

NOURISHING COMMUNITY: CULTIVATING FELLOWSHIP AND VISION IN YOUTH SERVICES



Part 3: On Fellowship

Centering belonging requires everyone's unique contributions. Belonging is a feeling, yet our programs often face pressures that distract from the relationship building needed to explore, understand, and support what our program communities need to *feel* seen, heard, respected, and connected. Even more, our communities are diverse - and, as a community of communities, we are still working to co-create environments where diversity leads to connection instead of disconnection.

- **Diversity and belonging might seem to be distant concepts.** Diversity refers to the presence of multiple ways of thinking, feeling, believing, and valuing; belonging comes from experiencing meaningful relationship(s) within the environment(s) we navigate.
- **What bridges diversity and belonging?** Opportunities to build relationships among people with shared interests, goals, and passions are the bridge. In other words, fellowship. Fellowship does not contradict diversity. Quite the opposite, fellowship allows communities to tap into the richness brought by diversity and the protective/enabling potential of belonging.

Look at the work that is ahead - the next month, quarter, or year. Your programs most likely include a diverse menu of offerings. Take 15 minutes this week to write out your responses to the following prompts.

1. Who are the different members of your program community that will be engaged in program activities? From your interactions with them, would you say they *feel* like they belong in your program community? How do you know?
2. How will you prioritize opportunities for your program community to connect back to itself?
3. How is your program prepared to welcome a diversity of colors, spices, appetites and flavors? If the program does not feel prepared, what actions are needed to be better prepared?