



# GUIDE TO AUTHENTIC YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Youth Catalyst Team

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Youth Catalyst Team

A national initiative for young leaders, ages 16-24, who use their knowledge, skills, vision, and personal understanding of systems/services to advance the youth services field.

Youth Catalyst Team (YCT) members operate as paid consultants: providing training and coaching, developing tools and resources, and propelling national awareness efforts and systems change. Youth and young adult leaders are part of the team - working in authentic partnership with Youth Collaboratory to reimagine possibilities for each youth, family, agency, and the larger youth services field.

## Contact

For more information about the Youth Catalyst Team, or to request training, consultation, brainstorming, coaching, or other project partnership, email us at [yct@youthcollaboratory.org](mailto:yct@youthcollaboratory.org).





# GUIDE TO AUTHENTIC YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Youth Catalyst Team

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## FOREWARD

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*Hey folks, YCT here, we've created this tool to share some of OUR best practices we have implemented over time. We are a team grounded in authentic youth collaboration, equity, and leading with lived expertise so we strive to bring that lens fully into our work. We believe that this foundation as well as our leadership as Subject Matter Experts (SME's) gives this tool some critical perspectives and findings that can serve the field as a whole.*



## INTRODUCTION

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This guide was created for youth and young adult leaders, catalysts, and advocates - as well as the adult collaborators that support this work. Although not all-encompassing, it is meant to serve as a template for developing and sustaining youth & young adult leadership groups. This guide can be applied across the youth services field and is meant to be adapted to meet the needs and goals of each unique group.





# MISSION AND VISION

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## Mission Statement

### **What does the team plan to do?**

Create a statement meant to identify your group's actions and purpose. Generally, this consists of one to three sentences and is easy for the group to memorize and describe. Include the entire team in its creation and periodic evaluations.

## Vision Statement

### **What destination does your team foresee?**

This statement does not need to be written with pragmatism. Simply write what your team's end goal is, regardless of the barriers that might exist at the current time.



# MISSION AND VISION

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## Mission and Vision Statement

### Examples

#### **Youth Collaboratory's mission & vision statement:**

Youth Collaboratory harnesses the power of the youth services community to innovate, evaluate, and drive effective strategies that assure the safety and well-being of youth and young adults, unlocking their limitless potential.

#### **YCT mission & vision statement:**

Youth Catalyst Team (YCT) harnesses the knowledge, skills, vision, lived expertise, and power of youth and young adults to provide training and coaching, develop tools and resources, propel national awareness efforts, and create transformative change in youth programs, services, and systems.



# MISSION AND VISION

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## Values Statements

It can be valuable to develop statements surrounding your core values to ensure that there is collective understanding and shared language. Youth Collaboratory staff and Youth Catalyst Team consultants partnered to articulate our shared values on Equity and Liberation and Authentic Youth Collaboration. Developed via several meetings and a collectively edited document, this process provided opportunities for deep discussion and shared learning amongst the team.

### Example

“Youth Collaboratory is committed to shifting the power and paradigms in our communities. We recognize that our progress as an organization and field is dependent on the uninhibited leadership of youth and young adults; which means equitable compensation is crucial for sustaining and uplifting youth and young adult leaders in order to advance the field.

We aim to eradicate adultism, decenter white dominant culture, and move young people most impacted from the margins to the epicenter.

Youth and young adults are involved in all aspects of the work - planning, development, action, reflection, evaluation, and follow-up. Our work requires authentic relationships, fierce advocacy, respect, and liberation, as the primary means through which transformative change develops and is sustained.

Youth Collaboratory works to foster the growth and development of youth and young adults historically excluded. This includes having abundant resources: generating exposure to opportunities, pathways to leadership, reciprocal growth and learning, genuine inclusion in organizational events and training, and overall support of youth and young adults professionally and personally.”

Learn more at [youthcollaboratory.org/authentic-youth-collaboration](https://youthcollaboratory.org/authentic-youth-collaboration)



## TEAM CULTURE

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### Mutual Agreements

Establishing mutual agreements in the workspace is crucial. This should be done as soon as possible so as to make the core values tangible and real to all participants. List these agreed-upon values on a physical document and review and revise them regularly.

