just focus on leadership. Tell them that just getting up every day and taking the initiative is leadership.”

“Put yourself in that young person’s shoes. Take a young person at their word.”

“Keep working on leadership as a tool and mechanism to monitor growth. Understand that many young people have not been in an environment where people care.”

“Hire staff with patience and understanding. Look at the quote, ‘Bad seeds may just become your best leaders.’”
Leadership Competency Checklist

Some Youthbuild programs list their program’s leadership development competencies in a checklist, to document when each trainee acquires and can demonstrate the skill. (A sample leadership development competency checklist is included in the Leadership Competencies Handbook in Appendix C.) To effectively use a leadership competency checklist, your program should decide which staff are responsible for monitoring student progress, tracking the development of these leadership skills, and giving feedback to trainees. Alternatively, trainees can be asked to assess their own progress toward these competencies regularly and get feedback on whether the staff agrees with this self-assessment.

Individual Leadership Plans

In some Youthbuild programs, each Youthbuild participant works with the leadership development coordinator or counselor to construct an individual leadership development plan. This plan might include:

- An assessment of the participant’s leadership skills, knowledge, and self-perception at the beginning of the program and again just before graduation
- A chart of leadership competencies, with a plan and a timetable for achieving them
- Self-chosen leadership opportunities to which the young person aspires
- A set of individualized leadership goals and objectives
- A record of personal achievements, awards, certificates, and press clippings

This plan can be revisited regularly to update it, revise the objectives, and review progress. If used well and consistently, the individual leadership development plan can be a helpful feedback aid as well as a motivational planning tool.

Creating a Leadership Development Plan

Before beginning the planning process, the director, program manager, and any key leadership development staff should read this handbook in its entirety. All staff should be required to read Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff (included as Appendix A). This preparation will ensure that all participants in the planning process have a clear understanding of the leadership development component and examples of leadership development opportunities and experiences that other Youthbuild programs have developed.

One full day should be designated to begin the leadership development plan. During this day, the Youthbuild director should lead the staff through a series of trainings and exercises to facilitate the development of the seven elements of the
plan. Item 1 in the Resources for Part II is a leadership development plan checklist. Item 2 is a series of workshops to assist this planning process. The goal for this day should be to give enough substance to each of the seven elements of the plan that individual staff members or teams have sufficient direction to complete plans for each element in greater detail. A written draft of the leadership development plan can then be prepared for staff to review and a second working session of the entire staff convened to complete and adopt the plan.

It is important to recognize that not all leadership development activities can or should begin at the same time. While leadership development experiences and opportunities should be present from the very start of the program, many get introduced gradually over the course of the program year. On the following pages is a possible sequence for introducing leadership development elements.
Sample Leadership Development Program—Month by Month

The following suggested timetable for leadership-related activities and events was designed for a 12-month program. Each program is different and will ultimately determine its own schedule of activities. Some of the activities will be explained later in the handbook.

Six Months to One Week Prior to Start-Up

- Staff hired, with input from young people
- Staff training in leadership development begins
- Young people are recruited and selected with the leadership aspect made clear
- Staff is trained in how to facilitate their role in the youth orientation

Youth Orientation

- Participants are introduced to the basic ideas of leadership
- The various leadership committees are introduced
- Leadership development requirements are explained
- Participants begin reciting a daily pledge or philosophy each morning*

(* indicates that the activity begins here but is continued hereafter)

Month One

- Daily pledge*
- Staff sets a positive atmosphere*
- Validations and appreciations are established as regular practices*
- Leadership development on the worksite begins*
- Leadership development in the classroom begins*
- Leadership competencies are introduced*
- Support groups begin to meet regularly*
- A temporary advisory committee is selected to serve until a Policy Committee is elected later
- Students are prepared for the Policy Committee election
- The first community meeting is held toward the end of the month

Month Two

- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom,
competencies, and support groups*

- Each participant makes individual leadership goals
- First leadership retreat is held four to six weeks after start-up
- Policy committee is elected at the retreat
- First training and meeting of Policy Committee happens within a week, and then the committee meets weekly*
- Extra community service responsibilities begin*
- Staff begin attending national HUD Youthbuild trainings*
- Program begins to explore cultural identity, gender, and mutual respect issues*

Month Three

- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues*
- A staff day is held to review progress in leadership development
- Regular monthly youth leadership training workshops are underway*
- The first batch of leadership competencies are achieved and recognized with awards
- Program begins to provide community leadership opportunities*
- Community Leadership Committee is formed and begins meeting*
- Formal training in group process skills begins

Month Four

- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
- Peer counseling begins to train young people to assist each other with problems
- Community Leadership Committee is active in the community and meets regularly to plan or reflect on its work

Month Five

- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
**Month Six**
- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
- Second staff day held to review leadership development work
- Public awards and recognition for achievement of leadership competencies

**Month Seven**
- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
- Several youth attend national Youthbuild Leadership Training in Washington, D.C.

**Month Eight**
- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
- Second youth-staff retreat is held

**Month Nine**
- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
- Third staff day is held to review leadership development work
- Public awards and recognition are given for achievement of leadership competencies
- Higher education applications begin

**Month Ten**
- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
- Job readiness leadership competency is emphasized
Month Eleven

- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
- Leadership opportunities after graduation are charted

Month Twelve

- Daily pledge, validations, leadership on worksite and classroom, competencies, support groups, Policy Committee, community service, cultural issues, leadership workshops, and Community Leadership Committee*
- Final leadership development assessment is done for individuals and for the group
- Leadership awards given at graduation
- Certificates of achievement of the leadership competencies are awarded at graduation

After Graduation

- Young people can continue to be active in the Community Leadership Committee
- Several graduates might serve on the agency’s board of directors
- Several graduates might become Youthbuild interns and staff
- Young people can become part of the Youthbuild graduate program or alumni club
- Staff reviews and evaluates the leadership development work done during the year, and makes recommendations for the future

The actual sequence will vary from program to program depending on local priorities, personalities, crises, and resources.
Chapter 5: Youth Governance—Staff Preparation

What Is Youth Involvement in Governance?

Involving youth in governance means incorporating structures that allow young people to participate in decision making for an organization or program. These structures can include a Policy Committee, an advisory committee, a conflict-mediation team or other bodies that help shape part of a program and allow the students to develop their leadership skills.

In more traditional youth programs, youth committees have a very limited scope of responsibility for decision making. They are only involved in those decisions that affect the young people, such as stipulating a dress code or planning extracurricular events. Rarely, if ever, do they participate in the broader planning and decision-making processes of the program or organization.

Because of the Youthbuild model’s focus on leadership development, many Youthbuild programs are committed to providing young people with the broadest level of involvement in decision making. A Youthbuild Policy Committee can provide trainees with that opportunity.

What Is a Youthbuild Policy Committee?

A Youthbuild Policy Committee is a body comprised of the Youthbuild director, at least one staff representative, and an elected group of students who work together to make decisions about the Youthbuild program.

The Youthbuild Policy Committee provides a forum for a cross-section of the organization to work through problems, compromise, and provide creative solutions that take into consideration the ideas, opinions and viewpoints of everyone—including the young people within the program.

The Youthbuild Policy Committee can ensure that the program is genuinely responsive to the participants’ needs. In addition, its members often undergo intense leadership development and then use these leadership skills elsewhere in the community.
The Scope of Responsibility and Authority of a Youthbuild Policy Committee

The scope of responsibility and authority of a Youthbuild Policy Committee varies considerably among Youthbuild programs. Your Youthbuild program will need to define the Youthbuild Policy Committee’s scope of decision making. A Youthbuild Policy Committee’s role may include:

- Participation in hiring staff
- Recommending improvements in program management and services
- Consultation on program design, policy, and changes
- Review of annual budget, where appropriate
- Consultation on firing of staff, although the director has final authority
- Reporting to and consulting with the rest of the program
- Planning events of its own design
- Solving problems as needed

Consider carefully the scope of responsibilities that your program’s Youthbuild Policy Committee will have. These responsibilities should be written up and distributed to staff and trainees so that everyone understands the role of the Policy Committee.

If the Policy Committee has no real responsibilities, the young people will
realize it immediately. If they are left to flounder by themselves, or if they are not taken seriously and only decide unimportant matters, then they will become disillusioned, disappointed, and will lose respect for the Policy Committee. See Appendix B: *YouthBuild Policy Committee Handbook*, for a sample description of a Policy Committee.

**Staff Support for the Concept of a Youthbuild Policy Committee**

Including young people in the governing core of the program, with major policy responsibilities, will be a new and possibly threatening prospect for some staff members. It is important that staff fully understand and support the role of the Policy Committee.

Once a program and Youthbuild Policy Committee are already operating, it is crucial that support for the concept of a Youthbuild Policy Committee be one of the conditions of hiring new staff, and that staff orientation includes discussion and support of the role of the Policy Committee. Otherwise, staff may undermine the effectiveness of the committee.

**Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

Sharing decision making with young adults can be challenging. The Youthbuild director must want the Policy Committee to succeed and must give its members the tools to succeed. The Youthbuild director must meet regularly and consistently with the Policy Committee. If the Policy Committee meets only with a counselor, for example, the young people do not have access to top levels of decision making for the program, and the director does not have access to the valuable information about the program that the trainees can provide.

**The Role of the Youthbuild Director**

The Youthbuild director faces the challenge of keeping the Policy Committee on course while at the same time, not dominating it. The director’s role may include:

- Helping the committee set priorities for its meetings
- Encouraging trainees to raise issues of concern for the committee’s consideration
- Raising issues that the director is dealing with for committee input
- Providing information as background so the group can make good decisions
- Raising concerns about specific issues that are not raised by the young people
- Nurturing the group dynamics so that all members participate
• Guiding decisions so that the judgment of the trainees becomes increasingly sound
• Holding back and listening, so that the trainees can develop their decision making skills
• Being directive and firm when necessary

The Role of the Executive Director of a Parent Agency

If the Youthbuild program is housed within a larger agency, the executive director of that parent agency needs to support the principle of youth involvement in governance and back the Youthbuild director’s efforts to cultivate and engage participants’ involvement in decision making. The executive director may also want to consider trainee or graduate participation in other decision-making bodies within the organization, such as the board of directors or a Youthbuild advisory board, if one exists.

Elected Staff Representative or Appointed Staff Member

Programs often ask staff to elect a staff member to serve on the Policy Committee, who represents the entire staff. Whether a staff member is elected or appointed, it is very helpful to have another staff member besides the Youthbuild director working with the Policy Committee. In addition to contributing input from the staff perspective, this staff member also serves in a support role to the trainees on the committee. The role of the staff person can include:

• Contributing to discussions from a staff perspective—without dominating the group
• Ensuring that the chairperson or secretary prepares a written agenda
• Ensuring that the secretary types up the minutes
• Working with students to follow up on decisions or activities that the committee decides to undertake
• Coaching and assisting the members in running meetings

Ingredients for a Successful Youthbuild Policy Committee

• Schedule a regular weekly time and place to meet. Never cancel the meeting.
• Allow time on the worksite and in school for Policy Committee members to report to and get input from other students.
• Provide a private meeting space, so that members feel safe discussing sensitive issues.
• Allow deliberations on important issues such as money, hiring policies, real problems, personnel problems, and long-range plans.
• Teach skills formally—terminology, minute taking, facilitation skills, goal-setting, timelines, and preparing a budget.

• Encourage the young people to set high standards for themselves. Let them set policy on their own behavior and attendance in the Policy Committee, and periodically review how they are doing.

• Consult, inform, ask questions, guide discussions, check the judgment of the young people, and be sure they understand the extent and limitations of their authority.

• Ensure good group process, including a chairperson, an agenda, time allocations, and opportunities for everyone to speak. Prevent a few members from dominating the discussion.

Item 3 in the Resources for Part II includes a series of workshops for staff to plan the Policy Committee.
Chapter 6: Leadership Development During Trainee Orientation

Planning for Trainee Orientation

Orientation for participants is the key to successfully launching a program. Research on the process of youth transformation done at five Youthbuild programs\(^1\) indicates that the main concern of a new participant for the first six to eight weeks is trust: Can I trust the staff? Are they “for real”? Is it safe here? Will I be comfortable here? The young people are looking for answers to these questions in the tone, content, structure, and experiences of those first few weeks. Therefore, the staff must prepare well. Here are suggested steps.

Design the Orientation

This is not an easy task. Orientation can last from one to three weeks. From the moment they walk through the door, young people need to be immersed in an environment that supports the expectation that they will succeed in the program, on the job, and in playing a productive role in the community. An effective orientation process might incorporate large and small group discussions, videos, role-plays, panels, team-building exercises, support groups, Outward Bound-type trust building activities, and a completion ceremony.

Determine Staff Roles

The orientation may require:

- A coordinator who sets the tone, handles discipline, and makes policy decisions for the duration of the orientation
- A daily leader, different from the coordinator, and a different person each day who facilitates many of that day’s workshops, shifts the schedule as needed, and acts as an emcee
- Workshop or session leaders
- A logistics person who coordinates supplies, materials, transportation, and food

Determine Which Staff are Best Suited to Lead Each Workshop Session

Those staff need time to rehearse, practice, and prepare the needed materials. Each workshop leader needs to work within the overall time frame to accommodate other scheduled sessions.

Define Clear Goals

There are general goals that an orientation should accomplish. Your orientation should accomplish the following:

- Present the positive value base of the program
- Raise high standards and expectations for behavior and attitudes such as: punctuality, perfect attendance, positive attitude and full participation, self-discipline, group unity, no gang colors, drug free, respect for each other's cultures and views, and so on
- Challenge stereotypes, self-defeating attitudes, and negative behavior by creating a positive group culture
- Invite young people to discuss why their communities are in their current state
- Create a safe atmosphere in which the young people can begin to share their feelings so that they can begin to heal
- Promote group cohesion and unity through small support groups and discussion groups
- Get young people to set personal goals, examine obstacles to success, and prepare to overcome them
- Develop mutual support and cooperation by asking small groups to set and achieve a series of objectives by the end of the orientation period

Leadership Development at Trainee Orientation

Formal leadership training begins in the orientation. A trainee orientation program with a strong leadership development focus might:

- Provide training on fundamental leadership skills
- Provide opportunities for trainees to exercise leadership abilities
- Introduce the basic ideas of effective leadership
- Introduce leadership committees
- Explain any leadership development requirements of the Youthbuild program
- Have trainees begin reciting a daily pledge or philosophy
Provide Training on Fundamental Leadership Skills

Trainee orientation is an excellent time to begin to provide training in basic leadership skills such as conflict-resolution and goal-setting. It is also an opportunity to generate discussions in which trainees begin to analyze problems facing their community and possible solutions for those problems.

Provide Opportunities to Exercise Leadership Abilities

Workshops and small group activities provide wonderful opportunities for trainees to begin to develop their self-confidence as leaders. Small group discussions can provide opportunities for trainees to learn to express their opinions, to speak in public, and to represent a small group in reporting back to the larger body. Activities that involve problem solving provide a chance for trainees to begin to work as part of a team. And the overall orientation process provides continuous opportunities for trainees to exhibit positive leadership through personal example, by helping with set-up, clean-up and other tasks that help keep the program running well.

Introduce Basic Ideas of Leadership

Most young people will not start off thinking of themselves as leaders. But the more the program treats them like leaders, the sooner they will rise to meet that expectation. It is very helpful to validate the leadership abilities and experiences that young people bring into the program. Many of them are parents and are playing leadership roles within their families. Some of them have been leaders in a street context, leading large numbers of young people and conducting complex business deals. Invite these young people to put their leadership skills to work on behalf of the program and the community. Be sure to recognize trainees who make leadership contributions during the course of the orientation program.

To highlight the basic ideas of leadership, a staff facilitator might ask the group to answer the following questions:

- What does an effective leader do?
- What skills does an effective leader have?
- What attitudes does an effective leader display?

Raising these issues for discussion will help trainees formulate their ideas about leadership. A detailed workshop on “Defining Good Leadership” is included as Item 4 in the Resources section for Part II.

Introduce Leadership Committee(s)

During the orientation, staff should preview various formal leadership opportunities available in the program, announcing when committees will form and what the qualifications for membership are. At this time, it is appropriate to introduce the idea of youth participation in governance and to distribute and discuss a
written description of the Policy Committee or other decision-making group. This might begin to interest some participants in running for the group when it is formed (usually about four to six weeks into the cycle). Some programs also choose to introduce the idea of a Community Leadership Committee, a group that does extra community service, advocacy, or community action outside the program. A detailed description of a Community Leadership Committee may be found in the Community Leadership Committee Handbook (Appendix D).

**Explain Leadership Development Requirements**

Orientation is also the appropriate time to discuss leadership requirements with the participants. The examples mentioned earlier include:

- Achievement of leadership competencies or skills
- Regular community service
- Registering to vote, if of age, and voting in all elections for the remainder of the program
- Attending at least one meeting of three different community organizations during the program cycle, and reporting back to the program
- Taking on a leadership role or serving on a committee at some time during the program

**Daily Pledge or Philosophy**

Some Youthbuild programs begin each day by having the entire Youthbuild community (trainees and staff) stand and repeat a Youthbuild pledge. This pledge is written by the local program and embodies that program’s philosophy and vision. The repetition helps each person internalize the ideas and values of the pledge. It becomes a reference point for the program.

**Sample Youthbuild Pledges**

Here are two pledges as examples, from the Youth Action YouthBuild in East Harlem, New York, and YouthBuild/Just A Start in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

**The Youth Action Pledge**

We, the members of the Youth Action YouthBuild Program, pledge that we are working together:

- To improve and rebuild our community
- To relate to each other in cooperative ways
- To develop our potential as leaders
- To educate and improve ourselves and help others along the way
• To respect our peers, neighbors, and all life, and
• To be part of a great movement for justice, equality, and peace

All this we will do with love and dignity.

**YouthBuild/Just A Start Pledge**

All of us at YouthBuild/Just A Start are dedicated to challenge and empower ourselves to be responsible to and for each other. We have made this commitment to teach and to learn; to respect each other as we would want to be respected; to recognize and accept our tremendous potential; and to make positive efforts in building our lives, our families, our program, and our community.
Resources for Part II

Item 1 - Leadership Development Checklist for Directors

Item 2 - Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component

Item 3 - Staff Planning Workshop for a Policy Committee

Item 4 - Workshop for Defining Good Leadership
**Item 1: Leadership Development Checklist for Directors**

This checklist can be used by staff to do a leadership development inventory, assessment, or planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Element</th>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophical Commitment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Board has voted that leadership development is part of its commitment, and that it will support leadership development in the Youthbuild program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youthbuild grads or other young people serve on the board.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A clear definition of leadership development and the basic elements of the Youthbuild leadership development program have been defined in writing by the Youthbuild program.</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</table>

**Staffing**

Leadership development is part of the Youthbuild director’s job description and annual goals and objectives.

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<th></th>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The program has a leadership development staff person or a leadership development team responsible for the leadership development component.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific staff are responsible for leadership development workshops and trainings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific staff are responsible for leadership development experiences and opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific staff are responsible for supporting youth involvement in decision making and governance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All staff have been trained in leadership development.</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</table>
**Leadership Development in Each Component**

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<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a leadership development plan for the construction site.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a leadership development plan for the education component.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a leadership development plan for the counseling component.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff are evaluated on their implementation of their leadership development goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership competencies have been defined.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A process for teaching and measuring leadership competencies exists.</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</table>

**Leadership Development Workshops and Trainings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership development is a key part of orientation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A leadership retreat has been scheduled and planned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A plan and schedule for ongoing leadership development activities exists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific staff are assigned to deliver these activities.</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</table>

**Leadership Experiences and Opportunities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A plan and schedule for ongoing leadership experiences and opportunities exists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific staff are assigned to deliver these activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A concrete community service program exists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young people are involved in program fundraising.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young people speak to media and represent Youthbuild in public events.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Young people attend meetings at three community organizations and report back to the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</table>

Young people are registered to vote and vote in all elections during the program year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</table>

Other

**Youth Involvement in Decision Making**

A written description of the organization's structure for youth involvement in decision making exists. It includes a section on composition, scope of responsibilities, structures, procedures, preparation, and training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</table>

A plan exists for creating an interim youth advisory committee until a permanent Policy Committee is elected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</table>

A plan and schedule for organizing a Policy Committee exists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</table>

Staff have been trained in the functions of a Policy Committee and how to organize one; or

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</table>

Policy Committee meets regularly with director.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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Policy Committee participates in hiring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</table>

Systematic training is provided for Policy Committee.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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</table>

Feedback and reporting mechanisms between Policy Committee and program members exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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Other

**Leadership Development after Graduation**

Staff have been assigned to work with graduates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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A follow-up program has been designed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Doing This</th>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>Decided Not To</th>
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<tr>
<td>Currently Doing This</td>
<td>Future Plan</td>
<td>Decided Not To</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates serve on agency board of directors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates have formed an Alumni Club.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates participate in Community Leadership Committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates are hired as Youthbuild interns or staff.</td>
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<td>Graduates represent Youthbuild on other Boards.</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</table>
Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component

Workshop Schedule: Creating a Leadership Development Plan (4 hours)

8:30-8:45: Coffee and muffins
8:45-9:15: Exercise 1: The Leadership Development Handbook
9:15-10:30: Exercise 2: Planning the Leadership Development in Each Program Component
10:30-10:45: Break
10:45-11:30: Exercise 3: Leadership Experiences and Workshops
11:30-12:00: Exercise 4: Leadership Development After Youthbuild
12:00-12:30: Appreciations
**Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component**

**Exercise 1: The Leadership Development Handbook**

**Time:** 30 minutes  
**Materials:** *Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff* (Appendix A)  
**Purpose:** To generate staff discussion about leadership development  
**Method:** This workshop uses the Rotating Chair (explained below) group process technique, which encourages people to be aware of encouraging others in the group to participate.  

**Advance Preparation:** Read *Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff.*

**Activity:**

1. Inform the group that today’s session will be dedicated to creating a Leadership Development Plan for your program. The plan will include all the key areas described in *Leadership Development: A Handbook for YouthBuild Staff.* Before getting into the planning, you want to give people a chance to share their reactions to what they read in the Handbook.

2. Explain that this discussion will use the Rotating Chair method. When people want to speak, they should raise their hands. The person who just finished speaking will call on the next person. When you’re choosing someone to speak, choose the person with his or her hand up who has spoken the least.

3. Ask the group the following questions:
   - Having read the handbook, what do you think is the most important thing that we can do as a staff to foster leadership development among the trainees?
   - How do you want to contribute to leadership development?
   - What will be the most difficult aspects of leadership development and how can we address those challenges?
Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component

Exercise 2: Planning the Leadership Development in Each Program Component

Time: 1 hour and 15 minutes

Materials: Planning Worksheets for Construction, Education and Counseling Departments

Purpose: To create objectives and strategies for leadership development in the construction, education and counseling components of the program.

Method: Three small planning groups, with report-backs.

Advance Preparation: Make copies of planning worksheets for all staff.

Activity:
1. Explain the purpose of this session.
2. Break up the group into 3 planning teams, and inform them that they will have 45 minutes to develop a plan. The teams are:
   - Construction
   - Education
   - Counseling
3. Give each person a copy of the planning worksheet. Suggest that they refer to their Staff Leadership Development Handbooks, p. 8-14 for ideas from other Youthbuild sites.
4. Have the group reassemble, and ask each “department” to present their leadership development objectives (clear and measurable) and the next steps in their planning process.
5. Collect one copy of the plan from each group.
6. Set a date for a future staff meeting in which the teams will be asked to report on their progress in planning.
## Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component

**Leadership Development in Each Program**  
**Component Planning Worksheet**

Component:  ____ Construction  ____ Education  ____ Counseling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Action Plan</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Lead staff</th>
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**Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component**

**Exercise 3: Leadership Experiences and Workshops**

**Time:** 45 minutes  
**Materials:** Several copies of the three attached worksheets  
Newsprint, markers, tape  
**Purpose:** To identify the key leadership experiences and leadership workshops that will be incorporated into your program this year.  
**Method:** Two small planning groups with report-backs.  

**Advance Preparation:**  
- Identify two staff members who will be in charge of overseeing and running the leadership workshops and the leadership experiences component of your program. Designate these two people as small group facilitators for this workshop and give them the planning worksheets in advance to prepare for the workshops.  
- Make copies of planning worksheets for all staff  

**Activity:**  
1. Explain the purpose of this planning session to the group. Let them know that they will get to choose one of two planning teams to take part in. Inform the group of the two staff that will facilitate the small groups. The small groups will work on:  
   - Leadership workshops  
   - Leadership experiences  
2. Hand out copies of the appropriate planning worksheet to each team. The group will have 30 minutes to work together.  
3. Give each group five minutes to report back.
**Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component**

Select 3-5 leadership development experiences that will be a priority for the coming year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Experiences</th>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Lead Staff</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Meetings (Youth/Staff)</td>
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<td>Community Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood/Public Meetings</td>
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<td>Media Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Internships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Community Leadership Opportunities</td>
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</table>
Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component

Leadership Development Workshops Planning Worksheet #1

Identify which leadership skills will be a priority for your leadership classes and workshops this year. Below are some possible topics, with step-by-step workshop instructions available in the full Leadership Competencies Handbook (Appendix C), or formulate your own. Then complete Worksheet #2.

Personal Development Skills and Knowledge

- Keeping a schedule and calendar
- Setting and achieving personal development goals
- Managing anger constructively
- Creating a personal budget
- Sexual reproduction, pregnancy prevention and AIDS/STD prevention
- Job readiness

Group Leadership Skills

- Listening
- Taking notes
- Leading a small group discussion
- Group process skills
- Defining good leadership
- Evaluating your own progress

Community Leadership Skills

- Using a phone system
- Finding information through research
- Understanding local, state and federal government
**Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component**

**Leadership Development Workshops Planning Worksheet #2**

List priority leadership development workshops that the program will offer this year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Lead Staff</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retreat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counseling Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specially scheduled workshops</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Item 2: Staff Workshop for Planning a Leadership Development Component

Exercise 4: Leadership Development After Youthbuild

Time: 30 minutes
Materials: Index cards, pencils, handbooks, newsprint, markers
Purpose: To create a vision for leadership involvement for graduates that will help shape your leadership development program
Method: Visioning activity
Advance Preparation: None

Activity:
1. Ask everyone to take five minutes to look at the last section of their Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff (Appendix A) on leadership development after Youthbuild.
2. Ask people to put their books aside. Pass out index cards. Ask each person to write down the three most important program activities that Youthbuild should provide for its graduates.
3. Go around the room and ask each person to take a couple of minutes to share what they wrote, and why they think these three things are important.
4. Put up a sheet of newsprint, that is headed: “Leadership Development After Youthbuild.” Ask the group to identify the 3-5 leadership development ideas that came up most frequently, and write those out on newsprint.
5. Put up a second sheet of newsprint that is headed: “Prerequisites for a Successful Graduate Program.” Ask the group if there is anything that the program needs to do with the students during their year in Youthbuild in order to successfully work with graduates. List these ideas on the newsprint.
Item 3: Staff Planning Workshop for a Policy Committee

Usually offered as part of a three day staff training that includes Introduction to Leadership Development and Creating a Leadership Development Plan.

