

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT LADDER

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## ORGANIZING AND GOVERNING

Youth have a central role in the organization's structure, driving programmatic or strategic decisions. Youth are empowered to be part of shared decision-making processes and have the opportunity for youth to learn from life experiences and expertise of adults.

## YOUTH-INITIATED LEADERSHIP

Youth serve as peer leaders in a paid or volunteer capacity. Youth lead activities with their peers or with adults. Adults are involved only in a supporting role.

## YOUTH-INITIATED PARTNERSHIPS

Youth and adults join together as equals to accomplish programming, plan activities, operate the program, or complete specific tasks.

## ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with youth. Attempts are made to use youth-friendly procedures and language.

## INFORMED DIALOGUE

Youth give ongoing advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. Youth are informed as to how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults. Youth are involved in evaluation of programming.

## ASSIGNED BUT INFORMED

Youth are assigned a specific role and informed as to how and why they are being involved. This includes inconsistent youth involvement or temporary consultations such as focus groups or surveys.

## TOKENISM

Young people appear to be given a choice, but in fact they have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

## DECORATION

Young people are used to bolster a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by youth.

*Adapted from works by J. Nowicki and R. Hart.*