#### Example

The Youth Catalyst Team has a mutual understanding that we are all centered around the big goals of; benefiting the youth services field; ending youth homelessness; and advocating for youth leadership, authentic collaboration, and equitable practices that work towards liberation. We believe adaptability and determination are keys to success, so we strive to ensure our work environment makes room for creativity and new ideas, while also ensuring that we maintain focus. We prioritize making space and being responsive to where everyone is at coming into meetings. Our space is also one where questions are encouraged and everyone's voice is heard and valued. No individual is expected to know everything and we all hold different areas of expertise.

#### Resource

- [Intergenerational Equity: A Framework](#)



# TEAM CULTURE

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## Managing Disagreement & Restorative Practices

### Transparency is Key

- When information is freely available and there is open communication, many conflicts can be avoided. When we don't have all of the information, it is easy to make assumptions or question someone's intentions. Communicate clearly what you do know, and be honest when certain information isn't available.

### Conflicts

- Utilize restorative practices to center relationships when moving through conflict. According to the [International Institute of Restorative Practices \(IIRP\)](#), restorative practices, at their core, are about strengthening individual and community relationships to create a sense of belonging and provide a system of communal accountability that sets the stage for repairing harm that may arise.
- When we feel hurt, disrespected, or have disagreements it is a good idea to discuss the conflict with the other person(s). This usually involves having a private conversation to clearly explain yourself, hear the other person's perspective, and determine the best possible outcome. If needed, consider the benefits of having a neutral person join the conversation to add an external perspective.
- When the work intersects with our own lived experience, the topic and decisions can be very personal. Each individual may have strong emotions, values, and perspectives, and all are valid and need to be heard. It takes practice to hold space for diverse perspectives and can be helpful to be clear about the objectives, work to identify areas of agreement, and follow up individually with members for additional support.

### Resolutions

- Work towards trying to discuss any feelings or disagreements as soon as possible. Generally, a time when all parties are in a calm state, and a conversation can be held in a peaceful way. Bringing another person from the team can assist in deescalating any rising tensions.
- Avoid holding onto things in the belief they will just go away, or won't impact the work. Try to avoid harboring any resentment amongst the team, and instead focus on creating space for honest conversations that address the issue while respecting each individual.

# TEAM CULTURE

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## Managing Disagreement & Restorative Practices

### Things to Remember

- Sometimes there will be conflicts, disagreements, and disappointments. We often grow the most during these times of discomfort.
- Try to assume the best of intentions, and keep in mind we are all human!
- Be open to genuine apologies, and work to repair harm.
- Take breaks from the work and engage in strategies to build community amongst the group (i.e. check-ins, team bonding event, game night).
- If you need to take a step back, do so. Self-care is the best kind of care. You are valuable and your team knows this!

### Resources

- [Calling In and Calling Up](#)
- [Turning Towards Each Other](#)
- [Getting Started Using Restorative Inquiry](#)
- [Conflict Transformation](#)
- [Don't Call People Out, Call Them In - Loretta R. Smith](#)
- [How to Have Difficult Conversation](#)

**“I do my best because I’m counting on you counting on me”**

**- Maya Angelou**



# TEAM CULTURE

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## Power & Decision Making Dynamics

### Things to Remember

- Youth should lead the work and its management to the fullest extent possible. This will help with workflow and allow participants to maximize their potential without micromanaging or gatekeeping. It also provides a morale boost that increases engagement and efficiency among staff.
- It is important for the group to collectively establish clear boundaries and roles. Young people should be empowered to create and express the boundaries that make them safe and comfortable.
- Consider creating an anonymous box/virtual board for members to ask questions, make suggestions, and or leave feedback. This will ensure members can voice their thoughts, opinions, and experiences without concern of backlash. This can aid the feedback process that will allow each person to be heard.

### Example

- As part of YCT's decision-making structure, we discuss any group decisions in our bi-weekly meetings with those in attendance. Sometimes a minor decision can be made by a smaller group of the team when needed. Full team feedback is gathered through email/text follow-up when a decision will impact the entire team. Tangible plans are discussed and voted on if consensus cannot be reached.

### Resources

- [Nurturing Relationships, Navigating Conflict](#)
- [Youth Organizing: A Model for Change](#)
- [Youth Activist Toolkit](#)





# TEAM CULTURE

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## Supporting Young Leaders in Their Role(s)

### Building Confidence

- Affirm and uplift all that young leaders are pouring into the work. Acknowledgment of their capabilities, resilience, growth, and impact is essential to Positive Youth Development (PYD). Additional resources on PYD can be found [here](#).