Exercise 1: Introduction to a Youthbuild Policy Committee
Exercise 2: Mock First Meeting
Exercise 3: Planning Your Youthbuild Policy Committee
Item 3: Staff Planning Workshop for a Policy Committee

Exercise 1: Introduction to a Youthbuild Policy Committee

Time: 1 hour

Materials: Newsprint, markers, Youthbuild Policy Committee Handbook, section on “Information for Directors and Staff” (see Appendix B), Chart: Steps to Creating a Policy Committee

Purpose: To understand the purpose, structure, and responsibilities of a typical Youthbuild Policy Committee.

Advance Preparation: All staff should receive the section “Information for Directors and Staff” of the YouthBuild Policy Committee Handbook (Appendix B) and should be asked to read it prior to the meeting.

1. Write the following questions on the top of a sheet of newsprint:
   What are the benefits of including young people in decision making?
   Ask people to brainstorm about the benefits for young people, the staff, the director, the program and the wider community. Write responses on newsprint.

2. Explain that today’s session will focus on developing a plan for a Youthbuild Policy Committee, which is a formal structure for youth involvement in decision making within the Youthbuild program. The staff will play a central role in shaping how the Policy Committee will operate.

3. Ask for people’s response to the material in the handbook.
   Specifically, ask the group to take a minute to reread page B-11 of the handbook (“The Youthbuild Policy Committee: A Sample Description”). What do people notice as they read through this page?
   Ask staff to turn to pages B-17-18 (“Types of Issues that Young People Involved in Governance May Handle”) and glance at three or four points under each of the headings about the kinds of issues that Youthbuild Policy Committees have handled. What strikes people as they look at these issues?
   Point out that the Youthbuild Policy Committee provides an opportunity for students to have input into serious decisions
within the organization. For this reason, staff involvement in defining the Policy Committee is very important.

4. Break the staff into small groups. Ask them to define the differences between these three ideas, and report back to the group.
   - Adult Authority
   - Youth Empowerment
   - Youth/Adult Partnership

Explain that the Policy Committee is not about giving the young people control over the organization, but is about creating a partnership between adults and young people, based on communication and consensus-building. It is about sharing responsibility for the success of the program with the students.

Ask the group: How do you accomplish this, because adults have more experience than young people?

5. Review “Steps for Creating a Policy Committee,” using the chart below.

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**Steps for Creating a Policy Committee**

1. Inform students about the Policy Committee during orientation.

2. Hold election 4-6 weeks after program starts. Staff should prospect for good potential members and encourage them to run.

3. Provide written description of the Policy Committee to students.

4. Set criteria and qualifications for members with the participation of the young people.

5. Do a careful election process, as described in the Policy Committee Handbook.

6. Provide Policy Committee members with at least four hours of initial training. (See the Policy Committee Handbook for training ideas.)
Exercise 2: Mock First Meeting

Time: 1 hour

Materials: The section of the Policy Committee Handbook: “Information for Youth Members” (Appendix B), the chart below: Policy Committee agenda.

Purpose: To model good meeting process for the staff and help them feel comfortable about the role of the Youthbuild Policy Committee.

Method: Role play

Advance Preparation: None

1. Explain to staff that they are all members of the newly elected Youthbuild Policy Committee, and that this is their first meeting. Explain that as the director, you will chair this first meeting, and future meetings will be chaired by students with you as coach.

2. Put the agenda up on newsprint:

   **Policy Committee Agenda**

   4:00: Introductions
   4:10: Select someone to take notes
   4:12: Review agenda
   4:15: Read section from the President of YBUS (pages.30-34)
   4:55: Discuss: “What We Want the Policy Committee to Stand For”
   5:25: Go over organizational chart
   5:40: Agree on time and place for next meeting
       Agenda item for next week:
       • Training on running good meetings
       Agenda item for following week:
       • Review budget, funding sources
   5:45: Brief evaluation of meeting
   5:50: Appreciations
   6:00 Adjourn

3. Introductions: Ask them each to introduce themselves and tell why they are glad to be on the Policy Committee. Ask for a person
to record the meeting and go over the agenda.

4. Read Letter: At the beginning of Section II of the *Youthbuild Policy Committee Handbook* is a letter from Dorothy Stoneman, President of YouthBuild USA. Ask them to take turns reading the letter and the two follow-up sections that were part of the original letter. They outline ten years of lessons learned by Policy Committees at the Youth Action Program—the first Youthbuild program. It communicates a lot of information. It reassures staff, and it models the practice of reading out loud with the young people, which ensures that everybody is hearing the same thing. Explain that with the young people, it is important to discuss things as they read them.

5. Discuss Standards: Pose the question: “What do we want the Policy Committee to stand for?” Have the recorder write down answers on which people agree.

6. Explain Organizational Structure: Explain to the staff that next, the director will draw the structure of the entire organization, with titles, names, lines of accountability and the Policy Committee's place in it. Do this by asking questions like: “Who is in charge of...X, Y, and Z”? “Who is that person's boss”? Fill in an organizational chart from what the students say. Draw a box with a dashed line representing the Policy Committee on a parallel with the director's box. This kind of information shows a basic respect for the young people—they need the whole picture in order to function well.

7. Decide on time and agenda items for future meetings. Explain that this meeting was entirely filled with training, but that as director, you want to list important items that people want to address during the next few meetings. By listing “Training in Leading Meetings,” and “Review of Budget and Funding,” you are communicating that the Policy Committee focuses on serious business. Make sure the members agree to and commit to the next meeting time.

8. Model a brief evaluation process: Ask the group to go around and state: What went well today? Any improvements we should make next time?

9. Do appreciations and end meeting.

10. Stepping out of your role as Policy Committee members, discuss people's reactions. Break people into pairs and have them each take 3-5 minutes to tell the other everything they have learned about the Policy Committee and to ask any questions they may have.
Exercise 3: Planning Your Youthbuild Policy Committee

Time: 2-3 hours
Materials: Policy Committee Planning Worksheets (copies for all staff)
Purpose: For the staff to come to agreement on the composition, scope of responsibilities, structures and procedures, and training for the Youthbuild Policy Committee, and to write a description which can be given to students.
Method: Discussion
Advance Preparation: None

1. Hand out Planning Worksheets and go through them, question by question. Be sure to provide time for disagreement and debate.

2. When the Worksheets are completed, have someone type up a description of your Youthbuild Policy Committee, including the following four sections:
   - Composition
   - Scope of Responsibilities
   - Structures and Procedures
   - Preparation and Training

This can be handed out to all staff and to students.

Planning a Youthbuild Policy Committee

1. Composition

In most Youthbuild programs, the composition of a Youthbuild Policy Committee includes:
   - The Youthbuild director
   - A representative group of about 8-10 students
   - One staff representative
   - How many people will be on the Policy Committee? (Experience indicates that a Policy Committee larger than 10 to 12 is unwieldy and inefficient.)
   - How many young people will be on the Policy Committee?
• If there is more than one group or crew, will there be representatives from each group?

• Will there be qualifications for office? (Are there standards of attendance, performance, or attitude, for example? Will staff or students set these standards?)

• How many staff representatives will be on the Policy Committee? The principle to remember is that the voice of the young people should be dominant. If there are more than two adults, the adults will tend to dominate. How will the staff representative(s) be selected?

2. Scope of Responsibilities

On what issues will the Policy Committee make final decisions? On what issues will its role be limited to consultation? Will the Policy Committee:

• Participate in hiring future staff? If so, how?

• Recommend improvements in program management and services?

• Contribute to program design, policies, and changes?

• Contribute to staff evaluations? If so, how?

• Change the trainee contract?

• Review the yearly budget?

• Provide input into terminations of trainees? If so, with what power?

• Provide input in the firing of staff? If so, in what process?

• Evaluate the success of the program?

• Mediate conflicts?

• Have other responsibilities? If so, what?

3. Structures and Procedures

• How long will the terms of Policy Committee members be?

• How will vacancies be filled (in the event that a student steps down)?

• Who will form the agenda?

• Who will chair the meetings? Will the chair rotate? If so, how often?

• Is a quorum required to meet, or just to make decisions? Who will decide what a quorum is?

• How often will the quorum meet?
• Where will the quorum meet? (In a private space?)
• When will the quorum meet? (During or after program hours?)
• Will Policy Committee time be paid or unpaid?

• When will the Policy Committee members have the opportunity to report back to their constituent groups?
• Will there be joint meetings between the Policy Committee and the staff?

• Will there be periodic meetings between the Policy Committee and the Board of Directors? Or will the Policy Committee have a liaison with the board?
• Who will serve as the administrative staff person to help carry out the business of the Policy Committee?

• How will the Policy Committee evaluate its own functioning?

4. Preparation and Training

• How and when will the staff introduce the idea of the Policy Committee to the group?
• How will the staff prepare the group for the election of members?
• When will elections be held? (Generally, four to six weeks after the program starts is a good time for elections, because people have begun to really get to know one another.)

• Will there be a temporary Policy Committee before the permanent one is elected?

• What kinds of training will be built into the first several months of the Policy Committee? These might include training the young people to chair meetings, use good group process, interview job candidates, read a budget, use the phone, write a business letter, and make consensus decisions.

• In what sequence will these trainings occur?
• Who will do these trainings?
• Will there be a special retreat for the Policy Committee?
**Item 4: Workshop on Defining Good Leadership**

**Purpose and Uses**

Young people are surrounded by a variety of leaders, some effective, some corrupt, some ineffective. It is important for all participants in a Youthbuild program to develop their ideas about what functions a leader has, what an effective leader does, and what skills a leader has or needs to develop. Most trainees can come up with a solid list of functions, skills, and attitudes. Once established, this list can become a reference point for assessing themselves and marking their progress. It also helps the group select the best leaders for the Policy Committee or other program leadership roles.

**How to Teach**

This competency can be taught in a formal workshop or training with all of the participants divided into small groups, or with an ongoing, stable group.

Divide into small groups for discussion. In a small group of six to eight people, have the facilitator ask the following questions:

- What are the *functions* of an effective leader? (i.e., what does an effective leader do?)
- What are the *skills* of a leader?
- What *attitudes* does an effective leader possess?
- What are the benefits of playing a leadership role in a group?
- What are the difficulties of being a leader?
- What kind of support do people taking leadership need from others?
- Who in history or in your life has been an effective leader, in your opinion?

Make a list and discuss. Write up the responses for everyone to see. Encourage discussion and clarification. Try to get consensus. Adult members of the group should add their own contributions. However, the adults should select carefully what to contribute, so as not to dominate, and not to offer what the young people would have offered themselves. Listen for a missing piece that might raise the level of discussion and offer that piece.

Combine lists in the whole group. If the group worked on the above questions in small groups, come back together to combine lists, see what is common and try to get consensus on a list of “Functions, Skills, and Attitudes of An Effective Leader.”
Do self-assessment of leadership skills and attitudes. Give everyone 3” x 5” cards and ask them to list the leadership skills and attitudes that they have. When finished writing, have them pair up and read their cards to each other. Then ask for three or four people to volunteer to read their cards to the whole group.

Do role plays of positive and negative leadership. Ask for two groups of volunteers (three or four each) to prepare a short skit, one group showing an example of negative or destructive leadership, the other showing positive or constructive leadership. Do negative leadership role play first. Ask the whole group what leadership qualities they observed and invite other comments. Do the same for positive leadership role play.

(In this section it is crucial to distinguish between moral qualities and leadership abilities. Help the group make distinctions between effective and ineffective leadership as well as constructive and destructive leadership.)

Memorize the list of functions, skills, and attitudes. Over time, ask the young people to actually memorize the list, and be able to explain each item.

**Essential Steps for Ongoing Groups**

If the group is an ongoing leadership group, like the Policy Committee or Community Leadership Committee, there are two more essential steps to this process, which can lead to an even more cohesive group.

- Ask everyone to take 10 or 15 minutes to write down their own strong points and areas in which they need improvement to become truly fine leaders. Use the functions, skills, and attitudes of a leader as a guide.

- Have each member present his or her self-evaluation and receive feedback from the group. This process takes some time. In a group of ten, each person could take up to 20 to 25 minutes.

This focuses the members on their own development, and gives them full feedback from the group regarding where they stand. Insecurities in groups are often based on uncertainty about what other people think of us; it’s usually a relief to find out. The facilitator should make sure that everyone receives constructive feedback. Each person should begin with the positive feedback and then make suggestions for improvements or next steps. It is always important to ensure that each person giving feedback makes positive observations, not just criticisms.

In an ordinary group, this process enhances the level of closeness and honesty as well as the consciousness of effective leadership skills and attitudes. It should be done at least once a year with the group. A good place to do it is at a leadership retreat.
**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

Since these are key ideas in the development of leadership, this competency should be achieved within the first six weeks of the program.

**How to Measure Achievement**

Students should be asked to list the functions, skills, and attitudes of effective leaders, according to the list drawn up by the group.
Once the leadership development component has been organized, participants have been selected, and orientation is completed, the program is ready to begin to implement leadership development activities. This part of the handbook describes specific leadership development activities for each program component, how to organize leadership trainings and workshops for students, and other ways leadership experiences can be incorporated into the Youthbuild program.
Chapter 7: Leadership Development in Each Program Component

Overview

The most effective way to teach leadership skills and promote leadership development of participants is to incorporate it into every component of the program. Not only do the young adults get extensive leadership opportunities through these daily experiences, but the program operates more effectively when the trainees take on the responsibility of working side by side with the staff to make the program run well.

The following chapter offers a variety of ways in which Youthbuild programs have incorporated leadership development into their construction sites, classrooms, and counseling components.

Leadership Development on the Construction Site

The construction site provides tremendous opportunities to teach students to take responsibility for themselves, for those around them, and for the project as a whole. This means giving students opportunities to “take responsibility” and not just “take directions.” For example: some Youthbuild programs rotate crew chiefs every week, giving all students an opportunity to lead the crew. In one program, after all students had taken a turn acting as crew chief once, the students elected a permanent crew chief. Below are 10 examples of ways to incorporate leadership development into the construction site:

1. Give all the trainees an overview of the entire construction process and timetable, teach them how to read the plan, and explain what will happen to the building when it’s finished.

2. Create official jobs for trainees to serve in leadership roles, such as:
   - Crew chiefs who help coordinate the work of a crew of trainees (under professional supervision) and ensure that the work area is cleaned up at the end of the day
   - A steward who is responsible for taking attendance, calling breaks, calling clean up, maintaining the cooler, and doing store runs with staff
   - A first aid and safety coordinator who monitors worksite safety and reports problems or violations, maintains the first aid kit,
prepares for and helps run safety meetings, and may serve on a safety committee of the organization

- A photographer who documents the work in progress
- A tool manager who signs out tools to students and conducts tool inventory

3. Take a trainee to construction meetings or contract negotiations.
4. Take a trainee to City Hall when permits are being obtained or offer other opportunities to learn how “the system” works.
5. Involve trainees in planning, including purchasing materials or scheduling and have them explain the process to other trainees.
6. Have trainees help to run morning or afternoon meetings on the worksite.
7. Ask trainees to come up with a solution to a particular problem on the site (such as meeting a deadline, keeping the site cleaner, improving attendance, or improving teamwork).
8. Have trainees give tours to visitors who come to the site.
9. Have trainees work on estimating and doing take-offs on parts of the project. This can double as a math assignment.
10. Ask trainees to evaluate the construction staff, the training process, and each other.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

Leadership on the Construction Site

“I received the job of crew chief. I was trusted and well-liked because I was willing to work right along with them, and not just shout orders.”

“The construction site was very useful in leadership. It shows how to keep a job by being responsible. It gives you a satisfied feeling, knowing that you have put in a hard day’s work.”

Leadership Development in the Classroom

Some programs include their program-wide leadership training workshops as part of their weekly classroom schedule. But whether or not leadership workshops are offered as a regular class, the classroom provides many opportunities to inte-
grate leadership skills into regular academic learning. The classroom can foster leadership development in the way it is structured, in the skills that it develops, and in the content of the material that is taught.

**Leadership Development as Part of the Classroom Structure**

No matter what the student’s specific objectives (such as a GED, diploma, or job), a fundamental goal of a Youthbuild program is to help participants learn to take responsibility for their own learning and their own lives. If students can learn self-discipline within an academic setting, they can achieve their goals and continue to learn and broaden their horizons after they leave.

But self-discipline is a learned behavior. The classroom can foster the development of this vital life skill by establishing systems in which students have to exhibit responsibility. For example:

- Involve students in making decisions regarding classroom activities
- Establish systems in which students are responsible for finishing their own work and correcting their work before moving on to the next topic
- Provide opportunities for trainees to work as teams on small group projects
- Provide opportunities for students to help one another to learn. Show them, through exercises and planned activities, that they can actually rely on each other for help
- Ask students to help create a climate of discipline and trust by being quiet, paying attention, and listening
- Create rotating leadership jobs in the classroom
- Have students participate in evaluating the teacher and each other

All of these processes within the classroom will help students become less “teacher-dependent” and more invested in the work for its own sake.

**Leadership Skill Development in the Classroom**

There are many opportunities to develop leadership skills through academic classroom activities. Many of the skills described below will simultaneously help students prepare for the GED exam by improving their reading, writing and analytical skills. For example, students can be asked to:

- Research a topic of community concern, either at the library or through oral history research (i.e., interviews) and write a brief paper on their results
- Read a brief essay or news article on a controversial public policy issue and present their opinions to the group
• Write about their opinions on a public policy issue
• Make a presentation in front of the class or the program, at a community meeting or at a press event, and to offer feedback to one another
• Participate in a formal debate
• Read and analyze a newspaper article for information, or to learn the skill of distinguishing fact from opinion
• Take notes on a presentation given by a teacher or by another student
• Write a letter to the editor, a letter to a Congressman, or an opinion piece for a newspaper; these pieces can be written by individuals or by a group

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### Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

#### Leadership in the Classroom

“In the classroom, I learned it was important to be responsible for what you do.”

“I learned a lot of different points of view in the classroom. We were not just learning about math or English. They were preparing us to live and work in the real world.”

“In the classroom, I understood that leadership has a lot to do with patience. It is based on one’s ability to strive for better things.”

“We got an opportunity to know our family tree. We also had tutoring and one trainee had to help the next trainee.”

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#### Leadership Content within the Academic Curriculum

In addition to skills, the academic program can consciously integrate content about community issues and public policy into its academic curriculum. Examples include:

• Visits from (or to) government officials and community leaders on public policy issues
• Studying how a law is passed, at the city, state or federal level
• Analyzing a community problem or a community organization
• Studying the history and culture of ethnic and racial groups that reflect the student body, helping young people develop increased knowledge, pride, self-awareness, historical perspective, and sense of belonging to a great tradition
• Reading about (and meeting) important public leaders, past and present, who can serve as role models of outstanding leadership
• Many of the leadership competencies can be formally taught in the classroom (See Appendix C for a set of suggested lesson plans)

Leadership Development in the Counseling Component

Developing leadership skills is an integral part of the counseling process. Learning to be consistently responsible for one’s own life is a necessary prerequisite to providing leadership for others and taking responsibility for their well-being. Personal skills that are critical leadership skills include:

• An ability to demonstrate consistency and responsibility on a daily basis
• An ability to advocate effectively for oneself
• An ability to resolve conflicts effectively
• An ability to communicate about issues of cultural identity in a positive manner
• An ability to listen and communicate effectively
• Clarity of personal values

As students work to overcome a variety of personal obstacles and problems, they will strive to replace negative behaviors by developing these and related skills. The counseling staff can identify these or other personal leadership skills to students. They can focus on these skills as constructive alternatives to negative behavior through one-on-one discussions, workshops and discussion groups, and can draw links between these skills and effective leadership. They can encourage students to try out these new skills within the context of the larger program, and can offer recognition when students learn to change their behavior. One of the most profound transformations that a Youthbuild program will witness is when a student who had a tendency toward uncontrolled anger learns to advocate effectively for himself or resolve a problem constructively. This is a critical leadership skill. Specific leadership development activities within the counseling component include:

• Training some of the young people to lead a discussion group
• Teaching students to do peer counseling
• Teaching students mediation and conflict-resolution skills
• Making an individual leadership development plan or life-skills plan with each young person

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

Leadership Development through Counseling

“My counselor expressed to me that whatever I have strong feelings about are the things that I should go out and try to achieve. Reach my goals.”

“Our counselors showed us that they were able to succeed. Many of them came from the same background. They taught us not to focus on the things you can’t do. Focus on the things you can do.”
Overview

Once the concept of youth participation in governance has been introduced to participants during orientation, it is important to follow up on its implementation as quickly as possible. Some Youthbuild programs have found it useful to form an advisory committee at the end of orientation or early in the first month to serve as a temporary group with whom the director consults until a Policy Committee or other permanent body is elected. There are many decisions to be made and problems to be solved during the first four to six weeks. Such an advisory committee would not have the same level of decision-making responsibility as a Policy Committee but would give advice and input to the director. If the director acts on the recommendations, it sends a clear signal to the participants that the program is serious about including them in governance.

Many Youthbuild programs hold the Policy Committee elections four to six weeks after orientation ends. This allows time for trainees to get to know one another and to find out who is responsible and who might make a good representative.

Elections

A Policy Committee election needs to be carefully planned so that students seriously consider who would make the most effective representatives. The experience of other Youthbuild sites has shown that when the program takes time to discuss the leadership qualities that would be effective on a Policy Committee, the election is less likely to become a popularity contest and more likely to result in a quality committee.

A model for a step-by-step process for planning and implementing a Policy Committee election is described in the Youthbuild Policy Committee Handbook in Appendix B.

Term of Office

Some Youthbuild programs have the Policy Committee elected for the entire year of the program. Other programs have found it useful to have terms of about five months with elections twice a year. This allows more students to have an opportunity to serve, and allows those students who need to focus on academic or
personal issues to step down gracefully. Usually, students are allowed to run for both terms, and many sites have found it helpful to have some continuity among representatives for both terms.

**The Role of the Director**

The success of the Policy Committee depends on the director. The director needs to view the Policy Committee as a key leadership development opportunity for both the members and the program as a whole. The director needs to make a commitment to the key ingredients for success.

**Key Ingredients for Successful Policy Committees**

- **Hold regular meetings.** The director should meet with the Policy Committee weekly. He or she must schedule other things around the meetings and never cancel except for emergencies. The young people will feel respected if they know that the director is arranging his or her schedule to meet with them.

- **Do serious business.** The Policy Committee should discuss and decide on serious issues. The youth members will bring some of their own, gathered from their peers. But the director should bring to the meetings issues that the young people may not be aware of. The director should think carefully about which issues to bring when. Issues should be real and should include: personnel, programmatic, and community issues. Participating in hiring of staff is always felt to be the ultimate respect for young people.

- **Provide systematic training.** The director should see to it that the committee is trained early on the following: the role and responsibilities of Policy Committee members, how to run effective meetings, how to read a budget, how to interview candidates, decision-making processes, and other training related to the work of the committee. Up to half of each meeting for the first several months should be training. If the director is not the best trainer, he or she should find the best person to do the training. The more time the director spends training the young people in the beginning, the more effective the committee will be. The members will be able to handle increasingly complex issues as time goes on if they have a solid foundation.

- **Use good group process.** During the meetings, it is essential that the committee members learn and use elements of good group process (e.g., having a chairperson, a written agenda, maximizing and valuing each person's input, appreciating each other, and handling controversial topics in ways that do not destroy group unity). The director should see that the committee members are trained in these skills and then insist that the group uses them consistently. Attention to
group process will pay great dividends.

- **Build a positive group.** The director is the overall leader of the Policy Committee. As leader, his or her role is to pay attention to three things:
  1. Whether or not the group is on task
  2. How group members are relating to one another
  3. How each individual member is functioning

Sometimes one of these three will take precedence over the other two, but over time all three need attention. The *Policy Committee Handbook* in Appendix B includes sample trainings, more information on the role of the director, and details of implementing an effective committee.

**Common Mistakes**

Here are the most common mistakes made by directors and programs in trying to implement a Policy Committee. Not surprisingly, they mirror many of the points made in the previous section.

- **Weak staff preparation.** If the staff have not had adequate training about the centrality of leadership development and the role of the Policy Committee and have not formulated a written description of a committee it supports, then the staff can undermine the committee in many ways: by not taking it seriously, not allowing committee members to report on the business of the committee during work hours, not making sure Policy Committee members get to the meetings, and not implementing the decisions of the committee.

- **Poor election process.** If the election is done casually, without proper presentation to and preparation of the young people, then those elected may turn out to be the ones who are flashy, popular, talkative, or colorful but not necessarily the best leaders. The quality and attitude of the members can make or break a Policy Committee.

- **Director is too passive.** Often the director misunderstands his or her role as “letting the young people do their thing.” Usually, the young people are not aware of and not used to making decisions about larger programmatic issues, and will focus only on smaller—though important—issues like lunch policy, pay, contract violations, and issues that more directly affect them. It is the role of the director to bring to the table some of the larger issues for the young people to focus on. (See the *Policy Committee Handbook* in Appendix B for a sampling of the kinds of issues faced by effective Policy Committees.)

- **Director is too dominant.** There are directors who are too active, talk all the time, run the meetings, or otherwise make the young people feel unimportant. The director must know when to be passive and
when to be active. Directors who have implemented effective Policy Committees usually begin by being quite active, setting the tone and expectations, modeling meeting process he or she wants the young people to learn, and doing a lot of up front training. Gradually the role of the director will be reduced as the group begins to function well.

- **Inadequate training.** Sometimes committees make decisions too soon, without a base of knowledge about the organization which sponsors Youthbuild, budget constraints, program procedures, how to make good decisions, how to run effective meetings, or how to build positive group relationships. Training is key.

- **Little important business.** If the committee gets bogged down in trivial issues, the young people and director alike can lose interest. The director is the person who makes the meetings count by bringing interesting and challenging issue to the meetings. This is accomplished through adequate preparation and training.

- **Poor group process.** Young people will not keep coming to meetings that are poorly organized, don't accomplish anything, are chaotic or boring, and have no clear agenda. They will also lose interest if they are not learning anything.

- **Divisiveness among the group members.** People don't like being in a group where conflict or disrespect is common, or when one person dominates the group without being checked. People are also opposed to situations where serious disagreements go unresolved.

**Youthbuild Policy Committees in Action**

As an example of effective Youthbuild Policy Committees, consider the activities of the Policy Committees of YouthBuild Portland, Portland, Maine and Casa Verde YouthBuild, Austin, Texas.

**YouthBuild Portland**

At the Youthbuild site in Portland, Maine, the Policy Committee includes six students elected by the members. The Policy Committee meets weekly to review program policies and discuss issues affecting youth in the community. The Policy Committee determines its own structure, identifies which members will fill committee positions, and creates policies for committee eligibility. They also create a framework by which issues are brought to the entire group for consideration. One issue considered was the need to improve general respect and teamwork within the program. The Policy Committee members enacted a smoking policy that addressed the issues of underage smokers and construction site safety. They also developed a plan to raise money for an emergency loan fund for program members and for an end of the year trip. Policy Committee members also organized a
holiday food basket collection for the needy.