### Full Transparency!

- It is important for youth to understand the ins and outs of the organization as much as any other employee to fully contribute.
- Share information about organizational vision and goals, as well as decision-making processes and budgets to build trust and increase youth confidence in representing the group. Set aside adequate time for training and ongoing support.

### Authentic Youth Collaboration

- Create consistent pathways for young peoples' visions and goals to contribute to the overall strategic plan and actions of the organization. These pathways should allow for youth input to influence the direction of the field.



## Peer Relationships/Dynamics

Peer-to-peer relationships are important to a team's dynamic. Building community with one another is a vital part of the work. Below we have included some key considerations, ideas, and topics that might come up within this:

# TEAM CULTURE

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## Peer Relationships/Dynamics Continued

### Enjoy the work!

- As you go about work, consider adding team-building activities to your schedule. Taking time to reflect on recent achievements in a casual setting can often refresh the team's morale and keep them excited as they're aware their work comes with tangible appreciation.
- Name strengths and achievements of team members.
- Support each member's personal and professional development goals.

### Community Agreements

- These should be flexible, adaptable, and revisited frequently.

### Examples

- Be open to hearing new ideas and be authentic in sharing your own
- Take space, make space
- Listen and reflect to gain understanding, even if you disagree
- Practice cultural humility
- Use "I statements"
- Use strength-based language
- Practice confidentiality ("stories stay, lessons leave")
- Take care of yourself

### Boundaries are important in all relationships!

- Personal history, values, triggers, and culture may all influence a person's boundaries. Create a shared understanding of the team boundaries.
- It is important for all members to create collaborative working relationships with one another and to keep everyone on the same page.
- Members may have more experience or comfort working or spending time with certain people, and friendships often develop. Consider how dating relationships or cliques may impact the work and team dynamics. Engage in honest conversations and collaborative decision-making to navigate any challenges.

# TEAM CULTURE

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## Peer Relationships/Dynamics Continued

Conflict resolutions should revolve around established agreements and what is best for the team moving forward.

Be aware of team morale, and where members may be emotionally due to personal, team, or community circumstances. It is important to be as responsive as possible to the needs of the group and adjust plans accordingly. If tasks need to be prioritized within meetings, set aside a separate time to check in personally with team members.

## Self Care and Community Care

Self-care and community care are extremely important for this work and must be at the center of the culture to create a healthy and functioning workspace. This could include:

- Checking in with one another one-on-one.
- Being honest and open about capacity.
- Planning times to build relationships with one another to create a space where vulnerability is supported.
- Holding times for rest and breaks (between meetings, during busy weeks, etc.).
- Figure out what the needs of your team are and work to fully hear and meet them.

## Resources

- [Beyond the Cliff](#) - TedX talk with Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, Founder of Trauma Stewardship Institute, and author of, *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*
- [45 Simple Self-Care Practices for a Healthy Mind, Body, and Soul](#)
- [Self-Care Wheel](#)
- [Black Emotional and Mental Health \(BEAM\) Toolkits & Resources](#)
- [Why Self-care and Collective Wellbeing are Critical to Winning Change](#)



# TEAM CULTURE

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## Formality of Spaces

**The formality of events should correlate to the matter at hand!**

While formal attire and presentation may be important in some circumstances, such as large-scale events, be aware of creating unnecessary barriers. Be clear with young people in advance about what to expect when they are entering new spaces and encourage young people to show up in a way that makes them feel comfortable and confident. Consider what this may look like in a virtual setting.

Be prepared to share resources with youth/young adults to support them in accessing formal clothing where desired.

Also, remember that all youth/young adult leaders may have different interests and roles. Identify and create other opportunities for young people who may be less comfortable stepping into more formal spaces.



# TEAM CULTURE

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## Increasing Engagement

Providing the necessary support that young people need to flourish is critical in ongoing engagement. It is also true that sometimes getting full and consistent engagement is just simply a difficult process, but here are a couple of pointers that we have found to be helpful.