**Casa Verde YouthBuild**

This Policy Committee meets every Wednesday between 11:30 am and 1:00 pm. The program buys lunch. There are four crews that each elect two Policy Committee members. In addition, two different Youthbuild participants who are not on the Policy Committee attend each week as observers, so that all the young people get to see it in operation. They have a youth chair and a written agenda. They begin each meeting by reading a few pages of the *Policy Committee Handbook* as a short weekly training piece. First they do old business, reporting on projects or assignments from last week. Then they move on to new business. Half the issues brought up are by the young people (on behalf of people in their crews) and half are brought up by the program director. The director and the other staff person play good roles. Whenever a young person asks the director a question, he turns it back to the group by saying: “What do you think we should do?” He says: “We have such-an-such an issue, what do you think we should do?” He listens, asks questions to get different opinions, and asks the group to make a decision. The chair clearly has the respect and support of the group. They end each meeting with appreciations of the group and the person on their left.

An impressive feature: There is a laptop on the table. One of the youth members takes minutes as the meeting progresses. At the end of each meeting, they put a disk into a computer, print out the minutes, and make copies for each member to post back at their sites or classroom. The following morning there is a scheduled time for the Policy Committee members to report on the meeting to their respective crews, and get input for the next meeting.

A Policy Committee member stated, “The Policy Committee is the best part of the program! You really get to decide things here.”
Chapter 9: Trainings and Workshops

Overview

Some leadership skills are best taught in workshops or classes in which students are presented with information and given an opportunity to apply the new skills to projects or assignments. The strength of a leadership development workshop is that leadership skills can be practiced within a simulated environment to allow students the opportunity to gain confidence while taking minimal risks. Effective leadership development workshops and classes are dynamic and interactive. They provide hands-on experiences in practicing leadership skills, with many opportunities for experiential learning.

In planning leadership development workshops or classes, a program will need to identify both the topics to be covered and the forums in which the information will be presented.

Settings for Leadership Development

Leadership development training can be offered to trainees in a wide variety of settings. Most programs incorporate a mix of the following venues for engaging participants in developing leadership skills. The key is planning. Once a program identifies the leadership skills or competencies that it intends to teach, the program director or staff will need to decide which of these skills will be taught in orientation, on retreats, in classes, or in workshops.

Program Orientation

As discussed in Chapter Six, the trainee orientation to the Youthbuild program provides an important opportunity to offer activities that helps trainees to develop their leadership skills.

Retreats

Many Youthbuild programs incorporate one or two leadership retreats into the year's calendar. Often, the entire community of youth and staff goes away on a two-day overnight retreat. The initial retreat usually happens during the first four to six weeks of the program. Typically, such retreats include workshops on leadership concepts and skills, small groups for personal support and community build-
ing, a ropes course or other outdoor adventure activity if available, recreation, and the election of a Policy Committee.

These retreats need to be budgeted and scheduled well in advance. It is often wise to have outside facilitators assist in their planning and development, so as not to overburden the staff. For more ideas, see the Sample Retreat Schedule, included as Item 1 in the Resources section at the end of this section.

**Ongoing Classes or Workshops**

Most Youthbuild programs offer regular classes or workshops that focus on teaching leadership skills or providing hands-on leadership training experiences. These may be offered in a weekly class by a teacher, in a weekly group session by a counselor, or in a special half-day activity once or twice a month. Some programs combine all of the above, depending on the particular leadership skill or competency.

**Workshop Topics**

Many programs develop a Leadership Development Competency Checklist that lays out the topics to be covered and the skills that students will acquire over the course of the year. As students acquire and can demonstrate skills, the staff member checks off the skill on students’ lists. Workshops can be used to teach leadership development skills related to such a checklist. A sample series of workshops can be found in the *Leadership Competencies Handbook* in Appendix C.

Many programs develop their own workshops, based on the experience and skills of their staff. If a program does this, it is very helpful to write out detailed plans for the workshops so that the program can continue to offer the training when there is staff turnover. Two areas that have emerged as important workshop topics in some Youthbuild programs are group process skills and cultural identity issues.

**Group Process Skills**

Facilitation is a skill that is critical for anyone in a leadership role. Staff need to cultivate their facilitation skills so that they can encourage student participation in discussion. Students will need to develop facilitation skills as they grow and develop their roles as leaders. Facilitation skills are necessary to serve on the Policy Committee. Group process skills are a set of specific techniques that facilitators use to foster discussion and participation among groups of people. The *Leadership Competencies Handbook* in Appendix C includes a description of various techniques that can be used in facilitating group discussions.

**Cultural Identity Issues**

One of the tasks of leadership development is to begin to create a stronger un-
derstanding of self and a greater respect for others. To do this, the issue of cultural identity must be addressed. This is particularly important in Youthbuild programs that include participants of different races, ethnicities, and gender. See Item 2 in the Resources section for a workshop that begins to explore these issues.
Chapter 10: Experiences and Opportunities

Overview

In each Youthbuild program, some trainees will emerge as visible leaders, and others will choose not to play a visible leadership role. Often, the best leaders in a program are those who do not initially think of themselves as leaders. Sometimes the quiet trainee who sets a personal example may emerge as an excellent leader within the program, while the trainee who is most articulate and outspoken may turn out to be less able to follow through on leadership responsibilities. Some trainees may be interested in a visible leadership role, but their personal problems may prevent them from fulfilling that role at this time in their lives.

The Youthbuild definition of leadership as “taking responsibility to make things go right...” offers all trainees the opportunity to take on a level of leadership that is appropriate to them at this stage in their development. For all these reasons, an effective leadership development program will provide leadership for all trainees and not only to a select group.

Real-life opportunities for community involvement are powerful tools for teaching leadership development skills. These experiences can take place within the “Youthbuild community,” or by finding ways for trainees to interact with the broader community. A variety of opportunities have been developed by Youthbuild programs to provide real-life leadership experiences for trainees. Some of these leadership opportunities include:

- Youthbuild program “community meetings”
- Community service projects
- Neighborhood meetings, public hearings and legislative sessions
- Community Leadership Committee
- Media work
- Internal internships

Youthbuild Program “Community Meetings”

Many programs schedule a regular (monthly) meeting, in which the entire program (young people and staff) gather to clear the air, discuss important issues, resolve problems, celebrate achievements, or decide on new initiatives. These
“community meetings” can provide leadership opportunities for young people to participate in a group process, to speak in public, and to voice their opinions on a range of issues. They can also be opportunities for the elected Youthbuild Policy Committee to communicate with the program, and to obtain formal input into the Committee’s process (See Chapter Five). The first community meeting is usually held toward the end of the first month.

Community meetings can be led by staff or by young people from the Youthbuild Policy Committee with staff backing. Be aware that meetings to resolve problems or discuss controversial topics can be difficult to facilitate. If trainees are going to run the meeting, be sure to help them plan the agenda in advance and decide on ground rules to ensure that everyone is heard effectively. Other purposes for meetings include:

- Giving awards to participants who have achieved perfect attendance, received their GEDs, mastered several leadership competencies, or earned apprenticeships
- Consulting with the whole program about a pressing concern or problem
- “Trainee-only” problem solving session, where trainee concerns are listed along with recommendations, followed by a dialogue with staff
- Grieving the death of a participant or staff member and thinking about how to respond
- Planning a barbecue, a dance, a graduation, or a youth-staff sports event
- Talking with a community leader on a local issue
- Meeting with a visiting member of Congress or funder

**Community Service Projects**

Community service projects for non-profits in the community can be a great way for trainees to learn about other organizations in the neighborhood and what these organizations do. Many programs schedule periodic half-day service projects during which they close down the construction site and/or classroom. Sometimes these projects are done after the day’s work is finished. These projects may be construction related (i.e., painting a community room or helping with disaster relief) or they may be other types of projects, such as talking with senior citizens or reading to children in a daycare center. Here are some examples:

- YouthBuild Philadelphia created a service corps of its graduates who run an after-school center for 300 children a day doing tutoring, recreation, arts and crafts, and service.
- YouthBuild Atlantic City organized a citywide youth conference on the topics of crime, violence, drugs, AIDS, homelessness, and jobs.
About 200 youth attended. Youth did the outreach to other youth, got many other organizations to co-sponsor, secured the conference site, solicited contributions of food and materials from local businesses, lined up the conference speakers and the workshop leaders, designed the publicity, and facilitated the program. It was a huge success. In a concerted drive, the young people also registered hundreds of young people to vote.

- YouthBuild St. Louis organized a food drive during the Thanksgiving period. It also assisted local flood relief efforts in 1993. The youth wrote a proposal, received funding, and produced a video about Youthbuild St. Louis. Youth have testified at the state house on youth issues, made presentations at city schools, and served as keynote speakers at various city and state functions.

- YouthBuild Tallahassee youth led a year-long series of presentations to junior and senior high school classes on the benefits of staying in school and off drugs. The youth also hosted a Youthbuild open house and invited local and state officials, advocated for minimum wage at the state capital and for youth service funds on the city and county levels, and participated in community service projects by making repairs to the homes of senior citizens and collaborating with the Tallahassee Housing Foundation during the annual spring Florida Fix program.

- YouthBuild Gary (IN) refurbished a little league dugout for youth in the neighborhood, established a Speaker's Bureau, spoke in junior and senior high schools, and made visits to senior citizens.

- YouthBuild Sandtown, in Baltimore, convened a neighborhood youth conference, from which they organized 150 youth into action committees to address different community issues.

- YouthBuild Boston created YouthBuild Teens, hiring six of its graduates as interns to run programs in the community such as a football league, a tutoring program, and an arts and crafts center.

### Media Work

Another leadership opportunity is to involve trainees in working with the media. Many Youthbuild programs hold ground breaking ceremonies or ribbon cutting ceremonies related to their construction projects. This can be an excellent time for a young person to make a public speech and for several others to be interviewed by the press. Be sure to prepare trainees for interview questions that they may not want to answer.

Youthbuild trainees can also write letters to the editor or can propose writing a regular column for a community newspaper on the “youth perspective” on various issues. The Youthbuild writers could work with the teacher on writing.
spelling, and composition; interview young people in the program and outside; research facts surrounding issues; and influence real situations. Some larger communities may have youth newspapers to which Youthbuild trainees can contribute. Some cable stations provide opportunities for young people be interviewed or to interview others.

**Neighborhood Meetings, Public Hearings, and Legislative Sessions**

Neighborhood meetings, public hearings, and legislative sessions are great opportunities to expose trainees to the inner workings of government and help them learn how public policy is made. Programs have scheduled mandatory or optional evening visits to community groups that are debating community issues and to public hearings on such issues as Block Grant allocations, development plans for an area of the city, or school board issues. Programs have also scheduled day trips to the city council or state house to sit in on a legislative session on an important issue, to testify at hearings, or to visit with legislators.

**Internal Internships**

Internal internships are opportunities for trainees to take on managerial assistant roles within the Youthbuild organization. Some programs have created formal part-time internship roles (with job descriptions), in which trainees work alongside staff on aspects of program management, construction planning, fundraising, retreat planning, doing media work, working as a receptionist, and a variety of other roles. These are particularly good opportunities for trainees who already have passed their GED test, have a high school diploma, or have strong academic skills, and are seeking a challenging opportunity to supplement the regular program.

**Other Opportunities**

Youthbuild programs are filled with interesting outside leadership opportunities for individual trainees who are interested, if the board, director and staff look for these opportunities.

**Youthbuild Director**

Most Youthbuild directors maintain contacts with other organizations in the community, city, county, or state. Directors raise funds, sit on community boards, and belong to community coalitions. In these capacities, a director can look for leadership opportunities for Youthbuild program participants, such as accompanying the director on foundation visits, speaking at community forums, appearing on local TV programs, and testifying at the city council. All these opportunities expose young people to the civic, social, and economic workings of a community. Speaking before groups increases self-confidence. Even “shadowing” the director
for a day or week of meetings can be an eye-opening experience for a young person. The director's role is to open the windows to a bigger world for the young people and to take young people everywhere.

**Board of Directors**

Board members typically represent a broad spectrum of the community, such as churches, financial institutions, the legal system, universities, professions, grassroots organizations, and local government agencies. With agreement and perhaps training, the board could connect young people with internships, mentors, board memberships, and advocacy opportunities.

**Staff**

Staff who are involved in local community organizations can encourage young people to accompany them to meetings, introduce the young people at the meeting, inform them of the goals and purposes of the organization, answer their questions, and invite them to get involved, if appropriate.

**Community Leadership Committee**

Some Youthbuild trainees and graduates want to initiate their own community service activities beyond building housing. Sometimes, these projects are for one time only. But several programs have helped trainees and graduates organize an ongoing leadership group, commonly called a Community Leadership Committee, to initiate community service projects or advocate on issues of concern to young people. The difference between a Community Leadership Committee and Community Service Projects, described above, is that the Community Leadership Committee is run by students (with staff backing and support) and generally takes place after hours.

Trainees and graduates have initiated a variety of interesting and effective projects through Community Leadership Committees. They have:

- Hosted an open house, inviting local and state officials
- Organized a citywide youth conference
- Organized a food drive for hungry people during Thanksgiving weekend
- Assisted local flood relief
- Refurbished a little league dugout for youth in the neighborhood
- Established a speakers' bureau, speaking in junior and senior high schools and juvenile detention centers
- Visited senior citizens
- Organized a football league for younger children
- Created a tutoring program for local elementary school children
- Walked in an anti-hunger walk-a-thon
A Community Leadership Committee, distinct from the Youthbuild Policy Committee, deals with community initiatives. A Policy Committee tends to focus on internal program concerns. A Community Leadership Committee can be created by and for trainees or graduates or both, and is usually open to any interested trainee or graduate. A detailed guidebook for developing a Community Leadership Committee is found in Appendix D.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

Best Leadership Experiences

“My best experience was going out to do community service—painting houses. It sent a clear message to people that young people care and are ready to make a change to better the community.”

“My best leadership experience was when I was able to help young kids in school.”

“We had a chance to meet with local politicians to talk about the program.”
Resources for Part III

Item 1 - Sample Leadership Retreat Schedule

Item 2 - A Starting Point: A Workshop on Racial and Cultural Diversity

Item 3 - Bibliography
Item 1: Sample Youthbuild Leadership Retreat Schedule

Day One
7:30  Depart from Program Site
9:00  Arrive and Settle In
9:30  General Meeting
  •  Introductions
  •  Goals and Agenda
  •  Ground Rules for the Retreat
  •  Community Jobs
10:00 Support Groups
  •  Introduction to Support Groups
  •  Meet in Support Groups
12:00 Lunch
1:00  Free Time
2:30  Physical Challenge Course
4:00  Leadership Concepts and Skills
6:00  Dinner
7:30  Improving Male-Female Relationships
  •  Goals and Guidelines
  •  Men's and Women's Groups
  •  Reportbacks and Discussion
10:00 Cultural Sharing, Talent Night

Day Two
7:00  Wake Up
8:00  Breakfast
9:00  Goal Setting Workshop
11:30 Support Groups
12:30 Lunch
1:30  Election of Policy Committee
3:00  Free Time
4:00  Pack and Clean Up
4:30  Gather for Closing
5:00  Depart for Program Site
Item 2: A Starting Point: A Workshop on Racial and Cultural Identity

Staff may tackle cultural issues in a program-wide context like a workshop. It is best if the staff does some work among themselves first in order to gain clarity, clear the air, and establish more trust before addressing the young people. What follows is a suggested workshop format to open the topic in a structured and relatively safe way, deepen understanding, and lessen stereotypes among various cultural groups within the program. It has been used successfully by various Youthbuild programs. As presented here, the workshop assumes some cultural diversity among the participants. It may need to be adapted to fit your program. Try this as a staff workshop first. It might be best introduced within the first month in order to open the dialogue, stop discrimination immediately, and let the participants know that it is okay to address these issues. (The following is adapted with permission from *Youth Leadership Development*, a handbook from YouthBuild USA and the Youth Action Program, by Dorothy Stoneman.)

Introduction

Raise issues by giving some background, a few assumptions and concepts, and then by asking questions for people to explore. The facilitator might want to include the following points in an introduction:

- To become good leaders and live productive lives, we need to shed negative ideas about ourselves.
- Many of the negative messages come from the prejudices aimed at the particular racial or cultural group we belong to.
- Culture can be defined as a set of beliefs, traditions, behavior expectations, and institutions shared among people of a particular group. (Ask for group input when forming this definition.)
- Our cultural backgrounds are a source of pride and often a source of pain, partly because of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.
- Mistreatment begins from the outside, from the beliefs, institutions, the personal behavior of dominant groups, but then gets internalized in the members of the stereotyped group.
- We need ways of seeing ourselves and each other more clearly.
- Each of us has an identity of race, nationality, gender, religion, class, and geography. Ask each person to take two or three minutes to share: What is that identity? How do you identify yourself in terms of culture, race, nationality, religion, politics, or whatever figures into your idea of yourself?”

Small Groups, Mixed Identities

Next, it is helpful to get together in small groups of four or five in which each
person has eight to 15 minutes to explain how his or her identity developed. The facilitator may ask, "How did you learn you were an X? What did your parents teach you about what it meant to be an X? Were you treated in any particular way by society as an X? What was it like to grow up as an X?"

These first small groups should be integrated groups. People are eager to cross the barriers of racial, ethnic, and class prejudice. They want to share their stories with each other. They want to know and be known by people with different backgrounds. Oftentimes they have not had the opportunity to tell their story or hear other people's stories in a deliberate, safe, and open way.

It is often good to structure this so that there are 10 minutes to tell each story and five minutes for the group to ask questions. This reassures people that the group is interested and that they are telling the other people what they actually want to know.

**Similar Identity Groups**

After people have met in mixed groups and shared their stories, which creates a more cohesive whole group, it is useful for people to group together in similar identity groups to answer together the following questions:

- What's great about being X?
- What's been difficult about being X?
- What do we want other people to know about us?

Then a report back to the whole group from each subgroup leads to a greater sense of understanding and diminished fear of discussing these issues. It also leads to greater unity within each identity group. This is desirable and important, because unity with other groups works best when it's based on unity within one's own group.

**Reasons for Resistance**

Be aware that virtually every group will have members who are quite scared to be divided into similar groups. There will almost always be resistance at first. It reminds some black people of segregation. For some white people who are determined to be good allies of people of color, it focuses them on their whiteness, for which they believe others won't like them. Some people feel least comfortable among groups of people like themselves, because they have been most hurt by the people closest to themselves.

It helps in running this kind of workshop to give a lot of latitude for laughter when people are setting up the groups. The leader must never assume what identity group or groups a person belongs in. Instead the leaders should ask the group to list all the identity groups that are present in the room. The leaders should write the list on the blackboard and allow participants to choose which group to meet with. Most people belong to several, and choosing which group to meet with can be emotional.
It must be remembered that the development of any limited identity has been imposed by society and is in itself partly an indication of the effects of oppression. On its positive side, it is an indication of the group's determination to survive and challenge oppression. There is no reason why every person could not have an identity as a human being and as a citizen of the world, except that we have been forced into more limited ideas of who we are. Some of the narrower identities are delightful, positive, and proud, based on a rich history; but they are also usually attached to perceived roles, expectations, and historical relationships that are rooted in oppression.

**Respect each Person's Choice of Identity Group**

It is important that the group leader not continue the imposition from society by insisting or assuming that a person must identify in a certain way, or must choose on this particular day to meet with a particular identity group. For example, a Jew who was raised as a Methodist may not choose to go with the Jewish group; a Puerto Rican who is blonde and was raised with white people may not choose to go with the Latino group; a biracial brown-skinned person with a Jewish father may choose to meet with the black group rather than the Jewish group; a dark-skinned Dominican might choose to meet with the black group instead of the Latin group. These and millions of other choices must be respected and welcomed, all as part of a lifelong sorting out of who we really are as human beings.

Of course, the leader must be sensitive to whether a particular group is ready to divide into identity groups. It may be appropriate to have a lot of general sharing and repeated grouping into diverse small groups to share many different experiences before people will accept identity groupings. The art of leading is to know what is the right next step for a group to go deeper, get closer, and be more thorough and open in their sharing, their discussion, and their setting of goals.

**Be Prepared for Feelings**

A person leading this kind of workshop must also be prepared for the fact that the feelings connected to identity run deep and strong, and when the waters are stirred the feelings will often surface as tears, anger, trembling, or a lot of laughter. This is to be expected, and it's fine. It's not an indication that the group is in over its head, or that anything bad is happening. This is just what happens because there is a lot of pain stored in these memories and these enforced identities. The leader needs to be calm and reassuring in his or her acceptance of feelings. However, if feelings begin to surface in the form of direct emotional attacks on other individuals, these need to be firmly interrupted because they will have negative effects.
Item 3: Bibliography


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Appendix A: Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff
Appendix A: Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff

Introduction

Leadership Development: A Handbook for Youthbuild Staff summarizes information about youth leadership development from the Leadership Development at a Youthbuild Program Handbook. This information includes: key concepts and definitions; the Youthbuild philosophy of youth leadership development; the role of Youthbuild staff in fostering leadership development; ways leadership activities can be incorporated into the construction, education and counseling components of the program; and information about youth participation in Youthbuild program governance. Throughout the handbook are quotes from Youthbuild trainees that address each topic. This handbook may be distributed to all Youthbuild staff members and included in new staff trainings.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

“All young people face a certain level of stereotypes, barriers, and lack of opportunity. For a young person not to take note of it or speak about it puts them at a disadvantage . . . People who put up these barriers don’t understand what a young person could offer this world. We can offer a lot.”

“Youthbuild helped develop my leadership by being interested in the youths’ voices, and by pushing me to the limit as a woman.”

“Youthbuild taught me that leadership is not just about yourself.”

What Is Leadership Development?

Leadership development is both a concept and a practice. As a concept, leadership development is an approach to working with young people that consciously
challenges the disempowerment that has permeated the lives of many Youthbuild participants. It is based on the belief that young people have insights and leadership gifts that are untapped and underestimated. Conveying this belief to participants changes the way they perceive themselves and changes the way they think adults have traditionally perceived and treated them. This builds self-confidence and self-esteem and enhances motivation in a manner that substantially contributes to their ability to change their own lives.

Leadership development as a practice can play a fundamental role in helping Youthbuild participants transform their lives by providing structures, trainings, and opportunities for participants to exercise progressively. This increases leadership responsibilities within the safety of the program and with the support of the program staff.

### Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

“Leadership is getting an opportunity to produce and express your character and your talents.”

“Leadership is taking responsibility for your own actions first. Taking on problems that affect not only you, but your family and community.”

“Leadership is something that constantly changes. The more you learn and the more things you experience. The things that stand out in a leader is when she makes sure that her voice is heard, and brings out leadership ability in other people.”

“Leadership is being a role model to other people.”

“Leaders make things happen. They don’t just tag along.”

### What Is Leadership?

Many Youthbuild programs use this definition of leadership:

- “Good leadership is taking responsibility to make things go right for yourself, your family, the program, and the community.”
This definition of leadership allows young people to recognize the leadership roles they play in their present lives and to envision the steps toward larger leadership roles in the future. Every time a young person gets up in the morning, comes to Youthbuild on time, and acts responsibly, he or she is taking the first steps toward greater leadership. Students who have children have additional responsibilities of supporting and caring for their families. Fulfilling these responsibilities is an act of leadership. These basic but critical accomplishments can be viewed as first steps in developing leadership skills and should be recognized and appreciated by the program, as students prepare to take on larger leadership roles.

Within the Youthbuild program, young adults may choose to take on larger leadership roles, such as serving on leadership committees, serving in a leadership role on the construction site, or providing leadership in other aspects of the program. Through the construction of affordable housing and other community service projects, trainees have the opportunity to take responsibility for rebuilding and improving their community. At least a few will want to stay involved on their own time in broader community issues to help improve life in the neighborhood, the city, or the world.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

“The difference between young leaders and young people who are not leaders is confidence.”

“Leaders usually have opportunities that other young people haven’t had. It’s just a matter of providing all young people with the same amount of opportunities.”

“Leaders are ones that take initiative. The ones who are not leaders are likely to complain more.”

Who Is a Leader?

In each Youthbuild program, some trainees will emerge as visible leaders, and others will not choose to play a visible leadership role. Often, the best leaders in a program are those who do not initially think of themselves as leaders. Sometimes the quiet trainee who sets a personal example may emerge as an excellent leader within the program, while the trainee who is most articulate and outspoken may turn out to be less able to follow through on leadership responsibilities. Some trainees may be interested in a visible leadership role, but their personal problems...
may prevent them from fulfilling that role at this time in their lives.

The Youthbuild definition of leadership—“taking responsibility to make things go right. . .”—offers all trainees the opportunity to take on a level of leadership that is appropriate for them at this stage in their development. For all these reasons, an effective leadership development program will provide leadership for all trainees and not only to a select group.

The Importance of Staff Philosophy and Attitude

“Leadership development is not something we do in addition to our jobs. It is the way we do our jobs.”

A Youthbuild program draws on the entire staff to implement the leadership development component of the program. The staff role in leadership development begins by creating an atmosphere that supports leadership development. Here are some suggestions to help create an environment that fosters youth leadership.

• Communicate respect in all your interactions with the young people. Though there are times when staff need to use their authority, they should avoid being authoritarian. Rather, be firm and respectful.

• Validate and appreciate the young people all the time. This counters the emotional scars they carry in the door with them. Try to communicate that you like and approve of the trainees as people, both individually and as a group.

• Show personal interest in the trainees. Greet them at the door whenever possible. Ask trainees about their lives. Spend time with them during the breaks. Let them know you personally. Let them begin to see you as a role model.

• From the first day, interrupt all put-downs. This is one occasion when you need to use your adult authority to set a correct policy. Try not to scold, but nevertheless be firm.

• Encourage laughter and humor to lighten things up, change the mood, and cheer people up (but never accept laughter at someone else’s expense).

• Reconnect. Begin each meeting, class, or workday with a chance for each person to share something that has happened since you were last together. Just a minute for each person allows trainees to feel that they’ve been heard and to re-establish contact with one another and with the staff.

• Practice offering full attention to students when they are talking. Explain to the young people that how we use the power of our attention makes a big difference in developing self-confidence. For example,
if we give our full attention to learning a new move on the basketball
court, using a new tool, or writing a new rap song or poem, it usually
goes better. Likewise, when we give our full attention in a positive way
to another person, that person tends to do better. When someone is
speaking and others in the group are looking bored, making snide com-
ments, or interrupting, it makes the speaker feel unimportant and not
cared for. Many Youthbuild participants have had this experience often;
therefore, the program should work to counter that experience.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

“Keep working on leadership as a tool and mechanism to monitor growth. Under-
stand that many young people have not been in an environment where people care.”

“Incorporate the youth in the everyday, overall operations of the program. That way you will hold their attention. Don’t have that “Do this!” mentality. Show them that everything they do is a learning experience.”

“Set aside certain times that just focus on leadership. Tell them that just getting up every day and taking the initiative is leadership.”

The Elements of a Strong Leadership Development Program

Youthbuild programs with strong leadership development components tend to include each of the following elements in their leadership development plans:

1. A list of the basic leadership skills or competencies that trainees will learn
2. Leadership development in each program component
3. Leadership development experiences and opportunities
4. Leadership development workshops
5. Youth involvement with governance and decision making
6. Leadership development after Youthbuild
7. A procedure for measuring and tracking leadership development accomplishments of participants

How leadership development is incorporated into each program component is described in more detail in the following pages.
Leadership Development in Each Program Component

The most effective way to teach leadership skills and promote leadership development of participants is to incorporate it into every component of the program. Not only do the young adults get extensive leadership opportunities through these daily experiences, but the program operates more effectively when the trainees take on the responsibility of working side by side with the staff to make the program run well.

For this approach to be successful, the entire staff needs to understand and be committed to youth leadership development. There are many ways to incorporate leadership development into your construction site, classroom, and counseling components. Following are some ideas.

Leadership Development on the Construction Site

“Giving real roles and real responsibilities gives the students ownership over the project.”

“The more the youth feel a part of it, the more they’ll get out of it. Have them involved in planning, and in taking leadership roles in the different phases. Give them practical opportunities to use what they are learning.”

The construction site provides tremendous opportunities to teach students to take responsibility for themselves, for those around them, and for the project as a whole. This means giving students opportunities to “take responsibility” and not just “take directions. For example, some sites rotate crew chiefs every week, giving all students an opportunity to lead the crew. In one program, after all students had had a chance to be crew chief once, the crew elected a crew chief.

Below are 10 examples of ways to incorporate leadership development into the construction site:

1. Give all the trainees an overview of the entire construction process and timetable, teach them how to read the plans, and explain what will happen to the building when its finished.

2. Create official jobs for trainees to serve in leadership roles, such as:
   • Crew chiefs who help coordinate the work of a crew of trainees (under professional supervision) and ensure that the work area is cleaned up at the end of the day
   • A steward who is responsible for taking attendance, calling breaks, calling clean up, maintaining the cooler, and doing store runs with staff
   • A first aid and safety coordinator who monitors worksite safety
and reports problems or violations, maintains the first aid kit, prepares for and helps run safety meetings, and may serve on a safety committee of the organization

- A photographer who documents the work in progress
- A tool manager who signs out tools to students and conducts tool inventory

3. Take a trainee to construction meetings or contract negotiations.
4. Take a trainee to City Hall when permits are being obtained or other opportunities to learn how “the system” works.
5. Involve trainees in planning, including purchasing materials or scheduling. Have them explain it to other trainees.
6. Have a trainee help to run morning or afternoon meetings on the worksite.
7. Ask trainees to come up with a solution to a particular problem on the site (such as meeting a deadline, keeping the site cleaner, improving attendance, or improving teamwork).
8. Have students give tours to visitors who come to the site.
9. Have trainees work on estimating and doing take-offs on parts of the project.
10. Ask trainees to evaluate the construction staff, the training process, and each other.

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**Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:**

“I received the job of crew chief. I was trusted and well-liked because I was willing to work right along with them, and not just shout orders.”

“The construction site was very useful in leadership. It shows how to keep a job by being responsible. It gives you a satisfied feeling, knowing that you have put in a hard day’s work.”

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**Leadership Development in the Counseling Component**

Developing leadership skills and attitudes is an integral part of the counseling process. Learning to be consistently responsible for one’s own life is a necessary prerequisite to providing leadership for others and taking responsibility for their
well-being. Personal skills and attitudes that are critical for leadership include:

- Self-confidence and sense of self-worth
- Consistency and responsibility on a daily basis
- Ability to advocate effectively for oneself
- Ability to resolve conflicts
- Sense of identity as part of a larger community (including cultural, racial, gender)
- Ability to listen and communicate effectively
- Clarity of personal values

As students work to overcome a variety of personal obstacles and problems, they will strive to replace negative behaviors by developing these and related skills. The counseling staff can identify these or other personal leadership skills to students. They can focus on these skills as constructive alternatives to negative behavior through one-on-one discussions, workshops and discussion groups, and can draw links between these skills and effective leadership. They can encourage students to try out these new skills and attitudes within the context of the larger program, and can offer recognition when students learn to change their behavior. One of the most profound transformations that a Youthbuild program will witness is when a student who had a tendency toward uncontrolled anger learns to advocate effectively for himself or resolve a problem constructively. This is a critical leadership skill. Specific leadership development activities within the counseling component include:

- Training some of the young people to lead a discussion group
- Teaching students to do peer counseling
- Teaching students mediation and conflict-resolution skills
- Making an individual leadership development plan or life-skills plan with each young person

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

“My counselor expressed to me that whatever I have strong feelings about are the things that I should go out and try to achieve. Reach my goals. Never forget where you come from, who your friends and family are, because those are your sources that will be there for you if you may fall.”

“From our counselors, we got to learn how to deal with stress, parenting. Goals that we didn’t see before slowly began coming into view.”
Leadership Development in the Classroom

Some programs include their program-wide leadership training workshops as part of their regular weekly classroom schedule. But whether or not leadership workshops are offered as a regular class, the classroom provides many opportunities to integrate leadership skills into regular academic learning. The classroom can foster leadership development in the way it is structured, in the skills that it develops, and in the content of the material that is taught.

Leadership Development as Part of the Classroom Structure

No matter what the student’s specific objectives (such as a GED, diploma, or job), a fundamental goal of a Youthbuild program is to help participants learn to take responsibility for their own learning and their own lives. If students can learn self-discipline within an academic setting, they can achieve their goals and continue to learn and broaden their horizons after they leave.

Self-discipline is a learned behavior. The classroom can foster the development of this vital life skill by establishing systems in which students have to exhibit responsibility. For example:

- Involve students in making decisions regarding classroom activities
- Establish systems in which students are responsible for finishing their own work and correcting their work before moving on to the next topic
- Provide opportunities for trainees to work as teams on small group projects
- Provide opportunities for students to help one another to learn. Show them, through exercises and planned activities, that they can actually rely on each other for help
- Ask students to help create a climate of discipline and trust by assisting each other in being quiet, paying attention, and listening.
- Create rotating leadership jobs in the classroom
- Have students participate in evaluating the teacher and each other

All of these processes within the classroom will help students become less “teacher-dependent” and more invested in the work for its own sake.

Integrating Leadership and Academic Skills

There are many opportunities to develop leadership skills through academic classroom activities. Many of the skills described below will simultaneously help students prepare for the GED exam by improving their reading, writing, and ana-
lytical skills. For example:

- Students can research a topic of community concern, either at the library or through oral history research (i.e., interviews) and write a brief paper on the topic
- Students can read a brief essay or news article on a controversial public policy issue and state their opinion to the group
- Students can write about their opinions on a public policy issue
- Students can make presentations in front of the class, the program, at a community meeting, or at a press event and offer feedback to one another
- Students can be asked to participate in a formal debate
- Students can read and analyze a newspaper article for information, or to learn the skill of distinguishing fact from opinion
- Students learn to take notes on a presentation given by a teacher or by another student
- Students (either individually or as a group) can write a letter to the editor, a letter to a Congressman, or an opinion piece for a newspaper

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

“In the classroom, I learned it was important to be responsible for what you do.”

“Having patience and understanding other people’s needs—that’s leadership. Not everyone learns things the same way. When a person gets up to say they have an answer or starts to do the homework, you have touched that leadership. Hold onto it.”

“I was able to tutor other students in the classroom. It showed that if I can do it, so can you.”

“You can help develop leadership by allowing the youth to teach the class. Trainees learn quickly from other trainees.”
Leadership Content within the Academic Curriculum

In addition to skills, the academic program can consciously integrate content about community issues and public policy into its academic curriculum. Examples include:

- Visits from (or to) government officials and community leaders on public policy issues
- Studying how a law is passed, at the city, state, or federal level
- Analyzing a community problem or a community organization
- Studying the history and culture of ethnic and racial groups that reflect the student body. This helps young people develop increased knowledge, pride, self-awareness, historical perspective, and a sense of belonging to a great tradition
- Reading about (and meeting) important public leaders, past and present, who can serve as role models of outstanding leadership
- Many leadership competencies can be formally taught in the classroom

Some programs develop a specific academic/leadership development curriculum that combines reading, writing, and history with leadership theory, models of change, and cultural issues.

Leadership Development Workshops

Some leadership skills are best taught in workshops or classes in which students are presented with information and given an opportunity to apply the new skills to projects or assignments. The strength of a leadership development workshop is that leadership skills can be practiced within a simulated environment to allow students the opportunity to gain confidence while taking minimal risks. Effective leadership development workshops and classes are dynamic and interactive. They provide hands-on experiences in practicing leadership skills with a lot of opportunities for experiential learning.

Leadership Development Experiences and Opportunities

Real life opportunities for community involvement are powerful tools for teaching leadership development skills. These experiences can take place within the Youthbuild community or in other contexts that allow trainees to interact with the broader community. The staff can find many ways to provide leadership development experiences and opportunities for participants.
Youth Involvement with Governance and Decision Making

Involving youth in governance means incorporating structures that allow young people to participate in decision making for an organization or program. These structures can include a policy committee, an advisory committee, a conflict-mediation team or other bodies that help shape part of a program and allow the students to develop their leadership skills.

In more traditional youth programs, youth committees have a very limited scope of responsibility for decision making, involving only those decisions that affect the young people, such as stipulating a dress code or planning extracurricular events. Rarely, if ever, do they participate in the broader planning and decision-making processes of the program or organization.

Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:

“My best experience was going out to do community service, painting houses. It sent a clear message to people that young people care and are ready to make a change to better the community.”

“My best leadership experience was when I was able to help young kids in school.”

“The best experience was when we were able to advocate for more funding for Youthbuild to local funders in our city.”

“We did public speaking. We had people from different professions come in and tell us about their lives. We tutored young people. And we got to meet the President!”

“I was lucky to have the experience to work on the statewide Community Leadership Committee. We had a grandparent’s adoption program. We visited elderly homes.”
Because of the Youthbuild model’s focus on leadership development, many Youthbuild programs are committed to providing young people with the broadest level of involvement in decision making. A Youthbuild Policy Committee can provide trainees with that opportunity.

**Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:**

“I was selected by my peers to represent them. I was only one of many leaders in my class. This was more than just leadership. This was an honor.”

“When I was on the council, I liked going over material that would affect other trainees.”

**What is a Youthbuild Policy Committee?**

A Youthbuild Policy Committee is a body comprised of the Youthbuild director, at least one staff representative and an elected group of students who work together to make decisions about the Youthbuild program.

It is one of the governing centers of the program. It gives the young people a voice, provides the director with guidance from the participants, and makes the program more responsive to the needs and concerns of the young people.

When it works well, the Policy Committee provides an opportunity for deep leadership training. Young people learn how to form an agenda, chair a meeting, make different kinds of decisions, debate issues respectfully, use good group process, read and use a program budget, be accountable to their peers, and practice leadership.

The role of the director is to provide training for the committee to do its work effectively, to bring issues to the group that the youth might not be aware of, to listen deeply to the issues brought by the youth and the staff committee members, to provide adequate information for the group to make informed decisions, and to insist on decisions that are in the best interests of the entire program. Ideally, the director is active but not dominating, and through training and experience, develops the group to handle increasingly complex issues.
The Scope of Responsibilities and Authority of a Policy Committee

The scope of responsibility and authority of a Youthbuild Policy Committee varies considerably among Youthbuild programs. Your Youthbuild program will need to define the Youthbuild Policy Committee’s scope of decision making. A Youthbuild Policy Committee’s role may include:

- Participation in hiring staff
- Recommending improvements in program management and services
- Consultation on program design, policy, and changes
- Review of annual budget, where appropriate
- Consultation on staff evaluations or firing of staff, although the director has final authority
- Reporting to and consulting with the rest of the program
- Planning events of its own design
- Solving problems as needed

Consider carefully the scope of responsibilities that your program’s Youthbuild Policy Committee will have. These responsibilities need to be written up and distributed to staff and trainees, so that everyone understands the role of the Policy Committee.

If the Policy Committee has no real responsibilities, the young people will realize it immediately. If they are left to flounder by themselves, or if they are not taken seriously and only decide unimportant matters, then they will become disil-
lished and disappointed, and they will lose respect for the Policy Committee.

**Staff Support for the Concept of a Youthbuild Policy Committee**

Including young people in the governing core of the program, with major policy responsibilities, will be a new and possibly threatening prospect for some staff members. It is important that staff fully understand and support the role of the Policy Committee.

Once a program and Youthbuild Policy Committee are already operating, it is crucial that support for the concept of a Youthbuild Policy Committee be one of the conditions of hiring new staff, and that staff orientation include discussion and support of the role of the Policy Committee. Otherwise, staff may undermine the effectiveness of the committee.

**Leadership Development After Youthbuild**

Leadership development does not need to stop upon graduation. Many Youthbuild programs develop alumni programs that include structured opportunities for continued involvement and leadership. If a Youthbuild program decides to offer opportunities for continued leadership development after graduation, these opportunities should be thoroughly discussed well before the end of the program, one-on-one, in community meetings and by guest graduate speakers explaining how they have continued to develop their leadership.

**Voices of Youthbuild Graduates:**

“My ‘after graduation’ experience includes: National Policy Council and National Alumni Council. I was able to participate in local leadership with the alumni club activities. Also, I was hired after graduation to work at the local Youthbuild program.”

“I was selected as a community role model and received an award. Our city also put together a citywide youth commission.”

“The Alumni program gave us a chance to come back and be interns to a new group of trainees. We were able to express to them to stay with it, and not give up halfway through the program.”
Appendix B:
Youthbuild Policy Committee Handbook

photo: Martin Dixon
Preface

This handbook is divided into two sections. The first section contains basic background pieces, training formats, and concrete “how to” information for staff and directors. The second section includes basic expectations and guidelines for the youth members.

It is strongly suggested that each staff member read the entire contents of the handbook, and then review it together and digest it a section at a time. This is not a rule book, but rather a set of guidelines based on the large goals and specific experience of Youthbuild programs. The better the whole staff understands the purpose, scope, and functioning of the Policy Committee, the more support they will give it. A serious attempt to practice what this handbook offers will bring good results.

The *Youthbuild Policy Committee Handbook* was written by John Bell, director of Leadership Development at YouthBuild USA, who drew on the experience of many Youthbuild directors regarding the operation of their Policy Committees and on the content of the *Handbook for Leadership Development* written by Dorothy Stoneman, based on her 10 years of experience with Policy Committees at the Youth Action Program—the original Youthbuild program.
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Section I

Information for Directors and Staff
Introduction

In a Youthbuild program, the participants, staff, director, and board all make decisions. Decisions are being made continuously, both formally and informally, individually, and in groups.

In a Youthbuild program, part of the role of the director and staff is to work with the youth participants in a formal decision-making structure, commonly called a Policy Committee. Each program designs its own Policy Committee. Typically it includes six to ten elected youth, the director, and a staff representative. It has both defined consultative and decision-making powers.

There are many important potential benefits of having young people involved in this key decision-making committee. The Policy Committee can:

- Be the place where the most intense leadership development takes place
- Help the young people believe that they have more ownership of the program
- Become a group that sets the tone for the entire program
- Present good solutions to pressing problems
- Be a source of good thinking and support for the decisions that weigh on the director
- Make the program more responsive to the real needs and successes of the young people
- Assist the young people to counteract the experience of often having been excluded from decisions that affect them
- Allow young people to learn how an organization works
- Be the training ground for young leaders who can take what they learn on the Policy Committee and apply it out in the community

A successful Policy Committee does not happen by itself. Years of experience with Policy Committees, first at the Youth Action Program in East Harlem, the originator of Youthbuild, and then at Youthbuild sites around the country, show that an effective Policy Committee requires the following:

- A director who has deep faith in the capability of young people to make good decisions given adequate information and take responsibility for the program. A director should respect the young people by bringing to the Policy Committee the most important issues facing the program and should understand that sharing governance does not mean abdicating his or her own leadership responsibilities. A director should be willing to
meet consistently and develop the group.

- A staff that agrees with and supports the concept of sharing governance with young people.
- A structure and good group process that draws out the best in the young people.
- Serious and ongoing training in the leadership skills needed on the Policy Committee.
The Youthbuild Policy Committee: A Sample Description

Each Youthbuild program should tailor its Policy Committee to fit its own organization. The Policy Committee—usually composed of the Youthbuild director, one staff representative, and six to ten young people elected through a secret ballot by their peers—is a governing center of a Youthbuild program. The responsibilities of the Policy Committee, as a whole, may include any or all of the following:

- Participating in the hiring of staff
- Recommending improvements in program management and services
- Consulting on program design, policies, and changes
- Reviewing the annual budget, where appropriate
- Consulting on evaluations of staff
- Participating in decision making affecting all aspects of the program
- Reporting to and consulting with the rest of the program
- Planning events
- Solving problems as needed

The board of directors of the local Youthbuild or sponsoring agency has final responsibility for all aspects of the program and has the authority to override the decisions of the Policy Committee if necessary. In practice, however, this is rarely necessary.

The responsibility of each member of the Policy Committee is to think about the welfare of the whole program, not just special interests. Each person's leadership pledge is to make sure “things go right” in the program. Each member must attend the meetings and report back to the participants and the staff on a regular basis.

Qualifications of the youth members of the Policy Committee are determined by the program, including the young people, but each youth member must be:

- A positive role model in attendance and attitudes, in school, and on the worksite
- A generally responsible person
- Able to represent the interests of everyone and the program

The term of office can vary according to the design of each program. Shorter terms (four to six months) involve more people in the decision making over the
course of the program and can provide greater stability of attendance to the Policy Committee, since it is sometimes difficult for some young people to sustain their commitment for a whole year. Longer terms (one year) allow for deeper development of the individual members and greater continuity and maturity of the Policy Committee.
Questions for a Staff Formulating Its Own Policy Committee

For a new Youthbuild program, it is best to engage the entire staff in determining the composition, scope of responsibilities, structures, procedures, preparation, and training of the Policy Committee. This should be done before the program begins. The description must be in writing. The Policy Committee should be something all staff can and will support. Once the staff and the young people have some experience with operating a Policy Committee, changes may be in order.

Below are specific questions staff should ask when formulating its Policy Committee.

Composition

- How many people will be on the Policy Committee? (Experience indicates that a Policy Committee larger than 10 to 12 is unwieldy and inefficient.)
- How many young people will be on the Policy Committee? If there is more than one group or crew, do you want representatives from all groups?
- What are the qualifications for office? Are there standards of attendance, performance, or attitude?
- How many staff representatives will be on the Policy Committee? The principle to remember is that the voice of the young people should be dominant. If there are more than two staff members, the staff will tend to dominate.

Scope of Responsibilities

On what issues will the Policy Committee make final decisions? On what issues will its role be limited to consultation? Will it:
- Hire future staff?
- Evaluate staff?
- Change the trainee contract?
- Review the yearly budget?
- Be involved in the firing of staff, and if so, how?
- Evaluate the success of the program?
- Mediate conflicts?
• Have other responsibilities?

**Structures and Procedures**

• How long will the terms of the Policy Committee members be?
• How will vacancies be filled?
• Who will form the agenda?
• Who will chair the meetings? Will the chair rotate? If so, how often?
• Is a quorum required to meet, or just to make decisions?
• How often will it meet? Where—in a private space? When—during or after program hours?
• Will the Policy Committee be paid or unpaid?
• When will the Policy Committee members have the opportunity to report back to their constituent groups?
• Will there be joint meetings between the Policy Committee and the staff?
• Will there be periodic meetings between the Policy Committee and the Board of Directors?
• Who will act as the administrative staff person to help carry out the business of the Policy Committee?
• How will the Policy Committee evaluate its own functioning?

**Preparation and Training**

• How and when will the staff introduce the idea of the Policy Committee to the group?
• How will the staff prepare the group for the election of members?
• When will elections be held?
• Will there be a temporary Policy Committee before the permanent one is elected?
• What kinds of training will be built into the first several months of the Policy Committee? These might include training the young people to chair meetings, use good group process, interview job candidates, read a budget, use the phone, write a business letter, and make consensus decisions.
  • In what sequence will these trainings occur?
  • Who will do these trainings?
• Will there be a special retreat for the Policy Committee?
Staff Agreement and Support for the Policy Committee

Including young people in the governing core of a program, with major policy responsibilities, will be a new and possibly threatening prospect for some staff members. It is important that the staff fully understand and support the role of the Policy Committee. Thorough discussion and agreement with each new staff person is crucial; otherwise, staff can undermine the effectiveness of the committee. Support for a well-functioning Policy Committee should be a condition upon which each staff member is hired. There are several key points to emphasize:

- The Policy Committee is a partnership among the young people, the staff, and the director. It is not an adversarial relationship such as “us” against “them.” It is a vehicle for building consensus and unity in the program. The committee’s role is to think about the best interests of the program as a whole.

- The director is ultimately responsible for seeing that the program runs well, and he or she will not abdicate that responsibility to a Policy Committee.

- The Youthbuild philosophy emphasizes mutual respect between all program participants, staff, and youth. When respect prevails, coercion on the part of staff or the director fades as a method of handling conflict, and gives way to cooperative decision making. When respect prevails, rarely does a Policy Committee advocate decisions that conflict with the best interests of the program. Members learn to take responsibility to see that the program runs as it should.

- The Policy Committee will not just work on its own. The members need training, good leadership, and constant nurturing.

When first forming such a decision-making group, the staff should be given a written description of the Policy Committee and understand its role. It must fit your organization and staff.

If the Policy Committee has no real responsibility, the young people will realize that immediately. If they are left to flounder by themselves, or if they are not taken seriously and only decide unimportant matters, then they will be disillusioned, disappointed, and will lose respect for the Policy Committee.

The Role of the Director

To develop fully, a Policy Committee needs a lot of attention from the director.
The director needs to meet regularly and consistently with the group. It is crucial that the young people believe they are meeting with the most powerful person in the organization. This is a basic structural respect. If they meet with the program manager or the counselor, they may think: “We’re not important enough for the director to meet with us; we know that whatever we decide here will still have to be approved by the director.”

Directors often mistakenly think that the Policy Committee just deals with issues that the young people bring up. The young people’s concerns are certainly important and part of the business of the Policy Committee, but it is usually up to the director to broaden the scope, to bring to the table the other important issues facing the program.

Nurturing the Policy Committee is not easy. The director needs to plan well, train the young people, set the tone and expectations of the group, and teach its members how to form an agenda and run a meeting. The director also needs to follow up and implement the decisions of the group. In the meetings, the director needs to balance:

- Giving full information as a background for good decisions
- Raising concerns other than those raised by the young people
- Monitoring the group dynamics so that all members get to participate
- Consulting without biasing the thinking process of the group
- Guiding decisions so that the judgment of the young people becomes increasingly sound
- Hanging back enough to avoid being the dominant force
- Being directive and firm when necessary

The basic attitude of the adult needs to be something like this: “It is my job and my responsibility to make this program run right, and I can’t go along with decisions that I am convinced will undermine the program. However, I know the program will run better if I have the benefit of the young people’s best thinking about all the issues facing us, and I know we as a program will reach better decisions if we think together. Whenever possible, I will implement the decisions of the young people. When I believe it is impossible or counterproductive, I will thoroughly explain and discuss the reasons why with the young people. In some cases, I know they will persuade me that we should try it their way. In other cases, they will at least understand why I have to do it a different way. In most cases we will come up with something different and better than I could have figured out alone.”

Be prepared for difficulty. Working to build a solid Policy Committee is a constant challenge. It will be unorganized, frustrating, and difficult at times. There will be many obstacles to face such as:

- The press of decisions that tend to crowd out the training
- Misunderstandings about how to exert leadership, with patterns of
dominance or pretense substituting for leadership and requiring gentle correction

- Personal crises that affect attendance
- Boredom, discontent, or disappointment because the job is not often exciting
- The internalized feelings that may make the young people doubt themselves, feel vulnerable in their leadership role, attack each other, or want to give up
- Policy Committee members’ potentially disruptive bad habits
- Unconscious disrespect toward the young people on the part of the director, which may be challenged by the youth
- Resentment or criticism of the Policy Committee from staff or other youth

Careful attention to building a strong Policy Committee, however, will bring many benefits.

Special Note: If your Youthbuild program is embedded in a larger organization, it is essential that the executive director of your organization support the committee and that he or she meet with the group at the outset, honor the group’s role by posing certain questions, and check back with them on a regular and planned basis to hear what they have to say and to pose additional questions.
Types of Issues that Young People Involved in Governance May Handle

One key role of the adult leader is to pose to the young people the most relevant questions facing the organization.

In some cases, the young people will have final jurisdiction; in other cases the director will simply be seeking their advice and input. The issues may be discussed by a governing committee by all the young people in the program, in small groups, or at a general meeting. Whether or not the young people have the final authority, they will benefit from discussing the most important and the most controversial issues, and the director (and sometimes the board of directors) will benefit from their input. Traditionally, adults offer young people the chance to make decisions about how to entertain or control each other—for example, letting the young people organize a dance or set consequences for bad behavior. We recommend a much broader involvement in the issues adults usually reserve for themselves—for example, future planning, the policies affecting adults, or the decisions that determine the future of the organization. Below are sample issues that Youthbuild Policy Committees could address.

Program Management Issues

- What are the basic values, principles, and ideas you want the organization to stand for?
- How shall we evaluate staff performance?
- What role does the Policy Committee want to play in reviewing proposals?
- Should we hire people with an eye toward the balance of staff composition in terms of race, gender, nationality, class background, educational background? Should it matter whether or not people grew up in the community? What sort of balance would be best for the program?
- How shall we manage or enforce the “trainee contract” and not end up terminating most people?
- What policy should we make regarding pulling trainees from the classroom or the site for counseling?
- Should potential volunteers who want to be tutors or mentors be interviewed by the Policy Committee or just by the program director?
Conflict and Personnel Issues

- A Policy Committee member has cursed out a staff member. What shall we do?
- Young people have complained that a staff member is encouraging young people to lie on job applications in order to get jobs. How shall we handle this?
- The board of directors has overruled the director’s and Policy Committee’s decision about the firing of a construction manager who was accused of sexual harassment of three young women on the construction site. How shall we respond?
- Many young people have asked the Policy Committee to deal with a staff person who they feel consistently disrespects them. How shall we handle this?
- After agreeing to have a program camping trip, the staff is backing out because they do not want to be in the role of policing the young people all weekend. What proposals should we make to respond to staff concerns?
- The director thinks the counselor should be fired because he has been acting unprofessionally, and does not seem to have the proper training to deal with the problems of the trainees. However, he or she has made good relationships with many of the young people. They like him and don’t want him fired. What should we do?
- How shall we handle rumors in the program?

Community Issues for Discussion, Learning, and Clarifying Values

- Students have identified improvements they believe need to be made in the community. The list includes: more after-school and recreation programs for children and youth; clean-ups of empty lots; repairing playgrounds with broken equipment; and replanting and cleaning-up parks that are in poor condition. Which of these improvements could be made through Youthbuild community service projects? Which could best be made by people in the community working together? What is the role of the town or city in addressing these issues?
- Students have determined that they want to help care for elderly neighborhood residents. What are the important issues or problems facing community elders? How will students contact the elders to learn about their needs? What kinds of help can Youthbuild students provide?
- Gang activity and violence is a big problem in the neighborhood. What positive steps can Youthbuild students take to help solve these problems? How can the Youthbuild program collaborate with community
groups working on this issue?

- There are other organizations in the community besides Youthbuild constructing affordable housing. What is the process for developing affordable housing in the area? Should Youthbuild and the other organizations form a partnership? What role can students play in this process?