- Ensure that everyone has access (transportation, wifi, etc.).
- Schedule activities and hours as a group in advance to ensure that there is maximum participation.
- Provide transparent communication, and create high expectations for communication within the team.
- Make meetings and gatherings fun! Incorporate interactive games and activities. Examples include:
  - Online: These can be on digital platforms like Kahoot, or a team facilitated game like an at-home scavenger hunt over video conferencing.
  - In-person: Charades or laugh out loud.
- Celebrate successes, and reflect on challenges as learning opportunities.

### Engagement Tools

- [Kahoot](#)
- [Miro Boards](#)
- [Mentimeter](#)



# TEAM CULTURE

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## Virtual Team Building

Many youth leadership groups have encountered challenges in transitioning to operating fully virtual, and not being able to gather in person.

The Youth Catalyst Team has been utilizing these strategies to increase virtual engagement:

- Creating an overall culture of self-care and community care. This includes setting intentional time to just hang out virtually, with no set agenda.
- Continuing to adapt meeting structure and schedule to increase full team consistent participation.
- Make personal check-ins among team members a part of the culture.
- Use virtual tools and games to keep meetings fun.

## Resources

- [Engaging Young People in a Virtual World](#)
- [Virtual Youth Action Board Tips](#)

## Communications

It's important to strive for a culture of consistency and inclusion. Establishing team expectations around communication, and a welcoming tonal atmosphere of the work/workspace is essential to guide the team into working effectively together. Clear roles, as well as group agreements, are key in helping to catalyze the work.

- **Notes & Next Steps:** Take notes during meetings and consider recording if using a virtual platform. Before the meeting ends, make sure next steps and action items are recorded. If next steps are unclear as a meeting is coming to a close, participants should be encouraged to ask questions! Clear communication on capacity/availability and comfortability in a particular role is necessary for both the team and individuals. When there are questions around next steps that are not addressed in a meeting, email/text follow are welcome. Communication and follow-up are critical and a part of maintaining transparency.

# TEAM CULTURE

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## Technology management

- Make sure that the whole team is trained and able to use the technology, and platforms that will be used within the organization to ensure equitable access and participation. This could include, but is not limited to:
  - Setting up a calendar schedule
  - Setting up a calendar invite
  - Utilizing emails/email lists
  - Navigating virtual meeting platforms
  - Group chats
  - Access to all documents and folders



## Team Representation

It is important to have clear distinctions when it comes to representing oneself and representing the team.

- Members should have a clear understanding as to when they are representing a personal idea or perspective vs. representing a team idea or perspective AND when they are representing themselves on a personal level vs. representing the team or organization.
- Members should have the freedom to hold and express their own personal views, values, and perspective when representing themselves.



# TEAM CULTURE

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## Transition and Closure

- When coming to a transition or closure time, evaluations are key to continuous improvement. Be sure to provide lots of space to share insights with future members, as well as thoughts on the roles and overall experience.
- Throw moving on/transition party!
- Have space to dream about what the transition will mean in order to support each individual's goals, needs, and desires.
- If a member will be transitioning into a new role, make sure to discuss distinctions and any overlap between the roles

### YCT's Transition and Closure Model

YCT works to provide a clear picture of what transition and closure look like from the beginning of the interaction. Our model stems from the question, "What is the next step after the YCT term?"

- YCT is designed as a 1-year term and contracts can be renewed annually. YCT Consultants should be age 16-24 when beginning their term.
- At the end of each 1-year term, Consultants and Youth Collaboratory will meet to determine if the individual will:
  - Sign an agreement for another YCT 1 year term.
  - Join the Subject Matter Expert (SME) Consultant Network at Youth Collaboratory. This means you are eligible to be contracted for projects with the agency, may set different pay rates, and do not have set or guaranteed hours.
  - Apply for other positions within Youth Collaboratory as available. Note: You may apply for open positions at any time, regardless of the length of time you have been a YCT Consultant.
  - End contracting with Youth Collaboratory to pursue other goals and opportunities. We support your continued success and can often write letters of recommendation.



# COMPENSATION AND INVOICING

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## Payment

Young leaders need to be equitably paid for the entirety of their work (i.e. meetings, prep, email). Payment rates, time expectancy for its delivery, and delivery methods are things that need to be very upfront and easy to understand. Paying youth/young adults as soon as possible after the completion of work is a good way to keep members engaged, maintain trust, and ensure that they can meet their own basic needs.