- A vacant piece of land in the neighborhood near the Youthbuild program will soon be developed. How can students inform themselves about the development process in the city (or town, or county)? Will hearings or public meetings be held to gather input from community residents? How would Youthbuild students like to see this land be used? How would other residents like to see the land be used?
The Roles of the Director and the Policy Committee in Hiring Staff: A Balance of Powers

The Policy Committee's role in hiring staff is a good illustration of the balance of powers between the director and the Policy Committee. It is a central function of the director to build a strong staff. It would be inappropriate for a director to delegate that function to the Policy Committee. The director can't be put in a position of trying to run a program with staff he or she doesn't think can do the job and do it well. However, the director will actually build a stronger staff if he or she shares the power of selection with the young people who will actually benefit or suffer from the staff member's work. The process is as follows.

The director, or somebody delegated by the director, screens all applicants. The director does a full interview of any candidate who is seriously being considered for the job.

The director should thoroughly check the references of all serious candidates, talking to the last three supervisors and taking down their comments word for word to show to the Policy Committee along with the résumé. If possible, the director should consult with individuals who were not listed as references but who are in a position to know the quality of the candidate's work.

It is important to check references before the candidate is interviewed by the Policy Committee, because you want their decision to be final. You don't want to come back a week later and say “Sorry, we can't hire that person after all because his references are bad.” Checking references also helps impress upon the young people the importance of reputation.

When the director has at least two candidates who would be acceptable, these candidates are interviewed by the Policy Committee, according to the process described in a later section of this handbook. (See “Guidelines on Interviewing Job Candidates.”) The Policy Committee makes the final decision.

In some cases, the director only can find one acceptable candidate. In this case, he or she consults with the Policy Committee about what to do: have them interview the one and say “yea” or “nay,” keep searching, or have them interview the acceptable one plus another candidate, whom the director did not think was qualified, in order to get a sense of what the director's criteria for selection have been.

The interview with the young people is important and has many positive effects. It weeds out candidates who show their discomfort with youth decision
making only when interviewed by a group of young people. This rarely happens, because you will have attracted adults who believe in the Youthbuild philosophy. More frequently, it leaves the candidate extremely impressed with the seriousness and intelligence of the young people, and they therefore enter the program with a first-hand positive impression of the involvement of young people in governance.

Another good effect is that the members of the Policy Committee experience the seriousness of their role. Selecting the adults who are to work with them has real and symbolic significance in reversing their feeling of having no voice in the institutions that affect them. There is nothing so exhilarating as being able to interview and select the adults whom the program is going to pay to work with the young people.

In summary, the Policy Committee cannot hire someone whom the director does not judge to be a good candidate; and the director cannot hire someone whom the Policy Committee does not judge to be suited for the job.

By sharing the power with the young people, a program will build a stronger, better staff. The process will not only orient the staff in a way that could not be done with words alone, but it will ensure that each new staff member feels confident that he or she was chosen by the young people and therefore belongs in the program. The rest of the young people will tend to welcome the adult with greater positive expectations, knowing that he or she has come through the Policy Committee.

This example of sharing power in a thoughtful way, while not abdicating the director’s central responsibilities, is meant to demonstrate the art of involving the young people in real governance while not pretending that the adults in charge are going to give up their own responsibility for making the program “go right.” This same delicate balance applies to other decisions.
An Effective Election Process

Many Youthbuild programs have found it beneficial to have a leadership retreat for all young people and staff four to six weeks into the program. This is often a good time to elect the Policy Committee. By this time, the young people have become familiar with each other, and know who the most serious leaders are.

The process outlined below is intended to create a supportive atmosphere for electing the best leaders from the group. You are encouraged to follow the order listed. Explain each step as fully as needed. Be sure to have people applaud each other at each step. All the candidates, whether they put themselves forward or accept nominations, are taking a risk. They all deserve respect and support. Here are a few technical notes:

- Decide ahead of time how many members will be elected. If you have more than one crew or group, be sure to designate that there will be, for example, four from group A and four from group B.

- Decide ahead of time who votes for whom. Some programs allow everyone to vote for any of the candidates, no matter which group they represent, while other programs allow young people to vote only for candidates from their group. Some programs allow staff to vote for the youth candidates and young people to vote for the staff candidates, since they will be making decisions affecting everyone; other programs keep it a constituency-based election.

- Also decide if the group is electing any alternates. Some Youthbuild programs elect two alternates. The alternates come to the meetings, learning and participating without voting, so that they will be prepared to take the place of a member if needed. At the time of the election, the whole group votes for however many members will be on the committee, plus two. The persons with the most votes are members, the next two highest are alternates.

- Try to get twice as many candidates as slots. This gives many people some public exposure and lets the group know that there is a lot of leadership in the whole group. Be sure to get a roughly equal number from each group.

- Pass out one ballot to each person. A 3" x 5" card is handy. Have some pencils available. Ask each person to write down their choices on the ballot. Be sure they understand how many from each group they should vote for.

Special Note: Some Youthbuild programs have found it useful to elect an
Advisory Committee at the end of orientation to serve as a temporary group with whom the director can consult until the Policy Committee is elected. There are many decisions to be made and problems that arise during the first four to six weeks. The organized input from a group of young people can be crucial. The same election process is used for the Advisory Committee.

**Youthbuild Policy Committee Election Process**

- Go over the job description of a Policy Committee member. Have the group read a brief, written description.
- From the group, draw the qualities they want in their Policy Committee representatives. Write them up on newsprint. Be sure the list includes “Acting as a role model with high standards whom the others can look up to.”
- Ask for volunteers first. Value the impulse to lead.
- Ask for a supporting statement for each volunteer. “Who would like to say why they think X would make a good Policy Committee member?” Encourage applause at every step.
- Ask for nominations next and a support statement by the nominator.
- Ask each nominee whether he or she accepts the nomination. Again, enthusiastic applause!
- Ask the whole group to look at the range of candidates to see if all backgrounds and constituencies are represented—genders, racial groups, age groups, different crews or teams, and so on.
- Ask for any other nominations to make the field of candidates even more representative.
- Have each candidate come to the front of the group and give a one-minute speech. Applaud each candidate.
- Have an election by secret ballot.
- Have two people count the votes so no one will think the results were fixed.
- Praise all the candidates and announce the names of those elected in random order. Never make the numerical results known.
The Suggested First Meeting of the Policy Committee

Allow enough time at your first meeting to set expectations and determine the group processes that you will use.

One-Day Retreat

Some programs have found it best to have an all-day Policy Committee retreat within a few days of the election. During this retreat you might do many of the following:

• Do long introductions or life stories, to get to know each other better
• Read this handbook
• Go over the organizational chart, accountability/decision-making structure, and the Policy Committee's place in it
• Train committee members to form an agenda and run a meeting
• Brainstorm to generate a list of concerns and issues the committee would like to deal with over the next few months
• Eat a nice lunch

Here is a sample agenda for a one-day retreat, to be held within a week of the election. The details in some of the sections are spelled out below, following the sample agenda for a two-hour meeting.

Morning Session

• Read the letter from the president of YouthBuild USA and the follow-up sections, (included in this handbook) and discuss
• Ask a series of questions to elicit the members’ thoughts about leadership
  • What is good about being a leader?
  • What is hard about being a leader?
  • How are you a good leader now?
  • Where do you need to grow to be a better leader?
• Explain the structure and terminology of the Policy Committee
  • What is an agenda?
  • What is the difference between a chairperson and a facilitator?
• What are minutes? Who takes them? What should be in them? How do they get typed, copied, and distributed?
• How and when do we gather the concerns of other young people and report back our decisions or proposals?

Lunch

Afternoon Session

• Brainstorm about issues to address over the next few months
• Organize the list of issues
• Evaluate and appreciate the day and each other

Two-Hour Meeting

We strongly recommend beginning with a retreat, but if you can only have a meeting the first time, the following agenda may be useful.

Preparation

For each member, have a copy of “Information for Youth Members” (Part II of this handbook). Have newsprint or a chalkboard available. Have snacks available. Write up the agenda, with time allotments, as follows:

Sample Policy Committee Agenda

4:00 Introductions
4:10 Appoint recorder
4:12 Review agenda
4:15 Read letter from president of YouthBuild USA and the Youth Members Handbook for the Policy Committee
4:55 Discuss: “What We Want the Policy Committee to Stand For”
5:25 Go over organizational chart
5:40 Agree on time and place for next meeting
   Items: Training on running good meetings
   Review budget, funding sources
5:45 Do brief evaluation
5:50 Appreciate each other
6:00 Adjourn
Introductions

Ask each member to say his or her name and explain why he or she is glad to be on the Policy Committee. Ask someone to serve as a recorder for this meeting to write down the important decisions or points. Then go over the agenda, so they know what to expect. Explain that you, as director, are going to chair these first few meetings to set the tone and demonstrate a good meeting process, but eventually each Policy Committee member will have the opportunity to plan the agenda and chair meetings.

Read Letter

Ask them to take turns reading the letter from YouthBuild USA President Dorothy Stoneman (included in this handbook) and its attachments: “Basic Expectations of a Policy Committee Member,” “Some Serious Mistakes You Should Avoid,” and “Your Main Role As A Policy Committee.” These outline 10 years of lessons learned by Policy Committees at the Youth Action Program, the original Youthbuild program, and at other Youthbuild programs around the country. The practice of reading out loud with the young people ensures that everybody is hearing the same thing. Of course, anybody has the right to pass if they don’t choose to read. Encourage the young people to discuss things as they read.

Discuss Standards

Pose the question, “What do we want the Policy Committee and the program to stand for?” This begins the process of having the young people set their own standards. Normally, they want to be part of something that is legitimate and honest and expects a lot of them.

Explain Organizational Structure

Draw a chart illustrating the structure of the entire organization, the titles and names, the lines of accountability, and the Policy Committee’s place in it. It is best if you can construct the organizational chart by asking the young people what they already know about the structure, while filling in what they might not know. Providing this kind of information is a basic courtesy to the young people—they need the whole picture in order to function well.

Decide on Time and Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Explain that this was a full plate for the Policy Committee’s first meeting, but as director you wanted to list important items for the next meeting. By listing priorities such as “Training in Leading Meetings” and “Review of Budget and Funding,” you are communicating that the Policy Committee is about serious
business. Make sure the members agree to and commit to the next meeting time.

**Demonstrate a Brief Evaluation Process**

Ask members, “What went well today? Are there any improvements we should make next time?” This should only take about five minutes.

**Do Appreciations**

Be sure to structure it so that each person is appreciated: for example, appreciate something you like about the person on your right (or left, or both). Build this practice into each meeting to help build closeness and self-esteem. (See “Group Process Techniques” to learn how to do appreciations. Use your imagination to keep appreciations from becoming routine and meaningless.)

**Things to Include in the First Five to Ten Meetings**

You are trying to build a solid group, and create conditions conducive to good thinking and decision making. The first five to ten meetings of the Policy Committee should include:

- Life stories of members, followed by questions from the group (ten minutes for each person, with two to five minutes for questions)
- Review of the guidelines (if you have them) or a simple statement of purpose of the Policy Committee
- Review of overall structure, main program goals, philosophy, and funding of the organization itself
- Training in good group process and leading meetings
- Some challenging and interesting decisions to be made—hiring of staff members is often a good choice
- Appreciation—a lot of it
- Development of the group's concept of good leadership
- Review of the organization's expectations of individual members and central ideas about their role in the organization as leaders
- Some sort of event that brings people close—a weekend training, a dinner together at the home of the adult guide, a dinner at the program, a movie or a play, or whatever the group would like
- Meeting with the whole staff for introductions and setting a tone of partnership between youth leaders and adult leaders on behalf of total organization
- Food at all meetings
Policy Committee Training
on Meeting Facilitation

The purpose of this 90-minute training is to teach participants to lead an effective meeting, using much of the group’s own thinking. Group members will memorize a simple ten-step meeting agenda formula. Before you get started, make sure you have newsprint and markers or a chalkboard and some chalk, copies of “How to Run a Good Meeting” (included in this handbook), and a written agenda that can either be posted or passed out. The following is a suggested format for the workshop facilitator to follow.

- Introductions or an opening appropriate to the group (5 minutes)
- Review the purpose and agenda. (2 minutes)
- Explain that different kinds of meeting styles and decision-making processes are needed for different kinds of tasks:
  - Explain that some tasks or goals require top-down authority. Ask for examples—responses might include a military campaign or an operating room.
  - Explain that some tasks or goals work well with parliamentary procedure. Ask members for a definition of parliamentary procedure, and examples of where it is used.
  - Explain that some tasks or goals require group consensus and maximum participation in decisions. Ask for examples—when you want people to “own” what they are doing, when you need all points of view, when you want to create unity and solidarity in your group. (5 minutes)
- State that Youthbuild is interested in involving as many people as possible in leadership. The model we prefer uses consensus decision making and includes each person. (1 minute)
- Ask: “What does a good meeting accomplish”? Write up a list drawn from participants suggestions, and include the following if they have not been suggested:
  - Communicates information
  - Results in decisions being made
  - Assigns tasks and responsibilities
  - Creates a good spirit
  - Helps build the organization or the group
- Have people memorize this and repeat it to each other in pairs. Cover up the list.
• Have several people repeat the list to the whole group. (10 minutes)
• Ask: “What steps would you take to have a successful meeting?” Draw responses from the members and list on newsprint their ideas about group process. Our experience shows that most groups will come up with a list that includes most of the items below.
  • Name a facilitator or chairperson
  • Plan ahead
  • Post agenda, get agreement, and estimate times
  • Go over old business and review assignments
  • Discuss new business
  • Reach a decision
  • Assign responsibilities
  • Evaluate meeting
  • Appreciate people (5 minutes)
• Ask: “If you were the facilitator, what things would you do?”
  • Open with personal sharing, song, or good news
  • Set a positive tone
  • Encourage the participation of all
  • Set an example by keeping comments brief
  • Do not allow attacks on people
  • Use pairings or small groups to ensure participation by all and defuse tension
  • Change the pace to handle work more efficiently
  • Call for a break, “energizer,” or stretch
  • Keep to the agreed upon agenda and times
  • Point out areas of agreement on controversial issues
  • Help define areas to be resolved
  • Ask for proposals for change, not just complaints
  • Close meeting with appreciations and a hopeful note (5 minutes)
• Ask: “What are the parts and order of a good agenda?” Draw suggestions from the group by asking “What would you do first?” and so on, while you put them in order, like the following sample.
  • Ten-Step Meeting Agenda
    1. Touch base
    2. Review and amend agenda
    3. Review and amend minutes
    4. Have reports and check on assignments
    5. Finish old business
6. Discuss new business
7. Make decisions
8. Assign responsibilities
9. Evaluate the meeting
10. Appreciate each other

• Have the group memorize the agenda and repeat it to each other in pairs
• Cover up the list, then have several people repeat the list to the whole group (10 minutes)
• Take turns reading “How to Run a Good Meeting” aloud and discuss in the group (20 minutes)
• Evaluate the meeting by asking the group what they learned, what went well about this meeting, and what could be improved (5 minutes)
• Appreciate the person next to you (5 minutes)
• Adjourn
Consensus Decision Making

Three common decision-making styles are command, majority rule, and consensus. This section will briefly explain each kind of decision making, then describe how consensus differs from other decision-making methods and why it is the preferred method to use with a Youthbuild Policy Committee.

Command Model

Different goals require different decision-making processes. If you are in a hospital operating room, you cannot debate which surgical instrument to use. The head surgeon is in charge. Period. The same is true in a military operation. The commanding officer gives orders. With high stakes, decisiveness is necessary. Similarly, sports teams have coaches who make the crucial decisions on personnel, game plan, and timing. This style of decision making is referred to as command, top down, or hierarchical. It is not democratic. The decision-making process does not usually involve those being led. It is sometimes absolutely necessary.

Majority Rule Model

Most people who grew up in this country learned how to vote in order to decide things. We were taught that voting on issues, with one vote per person, is the essence of democracy. We hold fast to the idea of majority rule.

Majority rule includes more people in the decision-making process than the command model does. It is necessary when there is great disagreement within a group, and when a group needs to end debate and make a decision. Requiring the minority to go along with the majority decision prevents much chaos and conflict.

However, majority rule can result in vested and contrary interests blocking each other or paralyzing the best interests of the whole. Using simple majority rule as the primary means of making decisions in a Youthbuild Policy Committee may mirror the divisiveness of the wider society.

Majority rule voting is often accompanied by parliamentary procedure (codified in “Robert’s Rules of Order”). We believe this is a useful tool. Without a working understanding of the complex “Robert’s Rules of Order,” an ordinary person (especially a young person) is bound to feel lost and powerless to join the process, and thus is effectively excluded from decision making. Learning how to use parliamentary procedure can prepare us to participate more effectively in decision-making forums.
**Consensus Model**

The leadership tasks of a Youthbuild Policy Committee are broad. They include making decisions that will best benefit the program and building unity and understanding among the members. These tasks call for a decision-making method that is inclusive and unifying.

Consensus decision making is a way to elicit the best thinking from all the members. Everyone is encouraged to listen respectfully to each person, express their reservations or disagreements, and stand up for different points of view, even if no one else holds that view. Unanimity is not necessarily the goal. The facilitator reaches for the overwhelming sense of the group. If those who hold minority opinions believe that they have been heard and treated fairly—perhaps with some of their points being integrated into the accepted proposal—they are often more likely to change their position or go along with the sense of the group without feeling railroaded or manipulated.

If, after a thorough discussion, most of the group favors a particular decision, but one or two are still not persuaded, the facilitator can say to them something like, “Most of the group wants to go down this road. I know you still disagree, but because we have to make a decision here so we won't be paralyzed, can you agree to go down this road with the group for, say, two months, to see what the results are? At the end of two months, we can revisit the decision. Could you go along with that?” Usually, they will.

We want the Policy Committee to learn that it is almost always possible to reach agreement if people really try to understand each other’s points of view and if you have enough time; that it is possible to disagree and still respect each other; that a decision is stronger when everyone owns it; that listening and persuasion are very effective means of solving conflict.

Realistically, the consensus process is more time-consuming. Sometimes the press of decisions that need to be made will force us to pay less attention to this more involved process. But for anything of major significance, it is worth the time.

The type of decision making model you practice will have repercussions in the rest of the program.
Group Process Techniques

As a quick reference, here are some group process tools you can use and teach to the Policy Committee members.

**Brainstorming**

Most of us are familiar with this tool for generating a lot of ideas in a short time. But sometimes you will need to teach the process to the young people. The rules are simple:

- Express whatever comes to your mind about the topic
- Do not censor yourself
- Do not comment on other people’s ideas
- Put all ideas up on newsprint—no matter how seemingly wild or weird
- Encourage people to think fast
- Build on what others say
- Take turns—use the “twice-once rule” (see below)
- Limit the time
- Have fun

**Equal Time**

On a controversial issue use the “equal time” method, where each person gets to speak for a limited but equal number of minutes on the topic before there is open discussion. Often the group as a whole will put out all the pros and cons in an impressive way through this process, so no one has to feel it is up to him or her to say everything.

**Go-Arounds**

Things may get heated and the meeting can become a dialogue between two or three people. This leaves everyone else out but also creates tension. If this happens, call for a “go-around.” Ask for a volunteer or pick a person to start, then go around the room to give each person a chance to speak on the topic. If you are limited in time, then use an equal time go-around. This accomplishes several positive things. It gives everyone a chance to be heard, not just the dominant ones. It allows the heated ones to cool off while they listen to other people’s thinking. It
allows everyone to relax and listen more since they know they will get their turn. In addition, it usually produces a higher quality discussion than an emotionally charged process does.

**The Twice-Once Rule**

You can sometimes use a simple discussion rule: “No one speaks twice before everyone else has spoken once, and nobody speaks four times before everyone else has spoken twice.” Explain that everyone has important things to say, and the group needs a structure that allows everyone’s thinking to be heard without having to jump in or interrupt. With practice, the group members begin to monitor each other, reminding each other when they have already spoken.

**Time-Outs for Selected Groups**

Group dynamics often mirror the culture of the outside world. If, for example, you notice that the males have been doing most of the talking, suggest that “For the next 10 minutes, let’s have the men listen, while the women have the full floor.” The same is often true in youth-adult groups, or people of color-white groups: the adults or the whites dominate the discussion. As subtly as possible, simply reverse it. Or, whenever someone has been very quiet, ask if he or she has anything to add or any thoughts to share on the subject. Many times people will speak when asked, when otherwise they would consider their thoughts unimportant.

**Varied Format**

Since different people learn in different ways, try to employ a variety of formats in meetings. For example, have people break up into pairs or small groups often. Have small groups report back. Use “energizers” and games to increase the energy level or demonstrate certain ideas. Use visual aids such as wall charts. Use role-playing to help people understand different points of view.

**Appreciations**

A consistent practice of appreciation in Policy Committee meetings helps build a positive environment in which young people can learn better, feel supported, and make better decisions.

Below are some suggested methods of doing appreciations. These are public and done one at a time so everybody can hear what is said to each person. Variations include:

- Say one thing you like about the person on your left (right, two people to your left or right, directly across from you).
- What did so-and-so do today that helped the meeting?
• What do you respect or admire about so-and-so?
• What makes so-and-so a valuable part of the Policy Committee?
• How have you seen so-and-so grow in the last few months?
• How has so-and-so been a good leader (this week, or lately)?
Potential Pitfalls for Adults in Relation to the Policy Committee

Adults with skills and the best intentions are still prone to make mistakes in guiding the development of the Policy Committee. Here is a list of pitfalls. It might be helpful for the adults on the Policy Committee to scan this list periodically in order to be aware of them.

Adults should avoid being:

- Overly controlling or scared
- Condescending
- Boring or overly talkative
- Critical and scolding
- Afraid to teach values
- Irresponsible (being habitually late, not honoring commitments)

They should also avoid:

- Assigning insignificant or peripheral tasks
- Providing too little guidance, leaving the young people too much on their own
- Emphasizing rhetoric about power
- Setting up adversarial relationships with other people in power
- Treating the Policy Committee as less than a top priority
- Not really listening to people or not taking them seriously
- Teaching dishonesty (by saying, for example, “You’ve got to lie in order to deal with unfair bureaucrats or oppressive policies or racism”)
- Feeling powerless and therefore not carrying youth involvement to its logical level of impact on the larger community
- Failing to ensure that the young people don’t feel used
- Neglecting good group process
- Ignoring issues of abuse of power—letting things slide and just get worse
- Allowing the Policy Committee to become isolated from the rest of the young people and not supported by the staff
- Empowering young people while disempowering staff, ending up with a staff that resents the Policy Committee
Section II

Information for Youth Members
A Letter from the President of YouthBuild USA

Dear Elected Member of the Youthbuild Policy Committee:

CONGRATULATIONS! Your friends and coworkers have chosen you as their representative on the Policy Committee of your Youthbuild program. This is a great compliment and an honor. They trust and respect you, believe you are smart, and believe that you care. In my experience, young people in these elections make very good choices and have a very good sense of who will make good representatives. They have seen something special in you.

This leadership role is not always easy. Each committee and each committee member usually go through some changes figuring out how to do it right. Based on my ten years of working with Policy Committees at the Youth Action Program in New York City, the originator of Youthbuild, and because the first year at Youthbuild Boston was so full of ups and downs, I wrote the following pages as a letter to future committee members, to help them avoid some of the mistakes we had seen. The Youthbuild Boston Policy Committee reviewed these pages and enthusiastically recommended that all future Policy Committees get them at the beginning and read them together.

So I hope your committee will read the “Basic Expectations of a Policy Committee Member,” and “Some Serious Mistakes You Should Avoid” and discuss them. Hopefully your own committee will talk a lot and decide how you want to work together and how to work with the rest of the students and staff in order to do the best job possible.

We at YouthBuild USA deeply appreciate your willingness to take on the extra responsibility of helping the director make wise decisions about your program. Your contribution to strengthening your own program will make the whole national movement stronger, and that will help thousands of young people have better opportunities for jobs, training and education, leadership, and community service.

Thanks for caring and for working at it. As a result, we care about you and hope you will contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Best wishes for your success in every venture.

Dorothy Stoneman
President, YouthBuild USA
Basic Expectations of a Policy Committee Member

1. **Come to every meeting on time.** If you can’t, be sure to let somebody know in advance. Your presence makes a difference to the other members. The strength of a group depends on the reliability of each member.

2. **Listen respectfully to everyone’s opinion about every subject.** Even when you disagree with most of it, you can usually agree with part of what someone else is saying. The best decisions include the best thinking of all the members, so listen for the best parts of what other people are saying instead of just disagreeing with the worst parts.

3. **Express your own opinions even when you’re not sure of them.** It’s part of the thinking process. It’s important that you and everyone else feel comfortable sharing your ideas, because only through sharing ideas will a group be able to reach the best possible decisions.

4. **Be careful not to dominate the discussion with your own ideas.** Often, we are incorrectly taught that being a leader means forcefully pushing one’s own ideas. Actually, being a good leader means encouraging others to speak; respecting what they say, even when they disagree with you; expressing your own ideas; and listening for ways to combine all the good ideas. If you are too pushy about your own ideas, no matter how good they are, other people will stop talking, stop liking the way you treat them, or even stop coming to meetings.

5. **Remember that your job is to make decisions that benefit the entire program.** As a committee member you will start to think like the director or a board member, because you will have an influence on how good the program is for all its members and staff, now and in the future.

6. **Remember that other program members will be watching to see if they have chosen the right people to represent them.** Your general performance in the program will be part of the answer. Your attendance and level of responsibility should be high, because now you represent the Policy Committee and the members want to be proud of their committee.

7. **Also remember that communicating with the rest of the program members and the staff is part of your job.** Make sure that meeting minutes are distributed to everybody. Allot time every week to report to the rest of the program members and get their input on subjects you are discussing in committee meetings. This way the Policy Committee can serve as the backbone of the program, holding the parts together and keeping the program strong.

8. **Keep finding ways for other members of the program to develop their leadership skills and commitment also.**
• Add new members to the committee as you go along
• Form other committees—a social committee, a community service committee—to deal with specific issues
• Include everyone who wants to be included in the Policy Committee training
• Have other trainees do public speaking when the opportunity arises
• Hold general meetings in which other members lead small discussion groups

You’ll think of more ways. The community and the world needs all the good and caring leaders it can get. It’s the job of every leader to help create other leaders—the more the better.
Some Serious Mistakes
You Should Avoid

Here are some of the worst things we have seen happen. Please take this as a warning of *what not to do*, and what *not to allow* other members of your committee to do.

1. Sometimes committee members think they have special privileges and start to act as if they don't have to follow the basic rules of the program. This will make everyone mad and might turn people against your committee.

2. Sometimes committee members, because they are involved in hiring and evaluating staff, treat staff members disrespectfully. We've even had cases of Policy Committee members cursing at staff or threatening them with remarks like, “Wait until the Policy Committee meets.” This makes individual staff members upset and causes the entire staff to distrust and even disapprove of the role of the Policy Committee.

3. Sometimes individual members are so good at public speaking that they are overwhelmed with invitations to represent the program. Outside engagements become too distracting, and they start to forget about good attendance and performance in the basic program. Other people will resent this, and eventually the person may become isolated and criticized.

4. Sometimes individuals get so pushy about their own ideas that other people no longer want them to be leaders, because they seem to have stopped respecting the group.

5. Sometimes members get very scared because they are being so successful and they are not used to it. Success is scary. Sometimes it leads to acting out, and sometimes it leads to pulling back. Sometimes you don't even know why you're feeling so scared. It's because you are stepping out of the familiar position you have been used to. You're taking more risks. You're more visible. You're afraid you might not be able to keep it up. You're afraid other people might not want you to keep it up. You're afraid you might get ahead of your family or your friends and they might not like it. You're afraid you're going to fail in the end anyway. These are some of the feelings people get, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. But don't be surprised if you or other members of the committee feel afraid or start to act out and you don't understand why. This happens to many people when they start to do better than they are used to doing. It's a good idea to talk about it.
6. Sometimes members choose a chairperson who hasn't had much experience but who takes the responsibility very seriously. As chairperson, he or she gets frustrated and mad at the group for not being serious enough. He or she scolds the group, or takes over for the group, or pushes his or her own opinions on the group. The result is that the group doesn't work, the chairperson becomes isolated and unhappy, and soon quits or is removed. Be careful not to let this happen to any of your members. If it starts to happen, talk to the director immediately and decide what to do. A serious chairperson is a precious and wonderful resource; he or she should be helped to do the kind of job that strengthens the committee rather than weakens it. It's not easy. Some groups have decided to start by giving everyone a chance to serve as chairperson. This way everybody gets experience and training, and no one person has too much pressure, responsibility, or power.
Your Role as a Policy Committee

1. To reach the best possible decisions for the benefit of other young people in the program, the program as a whole, the community, and, as appropriate, for the city, state, and country.

2. To become the best possible leaders, able to make good decisions, communicate ideas well, take responsibility to improve every situation you’re in, and help other leaders develop.

3. To be good role models for other young people and to build the credibility of the committee. You and the committee will be judged by how you treat others, how responsible you are, and how consistent your behavior is with your rhetoric and leadership role.

4. To help build unity in the program by not being publicly negative about committee meetings, maintaining confidentiality, and bringing people together as you see needed.

5. To support the development of other leaders.

6. To be accountable to the rest of the young people by reporting back to them, getting their ideas, involving them, and thinking about how things affect them.

7. To hold the director accountable, and keep the director informed of what is going on and what issues need to be addressed. Make sure the director makes good decisions.

8. To carry out the following possible responsibilities:
   - Participation in the hiring of staff
   - Recommending improvements in program management and services
   - Consultation on program design, policies, and changes
   - Review of yearly budget, where appropriate
   - Consultation on firing of staff (although the director has final authority)
   - Participation in decision making affecting all aspects of the program
   - Reporting to and consulting with the rest of the program
   - Planning events
   - Solving problems as needed
How to Run a Good Meeting

A group can succeed or fail by the process it uses to conduct meetings, involve the members, and build morale. Here are some suggestions for how your group can run its meetings. Over time, you can train the youth chairperson to use these guidelines. Soon the whole group will internalize a good process.

• **Set a regular meeting time and place**—e.g., every Tuesday in the Conference Room from 3:00–4:30. Once a week is best. This way, if a member cannot make it this week, he or she knows that it will be there next week. “If it’s Tuesday, it must be Policy Committee day!”

• **Notify everyone of the meeting** as personally as is necessary to get them there. Know who is expected and who is not.

• **Limit the time to one and a half or two hours.** Begin on time and end on time, thereby respecting people’s other commitments. If you make a habit of beginning on time, then people will tend to arrive on time.

• **Have a youth chairperson for each meeting.** Leadership is necessary. Over time, things don’t work well with only committees. There needs to be an overall chairperson for a term of time—three months or less. The group selects the chair, defines the responsibilities, and periodically reviews the chairperson’s performance. Alternating chairpersons is good because it develops leadership skills among many people, thereby strengthening your group. However, do not change the chairperson too frequently because you will not have someone thinking about how the group is doing over a period of time.

• **Make sure everyone knows everyone.** Don’t start a meeting without being sure everyone at least has a chance to know each other’s name.

• **Start with people making personal contact.** Each person might take a turn saying what’s new or what’s good since the last meeting. Sometimes someone is upset and needs a few minutes to talk about it so he or she can function better in the meeting.

• **Welcome latecomers**, introduce them if they are new to the group, and explain to them what you are doing at the moment.

• **Inform the group why the absent people could not come.** This establishes that they are still part of the group. It also establishes the expectation that people contact you if they have to be absent.

• **Have a planned, visible agenda with important content.** If people feel the chairperson is using their time purposefully, they tend to be more responsible in their own use of the meeting’s time. Allow for input from
the group to shape the agenda.

- **Post the estimated time for each agenda item so people know when to move on.** If something unexpectedly emerges as very important, people can then decide whether to postpone other agenda items, stay late, or call another meeting.

- **Include in your agenda a review of every specific responsibility that has been previously assigned and is still hanging.** If someone volunteered to do something, see if it was done. If it was not done, see what help is needed. If it was done, give the person a chance to report and then have the group appreciate him. The group needs to know that everything is being moved forward and that responsibilities are not dropped.

- **On every important decision make sure every person speaks fully.** Every person has important things to say. Let nobody dominate the discussion and let nobody be overlooked. A healthy group listens to the thinking of all of its members—or ends up losing the ones who have not been heard.

- **On every important decision try to reach consensus.** Discuss until all important objections to the dominant view have been shared and explored. Discuss until the minority who disagree have been thoroughly heard and taken seriously.

- **Make progress on all fronts.** Make sure that, over time, no important area of concern is repeatedly dropped. Even if your resources force you to make slower progress on some fronts than others, this should be stated explicitly and a plan should be followed for when and how the concern will be handled. Otherwise morale will be lowered by the feeling that the group, or the leader, is inadequate to handle its whole task. As a result, your other excellent work may be eroded by the weakness that develops from continually putting aside less urgent but nonetheless important concerns.

- **Encourage laughter in your meetings.** Serious discussions can get boring or tense. Jokes and lightheartedness lift the spirits and bring people together. The work goes faster when people are more relaxed and tuned in.

- **At the close of every meeting take a few minutes for evaluation and appreciations.** Even a sentence from each person on how the meeting went—what she liked and what could be improved—will do. This gives valuable information for planning. No one has to leave wondering how the others felt. Also include appreciations for the chairperson and others in the group who played a leadership role. Appreciating the person next to you always lifts the tone of the group. No one ever gets enough appreciation. Make it a regular practice.
• Keep good notes of the meetings and make sure to get them to the absent members and to people who have reason to know of your progress. Much good work is wasted by not communicating it to the people who care.

• Use part of your meeting for support groups as often as possible. This is rarely included because of the press of program issues. Perhaps 30 minutes every other week could be used for a support group—a time of giving full, warm attention to each person in turn (in groups of four to six) for personal, emotional support. It deepens relationships and helps people with specific difficulties, which in all probability interfere with their leadership.
Guidelines on Interviewing
Job Candidates

One of the key responsibilities of a Policy Committee is to interview and participate in the hiring of future staff. Before interviewing, the Committee members need to learn how to interview. Below is a training that has been used in Youthbuild programs.

Before the Interview

- Review and understand the job description.
- List the qualities and qualifications for this position.
- Write down questions that address these qualities and qualifications. Put each person’s question on a 3” x 5” card for use in the actual interview.
- Devise a possible role play situation: think of a situation or problem a person in this position would be likely to handle; decide who will play which parts in relation to the candidate; decide on a time limit for the role play.
- Look at the candidate’s résumé and references. Generate questions from it.
- Decide on the format of the interview and the roles of the committee members: Who will welcome the person and outline the process and moderate, who will be the first three to ask their questions, who will introduce and set up the role play, who will thank the candidate?
- Decide whether the decision must be unanimous or by overwhelming majority. You do not want to use a simple majority vote, since you want most, if not all, of the people to agree. It’s not a win/lose, jockeying-for-my-choice situation, but one of building unity.

During the Interview

- The moderator welcomes the candidate and asks each member of the group to introduce himself or herself.
- The moderator asks the candidate to tell the group about himself or herself and why she is interested in this job.
- Committee members give the person their best attention, always look-
ing at him or her, not communicating any disapproval, not gigglng or chewing gum or distracting the group, and giving the candidate respect.

- Committee members begin asking their questions in the prearranged order. After that, members should ask any and all questions that come to their minds.
- When the time feels right, explain and set up the role play.
- Don’t drag the interview out. Toward the end of the time allotted, ask the candidate if he or she has any further questions for the committee about the program or the job.
- Thank the person for his or her interest and explain the hiring process and timeline—for example, “You are one of three final candidates who we are interviewing today. We hope to make a decision within a few days. We will call you by the end of the week.”

**After the Interview**

- When the candidate is out of the room, have a quick first go-around, asking each member, “Would you hire this person? Yes, no, or maybe.” Do not ask people to give reasons. This gives everybody a quick reading of first impressions, before anyone has a chance to be persuasive.
- Go around again, this time with each person giving all their reasons. Each person should be listened to fully and respectfully. People should be encouraged to express all their doubts and concerns. This is an important decision.
- Discuss thoroughly until consensus is reached or the next step is determined—e.g., check more references or interview the person again. (Note: References should always include the candidates’ last three supervisors, not just friends or people who speak favorably.)
- Decide who will inform the candidate of the decision and when.
- Appreciate each other for an important job well done.
Appendix C:
Leadership Competencies Handbook
Introduction

In the Youthbuild model, core components make up an effective program: construction, education, and leadership development. Just as there need to be benchmarks and expected outcomes in learning construction skills and in preparing to achieve a diploma or GED, there need to be competencies in the area of leadership development. As an example, this is one set of competencies among the many possibilities.

Each of the 15 competencies listed here could be mastered within a program cycle. Each one will benefit the individual and the program. Each one is a knowledge or skill related to personal development, group leadership, or community leadership.

These competencies can be taught and learned in different parts of the program, some most easily in the classroom, some on the construction site, some through leadership committees and activities, some in the counseling groups, and some on one's own.

Each competency has a “lesson plan,” or suggested methods for teaching it and for measuring its achievement.
Youthbuild Leadership Competencies: A Summary

The following list of leadership competencies and skills are what all Youthbuild participants are expected to know by the end of the program. These leadership competencies are related to the basic Youthbuild definition of good leadership.

Good leadership is taking responsibility to make things go right for yourself, your family, the program, and the community.

**Personal Development Skills and Knowledge**

1. Can keep and use a weekly schedule and calendar for the entire program year
2. Can set and achieve personal development goals
3. Can manage anger constructively
4. Can make and use a personal budget
5. Can explain the basics of sexual reproduction, pregnancy prevention, and AIDS and STD prevention
6. Can demonstrate readiness to secure and hold a job

**Group Leadership Skills**

7. Can listen well to others in class, in meetings, and on the site
8. Can take useful notes in class, in a meeting, and on the worksite
9. Can explain and participate in the following group process methods:
   - Brainstorming
   - Two-way or three-way sharing
   - Equal time
   - Go-arounds
   - The twice-once rule
10. Can lead an effective small group discussion
11. Can participate in self-estimation as a way to evaluate one’s own
progress
12. Can define the functions, skills, and attitudes of an effective leader

**Community Leadership Skills and Knowledge**

13. Can effectively use the phone system
14. Can find information through researching
15. Can explain the basics of how local, state, and federal governments work
Leadership Competency 1

Can Keep a Weekly Schedule and Calendar

**Competency**

Can keep and use a weekly schedule and calendar for at least six months.

**Purpose and Uses**

Managing time can be a challenge to all of us. It is helpful to prioritize and estimate the amount of time it will take to complete a task. This will help young people treat time more carefully and use it in meaningful ways. The practice of keeping a schedule teaches young people to take themselves seriously, and to take their day-to-day lives seriously.

**Where to Teach**

The counselor or leadership developer should work with the trainees on individual schedule-making. If there is a public program calendar, it could be the responsibility of a trainee to work with a staff person to update it and keep the group informed of upcoming activities. The construction site and the academic classroom may also have a schedule of visits from contractors, upcoming tests, delivery of supplies, visits from guests, and weekly activities. Maintaining the schedule should be part of the work of one or more trainees in conjunction with the teacher or trainer. This is an important leadership opportunity and should be rotated among trainees.

**How to Teach**

Trainees should be asked early in the program to maintain a personal calendar of activities. Some programs have given each participant a small pocket calendar at the beginning of the year. A small amount of classroom time should be devoted to explaining the parts of the calendar and demonstrating some methods of notation for meetings, tasks, and other events. More critical skills involve determining how long different activities will take, prioritizing, thinking through time necessary for travel to and from engagements, and handling scheduling conflicts. This competency should be taught with an initial session and ongoing review and training.

- Initially, the instructor should engage the group in a discussion on
the importance of keeping a schedule. This could be a brainstorm to answer the following questions: Why keep a schedule? How many people currently have to manage their time? Why? How do you do it? Draw out of the group the benefits of keeping a schedule. Promote the idea that their lives are changing, and that a calendar or schedule is a reflection of the greater importance of their time, and of their own commitment to a healthier and more focused lifestyle. Let them know that a person’s reputation for reliability is one of the most important factors in success in any venture, and the first step is to keep all your appointments on time.

• Next, create a hypothetical scenario of a trainee with a variety of activities to handle (a birthday, a doctor’s appointment, several job interviews during Youthbuild hours, a visit to a friend in the hospital, child care arrangements, picking up someone’s medicine) and ask the trainees to pair up and fill in the schedule for one week with the activities described. The teams could then share their schedule with the whole group. Some questions to address in the group are:
  • What things must be done this week?
  • Can anything be delayed?
  • Which things are hardest to schedule? Which are easiest?
  • Which things are most important to you (as the trainee)?
  • Do you schedule job interviews and check with staff later, or do you ask first?
  • Are any activities so closely scheduled that there might be difficulty completing each one?
  • Does any item need prior preparation? If so, what?
  • How do I know how long I will need to travel to get to a new location?
  • What should I do when I know I am going to be late for or miss an appointment?

• Next, have each person fill out his or her own week’s calendar in pencil to make changes easier, scheduling work hours, special Youthbuild dates, time with family, appointments, shopping, calls to make, and other responsibilities.

• A few minutes each week should be devoted to going over calendars in the classroom and on the construction site. Each person should fill out their own weekly calendar and the group should go over all upcoming program events and schedules, while each person keeps everyone informed of expected absences or special occasions.

• Individual and group calendars should be visible and used regularly; when events come up, ask trainees to note the event in their schedules. The maintenance of a calendar may feel boring or tedious for
young people new to the practice of carrying a calendar. It is important to keep reminding them that this is a measure of how seriously they take themselves and their own lives.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

This competency should be taught early—even in orientation—and mastered within the first two to three months of the program.

**How to Measure Achievement**

Trainees can be evaluated on their ability to make their own appointments and keep them in a timely fashion, their ability to resolve schedule conflicts, and their initiative in keeping their calendar. The counselor, teacher, or leadership developer can evaluate by reviewing calendars with trainees.
Leadership Competency 2

**Can Set and Achieve Personal Development Goals**

**Competency**

Can set and achieve personal development goals.

**Purpose and Uses**

Each individual wants to accomplish things in life. However, achieving goals does not happen automatically. It takes planning, persistence, and patience. This competency helps trainees think, plan, and act to better achieve their goals.

**Where to Teach**

The workshop format presented below works best in a classroom setting, but follow-up is key. Individual staff will need to work with each student to help them set goals, objectives, and timelines and to give them support along the way. This is a central part of the personal counseling process carried out by the counselor.

**How to Teach**

Presented here is one possibility in the form of a three-hour workshop that can be adapted as needed.

**Part I: Examining Our Beliefs About Success**

*9:00 a.m.*

Read each of the following questions out loud, and ask the group to respond privately, in writing:

- Do you generally expect things to work out well for you or work out poorly?
- Do you expect your best efforts to be successful, or do you expect them to be blocked?
- Do you see the potential in a situation, or do you see the roadblocks?
- Do you expect people to assist you or take advantage of you?
- Do you tend to think “I can” or “I can’t”??
Write the following sentences on a blackboard and ask students to discuss each one. The basic point to draw out is that our beliefs greatly influence what we achieve.

- “Whether you believe you can do something or believe you can't, you're right.”
- “They can because they think they can.”
- “Is the glass half full or half empty?”

9:15 a.m.

Ask “Where do our beliefs come from?” Write up the responses. The list will probably include the following:

- Religion and family
- Our environment
- Events, small or large
- Cultural or racial images and oppression
- Reading and learning about accomplishments of others
- Our own past results: success breeds belief in success, likewise failure breeds lack of confidence
- Imagination: imagining success or failure in advance

Briefly discuss whether we can change our beliefs. How?

9:30 a.m.

Discuss how our state of mind affects us, and how to change it to be more empowering.

- Ask someone to act depressed, angry, and sulky. Ask: “If you were feeling like this, how would it affect the goals you set or your motivation to achieve your goals”? Discuss.
- Ask someone to act confident, happy, powerful, and successful. Ask the same question. Discuss.

9:45 a.m.

Ask people to write down:

- Five key beliefs you have about yourself that have limited you in the past
- Five positive beliefs about yourself that will help you to achieve your goals
- Discuss the impact of our beliefs

10:10 a.m.

Break
Part II: The Beliefs and Actions of People Who Succeed

10:20 a.m.

Surveys of successful people show a fairly common set of beliefs that successful people in all fields share. Write up these, give examples if possible, and discuss.

Beliefs of Successful People

- Everything happens for a reason
- There is no such thing as failure; there are only results from which we can learn
- Whatever happens, take responsibility
- In every problem there is an opportunity
- It’s not necessary to understand everything to be able to use everything (e.g., computers)
- People are your greatest resource
- Work is enjoyable
- There’s no long-lasting success without commitment

10:30 a.m.

Formula for success. Write up this basic formula, and discuss.

- Visualize what you want—in great detail
- Make a concrete plan
- Discuss your plan with people whose judgment you trust and make sure it’s a good plan
- Take action according to plan
- Model successful people
- Determine how you will know if you have succeeded
- Assess the results as you go
- Make adjustments and correct the course

Part III: Setting Our Own Goals

10:40 a.m.

- Ask participants to write down a list of dreams and goals that they want to achieve in their lifetime. Encourage them not to make judgments about how realistic or appropriate they are at this time. When they have finished, ask them to put a time estimate by each item indicating when they expect to have it accomplished. It can be weeks, years, or decades.
10:50 a.m.
Discuss the following sentences:
• “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.”
• “If you were going to build a house, would you do it without a blue-
print or plans?”

This prepares them for making a concrete plan for achieving their goals.

10:55 a.m.
Ask for some of their big goals. (Some examples: “Owning my own business.”
“Graduating from college.” “Buying a house.” “Having my own music band.”)
Ask one person if he or she would be willing to work on a plan for achieving
one of his or her big goals in front of the group. The objective is to walk
through a plan that includes objectives, steps to accomplishing the objectives,
tasks for the objectives, and a timeline, while getting the student to think well
about his or her ability to meet this goal.
For example, the student might have a goal of owning a construction company.
Some questions might be:
• By what date do you want to have your own company?
• What kind of construction?
• How much money will you need to start up your business, given
equipment, space costs, telephones, computers, truck(s), and adver-
tising?
• What kind of licensing or certification will you need?
• What will you need to do, learn, and accomplish to become licensed
or certified?
• How will you get the business skills you need to learn to manage the
business?
• How many people do you think you will need working for you?
• Who will you get to support you?
As facilitator, note the effect of the questions. For some individuals, questions
like these feel so overwhelming and discouraging that they want to give up im-
mediately. For others, it may be exciting to make it real. The goal is to help the
individual in such a way that he or she feels empowered to take the goal seri-
ously.

11:10 a.m.
Ask the participants to look at their list of goals and pick a big one. Have them
work in pairs to develop a plan, a schedule of tasks, and a timeline for it. Re-
mind them to ask each other to ask questions if they get stuck.
Part IV: Setting and Achieving a Short-Term Goal

Now that they know about the thought that goes into long-term goal setting have them begin to use the same process to plan out some short-term goals.

11:30 a.m.

Ask each participant to think of a short-term goal that can be accomplished within the next six months.

Put a large chart on the wall with four columns labeled Name, Goal, Estimated Completion Date, and Support Person.

Ask each person to publicly commit to whatever they put up on the chart. The support person can be a peer, staff member, or someone in the participant's life. (If present, ask the chosen support person if they will agree to check in with the person about how they are doing on achieving the goal.)

This chart should be left up. There should be a monthly check-in. This lets students practice achieving a goal in a reasonable time, with support, and in public view. It builds a collective awareness of how people solve problems along the way. It also alerts the group to where more support is needed. It allows celebration of goals as they are accomplished, thereby encouraging others to persist.

Note: This workshop is just one possible starting point. Goal setting is a lifelong process. Youthbuild counselors can play a crucial role in helping participants overcome the obstacles while achieving their goals.

Time Frame for Achieving Competency

There is no particular time frame for achieving this competency. For the participants, the sooner the better, because these skills will help them accomplish their goals. However, the amount of time needed by each individual will vary, depending on his or her goals.

How to Measure Achievement

The student should achieve the six-month goal described above and demonstrate the ability to make a plan that includes a goal, measurable objectives, tasks, and timeline.
Leadership Competency 3

**Can Manage Anger Constructively**

**Competency**

Can manage anger constructively.

**Purpose and Uses**

Managing one’s anger is an important aspect of being effective in life. It is therefore necessary to have some techniques for dealing with anger as it arises.

**Where to Teach**

This competency can be taught in the classroom, but it should be practiced throughout the whole program. It can be learned through discussion, role plays, counseling on what triggers one’s anger, and help from peers.

**How to Teach**

There are probably local organizations that do workshop trainings on anger and conflict management. Below are several simple approaches.

**Write and Discuss**

Have participants write down things that make them angry. Ask individuals to share some examples. Then have them talk about the way they react when someone or something makes them angry. Ask them to decide which ways are healthy and which are unhealthy, and why. Discuss different ways of handling situations that make them angry. This exercise will help the participants see clearly how they react in anger situations and how they can change their behavior to be more constructive.

**Role Plays**

Role plays can be useful both for uncovering the sources of some of the emotions that flare up in real situations, and for practicing different responses for future situations. Begin by asking students to roleplay some of the examples they discussed above. Roleplay the way the situation happened, as well as some different methods for resolving the issue. As important as doing the role play is processing it with the group afterwards. Ask them to critique the role play by discussing:

- Moments when the actors lost their self-control
• How certain characters fed the rising anger
• How certain other characters calmed the situation

**Tips for Managing Anger Constructively**

Have participants discuss and demonstrate each of these techniques.

• **Use neutralizing words.** Try saying things like, “This is not worth fighting about,” or “Let’s talk, but I don’t want to fight.”

• **Apologize.** If someone feels offended by something you did or said, you can help defuse their anger by making a simple apology. You can try this even when you do not think you did anything wrong. It helps them to get calmer, and you lose nothing by apologizing.

• **Count to ten.** Although this method is simple, it works to clear your head and to avoid a physical confrontation.

• **Walk away.** It is very difficult to think clearly and say what you really mean at the peak of an argument or angry situation. This is often when people say hurtful things that they don't necessarily mean. Try walking away to avoid this.

• **Try to understand why the situation makes you so angry.** It may be that this situation is reminding you of some other situation or place in your life where you felt like you weren’t listened to or were being disrespected.

• **Shift your frame of reference.** Try to see where the other person is coming from, and try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Don't allow your lack of objectivity to dictate how you will act.

• **Re-explain your point of view.** After pausing to calm down, try to find a different way of explaining the point you are trying to get across.

• **Have someone else listen to both sides.** People in an argument often hear nothing but their own side of the conversation. Allowing someone else to listen might help to get a different take on the situation.

• **Have someone mediate.** If it seems there is no way that you will ever agree, have a third party mediate the conversation so that you can at least arrive at a compromise.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

There is no specific timeline for the accomplishment of this competency.

**How to Measure Achievement**

This competency can only be evaluated in a subjective manner. Have periodic conversations with the participants and have them talk about ways that they have improved in managing anger as well as places that they still need to work on. Staff and peer evaluation of this competency is important.
Leadership Competency 4

**Can Make and Use a Personal Budget**

**Competency**

Can make and use a personal budget.

**Purpose and Uses**

Economic independence depends on a young person's ability to effectively manage his or her money. This competency assures that the individual understands monetary institutions enough to make, use, and save money competently.

**Where to Teach**

The basic concepts can be introduced in the classroom, then reinforced by the counselor in one-on-one sessions and by the construction trainers when talking about budgeting for a construction project.

**How to Teach**

The skills involved in this competency can be approached from many angles throughout the year. If at all possible, leadership development staff should request that employees from banks, credit unions, and other economic institutions give more specific information. The following is one suggested workshop format.

**Budgeting and Effective Spending** *(60 min)*

- **Budgeting.** Discuss the ways participants currently use money. Ask participants to write down their monthly expenses and earnings. Discuss.

- **Income and Expenditures.** The following paragraph can be read as it is, or ideally, each sentence can be read as a question for the participants with the participants filling in the italicized words. In either case, this is used as an introduction to the participants writing their current budgets down.

  *Income* includes *earnings, gifts, public assistance, interest. Expenses* include *rent, utilities, child care, child support, food and toiletries, clothing, entertainment*. If your income is greater than your expenses, you have *savings*. If they are the same, you have a *balanced budget*. If your expenses are greater, you are in *debt*, or you have what is called a *"deficit"*.  

- **Saving.** Brainstorm about and discuss how people save. Using this discussion,
have the participants reevaluate their budgets to either balance them or increase their savings.

• **Keeping Track.**

*First week.* Ask the participants how much they spend daily and weekly and let them discuss this briefly. Do they know exactly? Have participants keep track of all of their expenses for the next week.

*Second week.* Have people report their expenses. Was it more than they thought they spent? Was it less? Were they surprised by anything? Are there areas where they could save substantially—e.g., bringing lunch, halving the number of sodas they buy, cutting down on cigarettes or quitting smoking completely, or buying generic products? Apply these savings to the budgets created the week before. Multiply these savings by 52 weeks to see how much could be saved in a year.

• **Bank Statement.**

*First week.* Ask participants to bring a bank statement. If participants don't have a bank account, plan an afternoon for opening a no fee savings account.

*Second week.* Get a bank statement, blank out the name and have the group find all the fees that the bank charges. Are the charges more than the interest? How many other things have “added costs”? (Examples include credit cards, layaway, and leasing.) Have the participants figure out these additional costs for themselves and apply them to the budgets they created the week before.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

Since handling one's money is a key to success in life, attention should be given to this in the first month of the program. This competency should be reinforced regularly and measured as each participant shows consistent ability to budget, save, and spend wisely.

**How to Measure**

The trainee must:

• Have or set up a bank account
• Make a balanced budget
• Set a balanced budget or savings goal and meet it for three months
Leadership Competency 5

**Can Explain the Basics of Sexual Reproduction, Pregnancy Prevention, and AIDS and STD Prevention**

**Competency**

Can explain the basics of sexual reproduction, pregnancy prevention, and AIDS and STD prevention.

**Purpose and Uses**

Knowledge and safe practice in sexual relations is absolutely critical to being responsible for one's life. Ignorance and unsafe practices can have dire consequences. An unwanted pregnancy can greatly alter one's life. Contracting AIDS can end one's life. This competency builds a knowledge base for having responsible and safer sexual relations.