### Key Considerations

- Depending on the role; contracts, payment structures, and work schedules may look differently. Regardless of those details, it is important to have a clear manner of payment dates that individuals can expect to receive their payment. This will require consistent communication about the role, including discussion with youth/young adults about their capacity, and the difference between structures and roles (stipends, hourly pay, consultant vs. employee, set vs. flex hours).
  - Hours may be very flexible in some roles, such as in a consultant role, where young people are considered self-employed. The work availability may also fluctuate, depending on capacity and available funds.
  - Some roles may have a set number of hours per week, typically associated with staff positions, fellowships, or paid internships.

# COMPENSATION AND INVOICING

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## Common Payment Structures

- **Consultant/Contractor** - In this structure, the individual is considered self-employed. In most cases, a consultant completes the work agreed upon in a contract, then they submit an invoice to the organization for payment. Typically, consultants are paid a higher hourly rate than staff, but hours are not guaranteed. Independent consultant/contractor wages do not receive deductions for taxes, insurance, etc. These items must be by the contractor on their accord.
- **Paid hourly staff** - As paid hourly staff, youth/young adults follow the same timesheet policies and procedures as other employees. This may offer more stability and ease of payment, but provides less autonomy than contracting roles.
- **Stipend position** - This structure is common in paid internships and fellowships, whereas youth/young adults enter an agreement for a specified role, approximate hours, and length of time. A set amount of payment is provided at regular intervals regardless of specific hours worked. For example, 1-year fellowship focused on “using technology for youth homelessness prevention,” part-time (up to 20hrs/week), \$2,000 stipend per month plus training and technology budget.

## Payment Methods

There are many different avenues to explore regarding payment, and it is important to offer multiple options to meet individual needs. Encourage members to discuss any potential barriers to payment in the beginning (i.e. banking access, identification, mailing address), and ensure that there is ongoing support available to address any access issues.

### Example

- Youth Catalyst Team members can elect to receive payment via Paypal, direct deposit, or check mailed to their address. Support is available on an ongoing basis through both YCT leadership staff and Youth Collaboratory’s finance department to assist members in navigating any challenges regarding payment.



## TEAM FUNCTIONALITY AND WORKSTYLES

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### Functionality

#### **What's the team's philosophy around work to maximize efficiency?**

Based on workload, Youth Collaboratory members often form small working groups to tackle different projects. Increasing the number of meetings for projects with a bigger scope is also common. Members may engage in multiple projects at once depending on their capacity and interest.



# TEAM FUNCTIONALITY AND WORKSTYLES

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## Team Leads

- As projects are created, some folks may need to be designated as coordinators for communications and to keep things moving forward.
- Tasks required in leading most projects are: communicating regularly with other team members via email, scheduling meetings, facilitating planning meetings, reviewing/editing work of the team, reviewing the timeline, and ensuring deadlines are met.
- Being the lead means that you “hold” all of the moving parts, ensuring that the pieces of the puzzle come together to accomplish the goal. This doesn’t mean doing all of the tasks, or being “the boss,” but rather working with everyone’s strengths to make it happen. Clear communication is critical in this role.



## Workstyles

In addition to other types of diversity, team members may have different styles of approaching the work, collaborating with one another, and completing tasks. It can be helpful to introduce an activity to identify each person’s work styles, as well as their skills/interests in order to fully utilize each team member and support the team's success. The scope of work may look differently depending on the project, timeline, team makeup, and goal. Team members should have the autonomy to choose the roles that best fit their work styles, interests, and skill-set - while collectively ensuring that all duties are covered.

On any team, the group will also naturally begin to develop patterns, or a collective style and culture, of working together. It is important to reflect on this often to identify strengths, challenges, and areas where support or adjustments are needed.

# TEAM FUNCTIONALITY AND WORKSTYLES

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## Workstyles

### Example

During our annual retreat, YCT members participate in the [Compass Point Activity](#) to identify our personal leadership styles and discuss how these styles intersect and strategies of working together. Projects in YCT include a mix of collaborative brainstorming, creating, independent research, writing, coordination, preparing materials, and public speaking.

### Meetings

YCT members work on a contractual basis per project. We utilize meetings to discuss upcoming activities/events, setting tasks and deadlines to push the project forward to completion. Meetings also include elements of self and collective care, visioning and brainstorming, and other priorities determined by the group.