**Where and How to Teach**

This is a critical competency for survival and success. It is too broad a topic to cover in the same way as other competencies in this handbook. There are often excellent local resource people and materials available to help teach this competency. Likely sources for information are your local department of public health, hospitals, neighborhood health clinics, the board of education, and AIDS research or action organizations.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

It is never too early in the program to begin educating the young people in this area. The information can be mastered within the first two months of the program cycle.

**How to Measure Achievement**

This competency does not dictate behavior. It only measures knowledge. It is hoped that knowledge will influence responsible behavior. Simple tests, written or verbal, can measure what an individual knows in this area. One hundred percent accuracy on factual questions must be the standard. This is a potentially life-threatening area and one error in knowledge can be fatal. In addition to a factual test, the
student needs to be able to accurately explain to someone else the following:

- How a baby is conceived
- How pregnancy can be prevented
- How AIDS or other STDs can be prevented
Leadership Competency 6

Can Demonstrate Readiness to Secure and Hold a Job

Competency

Can demonstrate readiness to secure and hold a job.

Purpose and Uses

Economic self-reliance of each participant is a key goal of Youthbuild and of the participants themselves. Further leadership depends on being able to provide a living for self and family. This competency prepares the individual to hold a job. This preparation will also teach additional skills of researching, résumé writing, interviewing, punctuality, and planning a career.

Where and How to Teach

The entire Youthbuild program is designed to teach this broad competency. However, there are specific world-of-work curricula available from many sources that can be taught systemically during classroom time in conjunction with the holistic experience provided by the context of the construction site and overall program.

Time Frame for Achieving Competency

The young person must know how to secure and hold a job by the end of the program. This competency needs to be emphasized especially during the last two months.

How to Measure Achievement

Before the participant is sent for a job interview, he or she must have:

- Prepared a resume
- Researched at least one job
- Participated in at least one workshop on job interviewing
- Participated in at least one individual counseling session on how he or she plans to succeed in a new job
- Achieved 95% attendance and punctuality during the previous three months
Leadership Competency 7

Can Listen Well to Others

Competency

Can listen well to others in class, meetings, and on the site.

Purpose and Uses

Listening is a skill that we practice every day of our lives, but it is also a privilege that we sometimes take for granted. Learning how to listen is a large part of being an effective leader. In a group, the quality of listening greatly affects the group’s work. Developing listening skills can help a person in love relationships, with children, with school situations, and on the job.

Putting emphasis on good listening will have side benefits in the program itself. The more individuals practice listening well to each other, the more communication and respect increase. Throughout the program, an atmosphere conducive to learning is created.

Where to Teach

This competency should be emphasized throughout the program. Good listening needs to be the consistent expectation. The teaching suggestions below can most easily be done in the classroom setting, but can be practiced everywhere, every day.

How to Teach

Listening is a complex skill. People have different types and levels of listening skills. Furthermore, for any one person, listening is different from situation to situation, depending on many factors such as:

- How tired or alert, stressed or energized the listener is
- How much attention the listener gives
- How important the listener judges the information
- What emotional tone comes with the information (e.g., anger or love)
- What else is on the listener’s mind
- How much other noise is in the listener’s environment
- How the listener feels about the source of communication (e.g., car-
ing or indifferent)

- What the listener was taught to listen for (e.g., content or feelings)
- Whether or not the listener thinks the information is important

A person can be in a room with the TV blasting, small children laughing noisily, people arguing, sirens wailing outside, and still be listening deeply and participating in a focused conversation. Or, conversely, a person can be attempting to listen to a slow passage of music in an otherwise quiet room, but be so distracted or obsessed with his or her own thoughts that he or she won’t hear the music.

For our purposes, the skill of listening can only be measured by noting how accurately a person can respond to, act on, repeat, or paraphrase what has been said. The performance goal for “listening well” is being able to report back with 85% accuracy. The exercises and teaching suggestions are geared toward this goal.

This competency can be taught in conjunction with Competency 3—Can Manage Anger Constructively, Competency 8—Can Take Useful Notes, and Competency 9—Can Use Group Process Skills.

**Teaching Suggestions**

- In a group, discuss reasons why it is important to use good listening skills. Then have students think of situations when they felt someone wasn’t listening. It is important for them to understand why these situations produced feelings of frustration. Role plays demonstrating good listening attitudes and poor listening attitudes might be appropriate. This will lay the groundwork for practicing good listening skills.

- Brainstorm answers to the question: “How can you tell when people are really listening to you?” List responses and discuss.

- Set up a series of listening exercises in which the goal is to report back what the listener heard with increasing accuracy. Sample exercises follow.

- Break into pairs. Person A tells person B about his family members: names, ages, and relationships to each other. Person B then repeats back what he heard to Person A. The pair estimates percent of accuracy. Repeat process until report is 100% accurate. Then switch: Person B tells A, and so on. Gather pairs back together and ask what they noticed about listening, what made it hard (or easy) to get 100% the first time.

  There will be variation because some people had larger families, so there is more to remember; or some people speak in a more organized manner, making it easier to understand; and so on.

  Repeat variations on this exercise often.

- Read a short story (one or two pages) to the class, asking them to listen. Ask for three or four volunteers to tell the story as best they can
remember it. Ask the class to estimate the accuracy. Repeat with several other stories. (A storyline helps the readers listen to and remember information.)

- Read a set of directions out loud to the class, and ask for volunteers to repeat back the directions. For example: “Tell Mark, Jose, Felicia, and Tina to meet us at 103rd and Lexington at 9:30 a.m. sharp. Tell them to bring lunch, a swimming suit, and $7.45 for the bus.” There are ten facts in this statement. The accuracy can be measured exactly. Ask each person to make up such a fact statement, which they can ask the class. Have fun with it. Begin with a short list of simple facts (even the above example might be too many facts for your specific group) that is not impossible to remember. The point is to train the listening ear, not the memory.

As the group succeeds with simple lists, move to more complicated sentences. For example: “Tell the Congressman that the press conference begins at 1:00 p.m. He will speak after the mayor and before the senator. It will either be at City Hall or at Dudley Community Center. He needs to call Lorna Doone before 10:45 a.m. to find out the exact location. His car will be waiting for him in Parking Lot C at 12:15 p.m.”

A variation is to have the group break into pairs, listen to the directions (or the short stories, as above), then take turns telling the partner what they heard, and estimating together the degree of accuracy.

- During a controversial discussion or even an argument between two people, stop and ask people to repeat what they heard, while avoiding interpretations of what was said. For example, if the group has had a women's group and a men's group, ask the women to report back first with the men listening. Tell the men that after the report, they will be asked to tell the women first what they heard (not how they feel about what they heard, which might follow). This alerts them to listen differently. It also tends to increase the communication.

- Play a short video documentary history about a topic of interest. Prepare the group for listening well by saying that they will be asked to give a summary of the main points after viewing it. You could also have a brief written test prepared as a way to measure how much was heard (and retained). View it a second time to correct any gaps or misinformation from the first viewing. Repeat as often as needed. Periodically repeat the process with other audio or video tapes.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

This competency should be introduced as close to the beginning of the program as possible. The earlier the program gives attention to developing good lis-
listening skills among the participants, the sooner those skills will show up in the classroom, worksite, and general relationships. The time at which each individual achieves 85% accuracy in most listening exercises will differ from person to person.

**How to Measure Achievement**

The goal is consistent achievement of 85% accuracy for information a listener has heard. Simple verbal and written tests can be administered to measure this listening skill.
Leadership Competency 8

Can Take Useful Notes

**Competency**

Can take useful notes in class, in a meeting, or on the site.

**Purpose and Uses**

Taking notes is a necessary skill for getting the main points of a verbal or written presentation. It is used to record decisions, summarize key ideas, and gather relevant information. Learning how to take useful notes is helpful for the rest of a person’s life—taking notes in class, getting information about job possibilities and qualifications from a presentation, doing research, or helping with community events.

**Where to Teach**

It is most natural to teach this in the classroom throughout the year. The format suggested below could be used two or three times on material the teacher is covering.

- Students can be asked to take notes at guest speaker presentations and then go over them in class
- Students can take notes at Youthbuild “Community Meetings,” record the important points, decisions, and assignments and go over them in class
- When a construction site supervisor gives a talk on a new construction topic, the students can take notes

**How to Teach**

Give students some basic information.

**Different Kinds of Note-Taking**

There are many ways to take notes. You can try to record everything that was said from beginning to end. You can put down the key points. You can make an outline of important ideas. You can report by categories like a) decisions made, b) responsibilities assigned, c) reports made, d) next meeting time and place.
**Hints for Taking Good Notes**

- Listen for key topics, or for what the speaker or writer stresses
- Underline important points
- Record decisions made and any key times, places, or dates mentioned
- Ask yourself “What is the most important point?”
- Record the name of the speaker for future reference
- Briefly outline items and use key words to remind you of whole ideas
- Write out fuller notes after the presentation

**Practice Note-Taking Format**

After going over the information above, give the students a five-minute talk on a topic. Ask them to take notes. Then ask each student to read back his or her notes. Be sure to praise whatever notes the person took.

Repeat this process several times. Each repetition will produce better, more inclusive notes and the information about the topic will be more fully absorbed.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

Begin teaching note-taking skills within the first month and ensure students practice these skills throughout the program.

**How to Measure Achievement**

Students can demonstrate the competency in many different ways, but here is one suggestion: A student takes notes on a short, five-minute talk—either live or taped. Notes are read either by instructor or by a small peer group. They must be legible and coherent and accurately report 90% of the key points of the talk.
Leadership Competency 9

Can Use Group Process Skills

**Competency**

Can explain and participate in the following five group process methods: brainstorming, equal time, go-arounds, the twice-once rule, and two-way or three-way sharing.

**Purpose and Uses**

Being able to take part in these basic group process methods will help any group discussion or meeting go better, help the person and the group achieve its goals, help each individual feel respected and valued, and build unity in the whole group. These results are useful in every aspect of the program.

**Where to Teach**

These five skills can be taught in most parts of the program. They should be introduced during orientation, setting the standards for constructive and productive group discussions.

They can be formally taught in the classroom setting, but practiced everywhere: class discussions, community meetings, Policy Committee meetings, worksite meetings, counseling groups, and lunch time discussion groups.

Programs that emphasize group process skills early on reap the benefits of higher level thinking, more mutual respect, greater participation, wiser decision making, and better learning among the young people.

**How to Teach**

Below are brief descriptions of the five group process techniques.

**Brainstorming**

Most of us are familiar with this tool for generating a lot of ideas in a short time. The process has some basic rules: express whatever comes to your mind about the topic with no self-censoring, no comments from other people, and no judgments. Write all ideas up on newsprint, no matter how seemingly wild or weird, encourage people to think fresh and fast, build on what others say, take turns, limit the time, and have fun. After brainstorming, narrow down the list of ideas.
**Equal Time**

When dealing with controversial issues an effective method to use is equal time. Each person gets to speak for a limited but equal number of minutes on the topic, before there is open discussion. Group members can speak in random order but only for the allotted time. Often the group as a whole will put out all the pros and cons through this process, so no one has to feel it is up to him or her to say everything, and everyone can feel impressed with how well the group is functioning as a whole.

**Go-Around**

When things get heated and the meeting becomes a dialogue between two or three people, this leaves everyone else out and raises tension. If this occurs, call for a “go-around.” Ask for a volunteer or pick a person to start, and then go around the room to give each person a chance to speak on the topic. If you are limited in time, then use an equal time go-around.

The go-around process accomplishes several positive things. It gives everyone a chance to be heard, not just the dominant ones. It allows the heated ones to cool off while they listen to other people’s thinking. It allows everyone to relax and listen more since they know they will get their turn. It usually produces a higher quality discussion than an emotionally-charged process does.

**The Twice-Once Rule**

This means, “no one speaks twice before everyone else has spoken once.” Explain that everyone has important things to say, and the group needs a structure that allows everyone to be heard without having to jump in or interrupt. With practice, the group members begin to monitor each other, reminding each other when they have already spoken.

**Two-Way or Three-Way Sharing**

Break the group into smaller groups of two or three, and ask each person to take a turn speaking. This can be an “equal time” turn where each person gets a specified amount of time to speak, or it can be a back and forth sharing. Some questions that can be used are:

- What did you learn/hear/feel in the whole group so far?
- What did you think as you listened to . . . ?
- What are the key points in the presentation so far?
- Where do you agree or disagree with the speaker?

Sharing like this in small groups allows more people to speak and be heard. It often helps people to clarify their thinking by saying it out loud, or to vent some feelings in private that might be disruptive or inappropriate to vent in the whole group.


**Practicing These Five Group Process Skills**

There are two parts to achieving this competency: learning to participate in each skill and explaining each one. (A third, higher level skill is learning how to facilitate each one.) Teaching methods could include the following:

- Give an oral description of one of the five, then demonstrate it immediately by setting up the process. You can either use the subject that the group needs to address or pick a topic of interest. Proceed through all five in a similar fashion. Ask them to “pair up” to repeat what they have just learned.
- You can demonstrate many of the five at once, for example, by picking a controversial topic like “How to build good relationships between men and women.”
  - After some open discussion, institute an *equal time go-around*.
  - Ask people to break into *pairs* to talk about the topic.
  - Then ask people to *brainstorm* about all the ways that men and women could build good relationships and good communication between them.
- Students can match the name of the skill with the short written description.
- The more the students participate in these processes, the more they will internalize their use. Explaining each one will be a natural step.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

This competency can be learned within the first two months of the program.

**How to Measure Achievement**

This competency can be measured by the following methods:

- The student can be asked to explain each of the five in oral or written form, probably by the classroom teacher or leadership developer.
- The student will be observed over time to evaluate whether he or she is able to participate in each group process. Any staff person who observes the student successfully participate in a group process can check off that particular skill.
Leadership Competency 10
Can Lead An Effective Small Group Discussion

Competency

Can lead an effective small group discussion.

Purpose and Uses

People commonly find themselves in small group discussions—at home with their families, on the court playing basketball, on the street with their buddies, at a restaurant with their friends, and in school with other students.

Any person can help a group have a fruitful discussion by knowing some basic discussion skills. The ability to lead an effective small group discussion is important for a good leader.

Where to Teach

This competency can be taught in the classroom or through involvement in the Community Leadership Committee or Policy Committee and practiced throughout the program.

How to Teach

Discussion Versus Meeting

Discuss the difference between a discussion (in which people exchange views on a topic) and a meeting (in which people strive to accomplish tasks, make decisions, or attend to some business). A discussion does not need to reach consensus or lead anywhere (although it could). There is often no agenda, and it is usually informal.

Guidelines for Leading a Discussion

Have the group brainstorm to think of elements of leading an effective small group discussion. Ask them to identify the things that make a good discussion and the things that make a poor discussion. Write all their responses on newsprint. Their list will probably include the following commonly reported items:

- Respecting people's ideas
• Not attacking or criticizing a person
• Everybody participating
• Taking turns talking
• Nobody dominating and squeezing others out
• Really listening
• Feeling safe to say what you really think
• Encouragement from the group to express your thinking

Then ask them to think of ways they can deal with problems that may arise during the discussion.

Discuss the following simple guidelines for leading a small group discussion:

• Pull the group together with an opening. If it is a new group, make sure everyone has introduced themselves. If it is a group that knows each other, do a quick check-in. Ask: “How is everyone? Does anyone have any news they want to share before we get started?”
• Explain the topic to be discussed.
• Ask people to listen respectfully and not to interrupt.
• Make sure that each person gets a chance to speak. Individuals may decide to pass, but they need to be offered the opportunity to talk.
• Try to keep the discussion from being dominated by only one or two people. Use some of the methods mentioned in Competency 9—Can Use Group Process Skills.
• As facilitator, you may want to speak on the topic yourself, which is fine. Just be sure you are taking turns with everyone else, and not using your position as facilitator to speak more than others.
• Be aware of the time limits for discussion, if there are any.
• Close the discussion by asking everyone, in turn, to briefly:
  • Share one thing they learned in the discussion
  • Say one idea they want to continue to explore
  • Appreciate the person next to them
  • Validate or thank the group as a whole

Simply put, there are three parts to leading a small group discussion:

• An opening to focus the group
• The discussion itself, maximizing participation
• A closing to summarize, or unify, or appreciate the discussion and the people


**Practice Leading Discussions**

The real learning comes through doing. Thus, the objective is to set up situations in which young people can practice leading small group discussions. Here is one format.

- Ask the group to make a list of topics that are interesting and possibly controversial.
- Have the whole group determine which one(s) they would like to discuss.
- Break into small groups of four to five people.
- Ask for someone in each group to volunteer to be the discussion leader.
- Give the discussion a time limit.
- The discussion leader proceeds according to the format described above:
  - Opening
  - Discussion
  - Closing
- Before returning to the whole group, ask the groups to give specific feedback to their discussion leader: What did he or she do well? What could he or she do better next time?
- Return to the whole group and share the experiences together. Ask students what they learned.

Over the course of the following weeks, repeat this process until each student has had the opportunity to be a discussion leader.

From then on, organize periodic rap groups or small group discussions so that the students can continue to practice their skills.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

This competency should be taught within the first six months of the program and practiced consistently until every participant can lead an effective small group meeting.

**How to Measure Achievement**

Have the students evaluate themselves and each other on a quarterly basis to measure their confidence and skill level in leading small group discussions. Also allow a short time at the end of each student-led small group discussion to give the leader feedback. Criteria for passing this competency should clearly indicate that the student can:
• Open and close a discussion
• Guide the discussion so that participants feel respected
• Interrupt a speaker who is dominating the discussion or putting someone down
• Give everyone a chance to speak
• Be aware of the time in order to bring the discussion to a close

Program-wide meetings of the whole Youthbuild community can be structured to include small group discussions in which participants take turns practicing how to lead the discussion.
Leadership Competency 11

Can Participate in Self-Estimation

Competency

Can participate in the process of self-estimation as a way to evaluate one’s progress.

Purpose and Uses

Everyone needs ways to evaluate their own progress in class, on the worksite and in the program as a whole. Unfortunately most evaluation comes from someone else in the form of criticism. By learning how to do self-estimation, individuals can look at their own accomplishments and shortcomings as well as get constructive feedback from their peers.

Where to Teach

This competency can best be taught in the classroom, then reinforced and practiced in other parts of the program.

How to Teach

First, it is crucial for students to understand the importance of self-estimation as a process for improving their lives. Talk about how it can sometimes be difficult to receive feedback and that they should expect to have feelings about it. Explain that these feelings are understandable, based on the general lack of respect that they have received throughout their lives. To start students thinking well about the process, ask questions like:

- How do you like to get feedback on your performance?
- What makes it hard for you to receive feedback?
- How do you give feedback?
- What do you want people to know about before they give you feedback?
- How will feedback improve your life in general?

Have each person tell the group what they think they did well during the last week. Because it is often hard to remember all of the progress or the successes we have had, allow enough time for them to make a list if they need to. Make sure that they really think about this so that they do not shortchange the progress they made. A
thorough review of all the positive things is healthy and keeps things in perspective.

Have them go through the same process with things that they would like to improve in the next week. It is important to have the participants think about why they feel they didn't succeed in accomplishing a goal so that they can change their actions for the next time. It also helps them think well about the support that they will need to improve on the issue.

After each participant finishes the process, the others in the group talk about what they think that person did well that week. Encourage thoughtful feedback about the person's capabilities.

When this is complete, have the group give suggestions about what they can do to improve.

**Helpful Tips**

- Let participants have a few minutes to write down some notes about their performance before beginning.
- Stress the importance of the group giving full attention to the speaker.
- Make sure that the evaluation stays on work that is relevant to the group. Make it clear that they are supposed to be evaluating people's performance and not people's personalities, beliefs, or lifestyles.

Questions might include:

- How has my performance as a class member been?
- How have I done on the worksite in the last week?
- How have I handled my responsibilities as a Policy Committee or Community Leadership Committee member?
- How has my leadership been this last week?
- How did I handle my job as tool chief?

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

This competency should be taught within the first several months of the program and practiced regularly.

**How to Measure Achievement**

The competency states that an individual can participate in the process. This means both parts: doing a self-evaluation listing strengths and areas needing improvement and giving others similar constructive feedback. It will be a subjective measurement on the part of a staff or the student's peer group as to whether the student has adequately participated. Participation in more than one self-estimation is required.
Leadership Competency 12

**Can Define the Functions, Skills, and Attitudes of Effective Leaders**

**Competency**

Can define the functions, skills, and attitudes of an effective leader.

**Purpose and Uses**

It is crucial for a young person to distinguish between effective and ineffective leadership, as well as constructive and destructive leadership. It is important for all participants in a Youthbuild program to develop their ideas about what functions a leader has, what an effective leader does, and what skills a leader has or needs to develop. Most trainees can generate a solid list of functions, skills, and attitudes. Once established, this list can become a reference point for assessing themselves and marking their progress. It also helps the group select the best leaders for the Policy Committee or other program leadership roles.

**Where to Teach**

As indicated above, this competency can be introduced in many settings.

- A discussion should take place during orientation in order to establish some key ideas about leaders and leadership.
- A formal workshop process as described below should be scheduled during the first month before the election of the Policy Committee.
- Such a workshop could be covered in the classroom, at a community meeting, or during a specific leadership training.
- The Policy Committee and Community Leadership Committee can use the process of leadership self-estimation (Competency 11) periodically.

**How to Teach**

This competency can be taught in a formal workshop or training with all of the participants divided into small groups, or with an ongoing, stable group. Here is one possible workshop.

**Leadership Concepts and Skills Workshop (75 min.)**

- Brainstorm: “Who are leaders you know of?” Ask the group to list
people they think of as leaders.

- **Qualities and skills of leaders:** On a flipchart make two columns, one labeled "Qualities," the other "Skills." Ask the group what qualities and skills a leader has and write the responses on the flipchart.

- **Self-assessment of leadership qualities and skills:** Give each person a 3 x 5 card and ask them to list the leadership qualities and skills they possess. When finished writing, have students pair up and read their cards to each other. Then ask three or four people to read their cards to the whole group.

- **Role play positive and negative leadership:** Tell the group that these skills and qualities can be used positively or negatively. Ask for two groups of volunteers, three or four students in each group. Ask the groups to prepare a short skit, one group showing an example of negative leadership, the other of positive leadership. Give the groups five minutes. While waiting, do the case study below. When the groups are ready, do the negative role play first. Ask the whole group what leadership qualities they observed. Do the same for the positive leadership role play.

- **Case study:** While the role play groups are preparing, ask the group what leadership skills a drug dealer has. Then ask what kinds of positive jobs or types of work a person with these skills could do.

- **Definition of good leadership:** Examine the three “M”s of leadership: motive (why), mission (goal), method (how); and use positive and negative examples of each. Examples are a drug dealer and an organizer for a gang peace group. Define good leadership: “Good leadership is taking responsibility to make things go right for yourself, your family, the program, and the community.”

- **The role of young people:** Give examples of young people’s contributions to social change. Ask two or three young people to share their leadership role in school or youth groups and discuss the motive, mission, and methods of each.

- **Appreciations and feedback:** Ask for appreciations for facilitators of this session and for three or four comments from students about what they learned. Ask students to spend a few minutes writing down their thoughts on this topic (optional).

**Essential Steps for Ongoing Groups**

If there is an ongoing leadership group like the Policy Committee or Community Leadership Committee, there are two more essential steps to this process that can lead to a more cohesive group. A self-estimation as taught in Competency 11, applied to one’s leadership role, would be done as follows:
• Ask everyone to take 10 or 15 minutes to write down their own strong points and areas in which they need improvement to become truly fine leaders, using the functions, skills, and attitudes of a leader as a guide.

• Have each member present his or her self-evaluation and receive feedback from the group. This process takes some time. In a group of eight, each person could take up to 20 to 25 minutes.

This focuses the members on their own development, and gives them feedback from the group regarding where they stand. Insecurities in groups are often based on uncertainty about what other people think of us. It is usually a relief to find out what people think. The facilitator should make sure that everyone receives constructive feedback. Each person should begin with the positive feedback and then make suggestions for improvements or next steps. It is always important to ensure that each person giving feedback makes positive observations, not just criticisms.

In an ordinary group, this process enhances the level of closeness and honesty as well as the consciousness of effective leadership skills and attitudes. It should be done at least once a year with the group. A good place to do it is at a leadership retreat.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

Since these are key ideas in the development of leadership, this competency should be achieved within the first six weeks of the program.

**How to Measure Achievement**

Students should be asked to list the functions, skills, and attitudes of effective leaders, according to the list drawn up by the group.
Leadership Competency 13

**Can Effectively Use the Phone System**

**Competency**

Can effectively use the phone system.

**Purpose and Uses**

Using the phone system is a good way of getting information. It can help in job hunting, researching, comparison shopping, finding a doctor or dentist, and locating a day care center. Often students are less able to do this in the beginning than we expect.

**Where to Teach**

This competency can easily be taught as part of the classroom curriculum. However, staff can reinforce this by asking young people to use the phone to find something out for the construction site, the Policy Committee, the Community Leadership Committee, the classroom, or a field trip.

**How to Teach**

We must prepare participants to use information systems that are becoming more technological. This competency should also be fun to learn.

- Put together a list of items that can be used as a “Scavenger Hunt Through the Phone System.” Let participants know that they will have to use the phone book, directory assistance, and the phone company. Some examples for the list are:
  - Finding out how to change long-distance carriers
  - Comparing the rates of three different long-distance carriers
  - Calling directory assistance to locate several business numbers and private home numbers
  - Locating the nearest place to get a driver’s license test
  - Learning how to use different information services to find a doctor for a particular purpose
  - Locating a plumber in the neighborhood
  - Finding out the right office of the Internal Revenue Service to get the
tax forms that they need

- Understanding the difference between the white and yellow pages

- Divide the students into small groups. Give each group a set amount of time to find the answers using only the phone system. (Have a phone line available for each group, if possible.) Have each team report their finds to the large group. Discuss and solve problems.

- Repeat this process several times over the course of several months.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

The sooner a person learns to be competent with the phone system, the more effective she can be in handling life. Therefore, the program should teach this competency within the first month.

**How to Measure Achievement**

Each participant must demonstrate proficiency using the phone system by completing an individualized project such as the one suggested above. Some of this information might be used to make a resource manual for the program.
Leadership Competency 14

**Can Find Information Through Researching**

**Competency**

Can find information through researching.

**Purpose and Uses**

Knowing how to research is a critical tool for gaining information. It is important to understand how to get the information, resources, and tools necessary for our existence within our increasingly technological world.

**Where to Teach**

This competency can best be learned as a part of the classroom curriculum, but can be reinforced by asking participants to research real information needed for the construction site or for a job search.

**How to Teach**

Being able to effectively research and find information requires the use of many different skills, such as brainstorming, interviewing, critical analysis, communication, problem solving, and note taking. The process should be broken into two parts:

1. Understanding where to find the information through researching
2. How to get the information

Competency 8—*Can Take Useful Notes* and Competency 13—*Can Effectively Use the Phone System* are useful in doing research.

Select a subject that is important for the participants to learn more about (e.g., housing laws, energy efficient construction, college admission information, or where to get funding for entrepreneurial ventures) and have them brainstorm about possible sources of information.

Remember to state the rules of brainstorming: there are no wrong answers and no one should judge anyone else’s ideas. Youthbuild students have consistently been told that they don’t know how to think, so the process for having them open their minds to all possibilities is crucial and can be extensive. Be patient if they get stuck and be prepared to throw out different ideas to restimulate their thinking. The
students could be doubting their own intelligence, so it is important to support them fully throughout the process.

Divide students into pairs and allow them to select the issue they want to research. It is important to have them in pairs so that they can have a partner to brainstorm with if they get stuck. Avoid groups larger than three because then it becomes easier for one member to not assist the group. Have them create a plan for how they will research the topic, then work backwards to find out the best way to find the information. Remind them that they can interview people in the neighborhood, gather information through the internet, watch videos, read magazines, and read books. If the first person they interview doesn't have the information, remind students to ask for suggestions about where to find it.

It might be necessary to develop phone scripts for their conversations and conduct a training about how to use the phone system. (See Competency 13—Can Effectively Use the Phone System.)

Arrange a trip to the local library, where participants will get a tour of all of the different resources as well as an understanding of the different coding systems and why they exist. Have them practice decoding some of the resource books so they get an understanding of how the system works.

Allow students a set amount of time to complete their research and have periodic check-ins to see how it is going. Have them document every step they take to find the information.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

There is no set time frame for the completion of this competency. Because it is tied to some of the other competencies, it might be good to teach them together.

**How to Measure Achievement**

The most important question to have the participants answer is whether or not they feel they can apply these skills. Another important point is to be sure to let them know how and what they will be evaluated on to achieve this competency so that they are clear about what is expected of them.

Give each group a “Discovery List.” This list can include things like:

- What is the process to get a drivers’ license?
- How and where do I register to vote? Where do I vote?
- How do I find out information on the college, technical school, or trade school that I want to attend?
- How do I use the phone book to find a good doctor?

This information can be used to create a resource directory for the program. If this expectation is laid out in the beginning of the process the trainees will feel successful upon the completion of the project.
Leadership Competency 15

**Can Give a Basic Explanation of Government**

**Competency**

Can give a basic explanation of how local, state, and federal governments work.

**Purpose and Uses**

An essential ingredient to becoming an active citizen is learning how government works. Such knowledge can help people influence decisions, improve the community, organize for better services, and make or change laws.

**Where to Teach**

This competency can be taught in the classroom and with visits to and from government officials. It can be taught by the director, teacher, or leadership developer.

**How to Teach**

Following are some suggestions about how this competency can be taught:

- Learn how the Youthbuild legislation was written, passed in Congress, signed by the president, and assigned to HUD.
- Learn how support from citizens can influence the government.
- Have lectures and discussions about government structures and processes.
- Study who's who within the government.
- Pose a specific issue that a community could face and find a way to take action through the local government (e.g., asking the city to install a traffic light at a dangerous intersection, ending the dumping of toxic waste in neighborhoods, or getting the city to renovate and maintain buildings in low-income neighborhoods).
- Study the referenda on the local ballot and understand how they will affect the community.
- Role play specific people, situations, or jobs related to government. Have each participant find out about a different government job and answer questions...
like: How does this fit into the big picture? Does this job exist at a different level of government? How would the same job be different at another level?

- Learn how the local government develops its budget and attend public hearings on the budget.
- Adapt various games, such as Trivial Pursuit or Jeopardy, to increase the level of knowledge while making the subject fun.
- Understand charts of local, state, and federal government from brochures available from these governments.

**Time Frame for Achieving Competency**

The last six months of the program are a good time to teach this competency. Six months into the program, the Policy Committee and the Community Leadership Committee should be fully functioning, providing the participants with an understanding of why this topic is so important. In addition, other competencies, such as discussion, reporting, researching, and writing have already been taught, all of which are necessary to master this competency.

**How to Measure Achievement**

Oral or written tests can be an effective way to measure achievement of this competency. Each student must be able to explain the basics of each of the three levels of government with 90% accuracy.
### Leadership Development Competency Completion Report

#### Trainee Name: ___________________________  Enrollment Date: ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Completed</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Can keep and use a weekly schedule and calendar for the entire program year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Can set and achieve personal development goals.</td>
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<td>3. Can manage anger constructively.</td>
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<td>4. Can make and use a personal budget.</td>
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<td>5. Can explain the basics of sexual reproduction, pregnancy prevention, and AIDS and STD prevention.</td>
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<td>6. Can demonstrate readiness to secure and hold a job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Can listen well to others in class, at meetings, and on site.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Can take useful notes in class, in a meeting, or on the worksite.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Can explain and participate in the following group process methods: brainstorming, two-way or three-way sharing, equal time, go-arounds, and the twice-once rule.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Can lead an effective small group discussion.</td>
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<td>11. Can participate in self-estimation as a way to evaluate one's progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Can define the functions, skills, and attitudes of effective leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Can effectively use the phone system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Can find information through researching</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Can explain the basics of how local, state, and federal governments work.</td>
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Other comments or trainee leadership development achievements or accomplishments in program: ___________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Community Leadership Committee Handbook

photo: Jane Whitehouse
Leadership in the Community

While young people join the Youthbuild program to learn a skill, acquire more education, and prepare for a job, some young people want to become involved in serving their communities in ways that go beyond building low-income housing. Some Youthbuild programs are also AmeriCorps programs, which put a great emphasis on community service. Youthbuild programs have provided many opportunities for community involvement.

- YouthBuild Philadelphia created a service corps of its graduates who run an after-school center for 300 children a day doing tutoring, recreation, arts and crafts, and service.

- YouthBuild Atlantic City organized a citywide youth conference on crime and violence, drugs and AIDS, homelessness, and jobs. About 200 youth attended. Youth did the outreach to other youth, got many other organizations to co-sponsor, secured the conference site, solicited contributions of food and materials from local businesses, lined up the conference speakers and the workshop leaders, designed the publicity, and facilitated the program. It was a huge success. In a concerted drive, the young people also registered hundreds of young people to vote.

- YouthBuild St. Louis organized a food drive during the Thanksgiving period. It also assisted local flood relief efforts in 1993. The youth wrote a proposal, got funded, and produced a video about YouthBuild St. Louis. Youth have testified at the state house on youth issues, made presentations at city schools, and served as keynote speakers at various city and state functions.

- YouthBuild Tallahassee youth led a year-long series of presentations to junior and senior high school classes on the benefits of staying in school and off drugs. The youth also hosted an open house for local and state officials and participated in community service projects by making repairs to the homes of senior citizens and collaborating with the Tallahassee Housing Foundation during the annual spring Florida Fix program.

- YouthBuild Gary (IN) refurbished a little league dugout for youth in the neighborhood, established a speakers’ bureau, spoke in junior and senior high schools, and visited senior citizens.

- YouthBuild Sandtown, in Baltimore, convened a neighborhood youth conference from which they organized 150 youth into action committees to address different community issues by making policy recommendations.

- YouthBuild Boston created YouthBuild Teens, hiring six of its graduates as interns to run programs in the community: a football league, a tutoring program and an arts and crafts center.
Community Leadership Committee—A General Description

Some Youthbuild programs organize these kinds of community activities through a Community Leadership Committee. A Community Leadership Committee is a group of young people who come together to organize and carry out activities. These activities provide them with opportunities for leadership and for contributing to their community through community service and community action. It is primarily youth driven but is sponsored and supported by the Youthbuild program. This is distinct from the Policy Committee that deals with concerns within the program itself.

A Community Leadership Committee can have any number of members; the members volunteer to serve rather than being elected. The members can be both current Youthbuild program participants and graduates.

The Community Leadership Committee needs consistent youth leadership in the form of officers or a chairperson. It also needs a staff support person who initially trains the members, helps with the administrative tasks of the group, and provides personal and programmatic support, as needed.

The members themselves determine the focus and intensity of their work in the community. Some Community Leadership Committees have focused primarily on community service, while others have focused on participation in decision making that affects their community.

Relationship of the Community Leadership Committee to the Rest of the Program

Because many of these kinds of activities require substantial program support, it is essential that the director and staff view the Community Leadership Committee as an integral part of the whole program.

A program needs to focus first on establishing a well-functioning Policy Committee, the leadership structure that deals with internal program issues. After the Policy Committee, a program can turn its attention to developing a Community Leadership Committee. Thus, several months into the first year of the program, after a Policy Committee is functioning effectively, after young people have come to understand and value the program, and after a certain amount of leadership training has occurred, the program can initiate the formation of a Community Leadership Committee. After the first year, it can be an ongoing group that includes alumni.

Benefits of a Community Leadership Committee

A Community Leadership Committee can provide many potential benefits to its members, the program, and the community. For example, it can:
• Expand the number of formal leadership roles available to Youthbuild young people
• Provide a structured way for young people to act on their desire to give back to the community
• Teach an ethic of service and responsibility for those beyond oneself
• Build leadership skills in leading effective meetings, public speaking, researching information, and making good use of the media, depending on the focus of the Community Leadership Committee
• Provide the young people with exposure to experiences they would not otherwise have
• Offer an understanding of how government works
• Be a source of pride for members, the program, and the community
• Be instructive in showing that young people can make a difference

**Community Leadership Committee Structure**

No matter what activities a Community Leadership Committee does in the community, minimally it needs the following elements of organizational structure:

• A regular meeting time and place (at least every two weeks)
• A young person who coordinates the activities
• A staff support person who assists
• A formal tie-in to the Policy Committee (e.g., the chair of the Community Leadership Committee could be a member of the Policy Committee or could regularly report to the Policy Committee)
• A way of keeping the program informed about its activities on a regular basis (e.g., through posted minutes and reports at Youthbuild program meetings)
• Written records of expenses and decisions made
• Written guidelines about membership requirements, behavior, and goals
• A consistent decision-making process (consensus recommended, with majority vote to speed things up when necessary)

Some Community Leadership Committees operate with minimum structure. For example, there might be just a chairperson who thinks about the work of the Community Leadership Committee and moves things forward in cooperation with the staff support person.

Some Community Leadership Committees choose to operate more formally,
using parliamentary procedure and electing officers, in order to prepare the members to function in many types of community organizations and government agencies.

These Community Leadership Committees elect a slate of officers: chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer. It familiarizes people with the functions of different roles. One drawback is that the young people may run for the title rather than for the responsibility. In electing officers, it is important to thoroughly discuss the duties, expectations, and qualifications for each office beforehand. Some committees have delayed elections for several months until they see who is serious and who is not. In the meantime, there is an acting chair, or each member gets a chance to chair a meeting, to spread the leadership experience.

A Community Leadership Committee can also choose to create by-laws and use “Robert’s Rules of Order” to build awareness of the terminology and purposes of these formal procedures that are commonly used in other organizations. It prepares members to be players in community affairs. The danger is that they can spend more time on form than on substance.

**By-laws**

By-laws are a simple set of rules for a Community Leadership Committee that has a formal structure. By-laws include the following points:

- Name of Community Leadership Committee
- Purpose
- Criteria for membership
- Description of officers
- Meeting time (e.g., once a month or when an emergency session is called)
- Governing rule (e.g., consensus ordinarily, except when time pressure does not allow for a full consensus process)
- Method of changing rules (e.g., rules can be changed at any given meeting by a two-thirds majority of the committee members)

When a Community Leadership Committee is first being formed at a program, it is important that the youth members shape the by-laws, with guidance from the staff support person. If the Community Leadership Committee has existed in previous program cycles, then the by-laws should be read by new members as part of their orientation to the Community Leadership Committee.

**Training**

The staff support person should set up a training in how to facilitate effective meetings and use good group process. Hopefully these will have been learned through the basic program, but some basic reminders can help. These include:
• Setting a tone of respect
• Making sure each person gets a chance to speak
• Encouraging ideas
• Keeping order
• Following the agenda
• Getting some agreements for next steps
• Closing the meeting with something positive, such as appreciating each other or the group and making constructive suggestions for improvement

In addition to training to lead effective meetings, Community Leadership Committee members need other trainings, depending on the work focus. For example, a committee that decides to set up a speakers’ bureau to give presentations in local schools will need training in public speaking. A committee trying to get a street light put in at a dangerous intersection will have to learn how the city government works. Many local resources can be called on to do the training if the right person is not already on staff. Here is a brief list of trainings that could be useful for a Community Leadership Committee.

• Public speaking
• How to record minutes
• How to use the telephone system to find information
• Interpersonal communication skills
• Voter registration
• How to write a petition
• Getting to know where I live: Who’s who, and What’s what?
• How to write a business letter
• Understanding the economy of the community and its critical issues
• Community organizing
• How to identify and learn from the positive leaders in the community
• Understanding the role of non-profits in the national and local arenas
• How city, state, and federal governments work
• Understanding the courts and the legal system
• How a local ordinance gets passed
• Using the media
• AIDS awareness and prevention knowledge
• Environmental issues and the community
• Typing and computer skills

Training indicates that the program is serious about helping young leaders develop real skills. Many of these trainings may be part of the overall Youthbuild leadership development or classroom curriculum, and Community Leadership Committee members will get the training along with everyone else. Other trainings will need to be set up especially for the Community Leadership Committee.

Steps in Developing an Effective Community Leadership Committee

Step 1—Conceptualize the Community Leadership Committee

Each Youthbuild program needs to design its own Community Leadership Committee. It is best to engage the staff first so that they will understand and support the role of the Community Leadership Committee as a method of leadership development. If the Community Leadership Committee grows out of the Policy Committee, then the Policy Committee will also help shape it. Once a Community Leadership Committee is operating, the youth members may amend some of the descriptions, procedures, and policies, based on experience, but it is extremely helpful to have a basic structure in place to begin with.

A staff member needs to put this basic description down on paper prior to inauguraling a Community Leadership Committee. In doing so, the following questions are among the ones that need to be answered:

Membership
• Are there any qualifications for being a member? (For example, general attendance level in the program, academic performance, attitude, or behavior standards?)
• What are the requirements for continuing membership? (For example, attendance at 75% of the meetings and willingness to volunteer time.)
• Can people become members at any time or are there certain entry points?
• Can graduates remain part of the Community Leadership Committee? This can be one way graduates can keep their connection with Youthbuild.

Scope of Activities

Suggested activities should mostly come from the committee members, once the committee is organized. Typical activities fall into three broad categories:
• Community service projects such as: tutoring younger children, providing after school programs, working with elderly or homeless people, serving meals in a soup kitchen, helping during environmental crises like earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes.

• Advocacy (registering young people to vote or supporting other causes of concern to you.)

• Community action projects such as: organizing a youth conference, participating in a neighborhood anti-violence campaign, or getting the recreation department to refurbish a playground.

The staff, director, and board of directors should give some thought as to whether there are any activities that it would not or could not support. For example, the program needs to state clearly that its Community Leadership Committee cannot endorse any candidate for political office, nor do work that would benefit any candidate's election, since such activity would jeopardize the program's non-profit status. (As individuals, young people could endorse whomever they choose, but not as a group representing Youthbuild.)

Another question is how far a program is willing to go to support the initiative of its Community Leadership Committee. For example, what if the Community Leadership Committee wanted to organize a boycott against a local merchant because of his discriminatory treatment of young people? Would the program back the committee members up with political contacts, letters to the editor, training on boycott organizing, or outreach to the community? Each case will have to be weighed separately, but raising this kind of question prior to beginning the Community Leadership Committee might prepare the program better. It should be understood that all the group's plans are subject to approval by the director and sponsoring agency.

**Structure and Procedures**

• How often will the Community Leadership Committee meet? (regularly or as needed?)

• Where? (in a space at the Youthbuild site? another place?)

• Will it meet during Youthbuild hours or after hours?

• Will participation be paid or unpaid?

• Who will set the agenda? How? When?

• Who will chair the meetings? Will the chairing rotate?

• For business meetings, is a quorum required to make decisions?

• Will there be officers? If so, what officers? How will they be chosen? When will they be chosen? By whom?

• What will be the relationship of the Community Leadership Committee to the rest of the Youthbuild program?
• How will the work of the Community Leadership Committee be communicated to the whole program? (in formal reports? during community meetings? in the classroom or on the worksite?)

• Where will funds for the Community Leadership Committee work come from?

• Who will be the staff support person and what is his or her role? (administrative? agenda setting? veto or approval of activities? training? getting resources?)

• What authority and accountability will that person have?

• How will the Community Leadership Committee evaluate its work? Measure its success?

Preparation and Training

• How and when will the staff introduce the idea of the Community Leadership Committee to the group?

• What kinds of trainings will be part of the early meetings (for example, chairing meetings, using effective group process, how government works, public speaking, using the phone system to gather information, and making a timeline for a project?)

• Who will do these trainings?

Step 2—Assign a Staff Support Person

There must be a clear understanding that the Community Leadership Committee serves as an educational and action tool to further the leadership development of those young people who volunteer. The program needs to dedicate time, money, and personnel to making a Community Leadership Committee succeed. It requires the active support of the director and other staff.

Designating a Community Leadership Committee staff support person is a key ingredient for a successful Community Leadership Committee. The role is to help the Community Leadership Committee members think about what it is they want to do, help them plan their course of action, and assist them along the way.

Young people generally need a great deal of support. Most of them are not used to being involved in community affairs. They need someone to advocate for them on all fronts, have faith in them to try out new ideas, and dare them to rise to new challenges. As a coach, trainer, mentor, big sister or brother, parent figure, and resource person, it is the staff support person’s job to provide these young men and women with opportunities and experiences which lead to enhanced self-esteem and greater effectiveness.

The specific functions of the staff support person will vary depending on the program and on the activities of that Community Leadership Committee.
However, it is possible to outline some general functions.

Training

The staff support person should ensure that the Community Leadership Committee members receive timely training.

Coaching the Chair

The staff support person needs to meet regularly with the chairperson to help think through the meeting agendas, ask the chair what the next steps are, listen to the chair's ideas and frustrations, and lend confidence and encouragement.

Helping with Administrative Tasks

The staff support person can get the minutes typed and copied, set up meetings between the Community Leadership Committee and the Policy Committee, and do whatever other follow-up work is appropriate.

Getting Resources

The staff support person can also access resources for the Community Leadership Committee that might be more difficult for the youth members to obtain. For example, he or she could make phones available for Community Leadership Committee business, secure a regular meeting space, get money from the program budget, use contacts to reach a government official, and cultivate media support. It is better for members to do these tasks, but the experience or know-how of a staff support person can often be decisive.

The specific functions of the staff support person will vary depending on the program and on the activities of that Community Leadership Committee. “Support” is the key word—meaning to encourage, facilitate, consult, ask questions, check judgment, opens doors, get resources, ensure success, and follow the lead of the young people.

Step 3—Preview the Community Leadership Committee During Orientation

Experience has shown that it can take several months to get a Community Leadership Committee operational. The leadership development coordinator might first mention it during the youth orientation, briefly explaining something like this: “After a couple of months or so in the program, some of you will have the opportunity to get involved in community work outside the Youthbuild program through a committee we call the Community Leadership Committee. It’s voluntary. It gives you a chance to give back to the community, in addition to building housing, to learn new leadership skills, and to do some positive things in the neighborhood.

The group will decide what to focus on. Some possibilities are to tutor
younger children in the local schools, to speak in middle schools about staying off drugs and in school, to work in a local soup kitchen, to visit our representatives at the state capitol to inform them about Youthbuild, and other projects you choose. We’ll come back to this in a month, after you know more about Youthbuild.”

As was stated earlier, it is wise to wait several months to initiate the Community Leadership Committee, so that young people will be familiar enough with the program to know whether or not they want to represent Youthbuild out in the community. The program also needs to be assured that the committee members will reflect well on the program. The Community Leadership Committee will be in the public eye as a Youthbuild-sponsored activity.

**Step 4—Encourage Young People to Take the Lead**

The Community Leadership Committee is led by the youth membership and chaired by a youth. However, it is usually difficult for a single individual to get it started. Ideally you want to encourage several participants to take responsibility and support each other. There are four ways of getting young people to take responsibility for developing a Community Leadership Committee.

- The Policy Committee can initiate the Community Leadership Committee, assigning an interested Policy Committee member to convene it.

- The Community Leadership Committee staff support person, during the early months of the program, can be on the lookout for potential Community Leadership Committee organizers from among the participants—people who show interest in some form of community involvement and can motivate their peers to join them in doing constructive work. The staff support person can think with them about the following kinds of questions:
  - What would you really like to see happen in the community?
  - What issues interest you?
  - How would you like to be of service?
  - What is your vision for a better community?
  - Who else in Youthbuild do you think would like to help improve the community?
  - What could a Community Leadership Committee do?
  - Would you be willing to talk to some of the young people about forming a Community Leadership Committee?
  - When and where should we have our first meeting?
  - What should be on the agenda?

- The staff support person can hold a first meeting (see below), let a Community Leadership Committee form, and let the natural leaders and eventual chairperson emerge from the group.
• The director can convene the entire student body, explain the mis-
  sion of the Community Leadership Committee, and meet with volun-
  teers who want to get it started.

Step 5—Hold an Information Session with All the Young People

Hold a special meeting, or take part of a Youthbuild program community meet-
ning to discuss the idea and stir up interest. It is possible for the staff support person to
convene this information session as a way of seeing who might be interested enough
to be the organizer. However, if you can get the organizer first and have the organizer
lead the information meeting, the notion might be better received.

• Explain the purpose of the Community Leadership Committee and
  some of the initial projects or activities that the organizer and staff
  support person discussed.

• Emphasize that membership is voluntary, that some Community
  Leadership Committee work may be done outside of Youthbuild pro-
  gram hours.

• Talk a little about the potential benefits to the community and to the
  members.

• Emphasize that it needs young adults who want to make a difference.

• Mention that the Community Leadership Committee will include
  leadership training, a chance to learn more about the way the com-
  munity works, possible opportunities to talk to the media, meet with
  elected officials, and make the youth voice heard.

• Answer questions.

• Announce the first meeting and get a show of hands of interested
  people (or pass around a sign-up sheet).

Before the actual meeting, contact each of the interested people and personal-
ly invite them.

Step 6—Hold the First Official Meeting

The first meeting is important. If the meeting is a good one, people will come
back. If it goes poorly, you have to start over with strikes against you. Here are
some things to keep in mind.

• The staff support person should plan the agenda with the youth
  organizers ahead of time. The agenda needs to be interesting and
  engaging, with the emphasis on drawing out ideas for action or activ-
  ities that committee members want to do. It should also include
  some enjoyable, group-building exercises. The agenda should be
  written and posted.

• The youth organizers should chair, if they are in place by then. The staff
support person should help the young people facilitate the meeting.

• Someone should record important decisions and ideas for future reference.

• Set a time and place for the next meeting.

• Announce an interesting outside event, trip, or visit already set up for the near future. This will show prospective members that the Community Leadership Committee can be fun, interesting, and meaningful right from the start.

• Have food available.

**Step 7—Report Back to the Program**

Within a few days of the first Community Leadership Committee meeting, the organizers should present a report on the meeting to the whole program. Use it as an opportunity to announce the next meeting and an upcoming event or trip, and encourage new people to come.

**Step 8—Begin Regular Meetings and Activities**

The Community Leadership Committee should meet regularly, at least every two weeks. The first series of meetings needs to include some combination of the following:

• Trainings in meeting facilitation and good group process

• Discussions to raise the community issues and concerns of the group

• An interesting activity that gets the members out into the community such as: speaking at a city council session, meeting with a public official, working at a soup kitchen for homeless people or attending a meeting of a community organization

• Determining a focus of action for the next period of time

• Doing team building and trust building exercises to develop group cohesion

• Writing Community Leadership Committee guidelines or bylaws

• Establishing leadership roles among the members (volunteer or elected chairperson, officers)

**Common Problems and How to Solve Them**

The most common problems are too few members or poor attendance at meetings and activities. Here are several common sources of these problems and suggestions for dealing with each.
**Staff Support Person Is too Dominant**

Sometimes the staff support person does not understand his or her role. By being too controlling, he undermines the young people. For the young people, this is too similar to many situations in their lives, and they don't want any part of it.

If this is happening, the director or program manager should clarify the role to the support person and see if he or she improves. If not, it may mean that staff needs to be replaced with someone who can play the proper role, as described earlier.

**Youth Chair Is too Dominant or not Skilled Enough to Handle the Group**

The problem may be that the youth chair wants to do everything his or her way, doesn't listen to other members, puts down their ideas, and acts too much like the boss. In addition, the youth chair may not be experienced enough to be able to chair the meetings, keep order, and guide the group to a good plan of action.

If one of these things is happening, you may work with the chair on his or her attitude or skill level over time, so that he or she will improve. The staff support person needs to coach the chair through each meeting. Often it may prove necessary for the committee to replace him or her with a more effective leader for the time being.

**The Meetings Are Boring or Unorganized**

Young people will not waste their time to sit in meetings that are not lively, interesting, and productive. The challenge here is to get an effective chairperson, plan a relevant agenda, and lead good meetings.

**The Members Feel Unprepared for the Activities**

The thought of testifying at city hall or speaking in a school can be scary for many young people. If there has not been enough training or practice beforehand, the members may feel the project is over their heads, and they simply do not show up.

**Community Leadership Committee Activities Do not Hold Interest of Members**

The committee might be merely going along with the favorite project of the most charismatic member, who was only able to carry the group in that direction for a short while. Maybe the members have worked on one project for too long and need a new one. Maybe the project is not challenging enough and the stakes need to be raised. Maybe there need to be several projects going on at once, to attract members with a variety of interests.
Members Are Uncomfortable with Each Other

Sometimes conflicts among members cause enough tension to drive people away. Conflicts could be personal, gang-related, or based on culture or gender. These tensions need to be dealt with seriously if the group is to stay together. Any or all of the following may help:

- Discussions (in private and in the whole group)
- Mediation
- Confrontation
- Counseling
- Retreats
- Workshops
- Trainings
- Heart-to-heart sharing
- Education

Sometimes, certain members need to be removed from the committee for impeding its work, or not meeting the committee’s code of conduct. If there is a conflict in the committee, it is probably related to what is occurring in the program as a whole, and it should be solved in connection with how it is being handled in the larger context.

Stages of Development

It might be useful to think of the Community Leadership Committee as having three distinct phases.

- Stage One, which can last up to several months, is the organizing phase. It includes getting a staff support person, courting the interest of youth organizers, holding the first informational meeting, and encouraging participation. This all takes place before the operating stage of activities. The director can often do this most efficiently.

- Stage Two, the first few months of an operating Community Leadership Committee, is divided evenly among three things: continued organizational development (electing officers, creating by-laws, and getting new members); the actual work of the committee, including the planning; and training to prepare for the work and increase the members’ skill level. The staff support person is key here.

- Stage Three begins when the emphasis is on the action or project of the committee. At least 50-60% of the Community Leadership Committee time is spent on activity, with 15-25% on further training,
and only 5-10% on internal organizational issues. The youth chair is now the lead person and is always backed up by the staff support person.

**Key Ingredients for a Successful Community Leadership Committee**

An effective Community Leadership Committee does not just happen by itself. In closing, it might be useful to summarize what has proven to be the key ingredients that are required for a successful committee:

- The director's support
- Staff support
- An effective staff support person
- A dedicated chair person
- A meeting process that involves members and maximizes participation
- Effective training on useful topics
- Consistent action, achievement, and learning by members
- Harmonious and enjoyable relationships among members

With these ingredients in place, and a little bit of luck, the Community Leadership Committee can be a powerful training ground for young leaders—an effort well worth the work.