### Outside of Meetings

Some activities may be needed outside of meetings in order to keep projects moving forward. Members are regularly asked to utilize the time between meetings to brainstorm ideas, work on the group's next steps, submit findings on projects, and lead or participate in training.

## Resources

- [Youth Activism Toolkit - Advocates for Youth](#)
- [Compass Point Activity](#)
- [Enneagram Test](#)



## MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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Hosting events can be a great way to increase collaboration among youth/young adults, as well as with adult partners. There are a variety of roles that individuals can take on, such as logistics planning, registration, hosting, presenting, background support, social media marketing, and more. The goals of the event, number of attendees, whether it is virtual or in-person, and other factors are considered in planning any event.

### Focus Groups & Roundtables

Everyone arrives nervous at this kind of event, so it is helpful to start with an icebreaker. The activity doesn't have to tie into any sort of content; we have found it useful to just allow it to break the mold between the groups of strangers present.

The majority of the focus group will revolve around discussion, and in most cases, it is helpful to share any discussion questions in advance so participants know what to expect. A favored method of focus groups is for everyone to sit full circle, with the facilitator(s) using the questions to guide the conversation, while openly allowing discussion to take its course wherever it leads. Prepare points and questions for your crowd to help draw out your specific goals for the session.

# MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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## Panels

Panels are a great way to utilize the experience of your group and promote conversation around topics of interest. When hosting a panel it is best to prepare a surplus of relevant and insightful questions and meet with panelists in advance to discuss and refine them. Panelists can work with you to determine in advance which questions they have the most comfort and expertise in answering. Having a few more questions than the allotted time designates is wise for potential run-on responses that cover more than one question. Don't be too concerned about hitting every question - focus on drawing out crucial responses and allow for genuine discussion.

## Meetings

It is important for youth and young adults to dictate the content of meetings, and how best to use the time. In some groups, the agenda is created in collaboration with the full team, and/or an adult partner. Meeting planning is likely the most simple to plan but may be frustrating to execute the event due to the unpredictability of audience engagement. To counteract this, allow everyone to get all their off-topic energy out at the start with an interesting prompt, and maybe add a break to your agenda if time allows.

Meetings should be held on a regular schedule, to share announcements and updates, and prepare for upcoming events. It is a good idea for all members to compare schedules to identify a time that consistently works for everyone.





# MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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## Conferences

Conferences are typically formal, large-scale events that require many people to be involved in planning. Conferences often include updates and announcements, keynote presenters, and workshops relevant to a selected theme.

Preparation for conferences should revolve around creating content catered to the established theme, goals, and expected audience for the event. Setting detailed timelines and roles for these events are highly suggested.

## Webinars

Webinars can be very similar to other events, but their unique platform includes some key differences that may be helpful sometimes, and at other times be hard to deal with. It's important to familiarize yourself and your team with whatever platform will be used for a webinar as well as all the features that will be used. If you are the lead of a project, communication around this is especially important.

Technical difficulties are almost always going to occur in one way or another so being prepared for that emotionally as a presenter can be really helpful as well as making sure to be as logistically prepared as possible. Designate a time directly before the webinar to perform sound and video checks, as well as do a brief run-through of the presentation that includes transition, and other elements that may be incorporated. If possible, have tech support in the meeting to handle any sudden difficulties.

One feature that we have found particularly helpful during webinars is a staff chatbox or group chat used to communicate with each other throughout the webinar.



# MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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## External Youth Engagement

A question that we are asking ourselves as a team and would encourage organizations and other groups of young leaders to be asking consistently is:

**How are we continually seeking perspective from other young people to gather, evaluate and elevate comprehensive content?**

Some ideas to implement this include organizing, hosting, and seeking out:

- Community Events
- Townhall & casual discussions w/ YYA leaders
- Annual Survey with YYA where findings can be shared with the field
- YYA in-person session at organization-wide convenings
- YYA sessions/spaces in other events/conferences
- New ideas are always welcome!

### Resources

- [How to Plan an Event: 10 Step Event Planning Guide](#)
- [Conference Planning: A Step-by-Step Checklist for Success](#)
- [Youth Leadership Toolkit - NRCYD](#)





# GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

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## Presentation Tips

The most remembered takeaways of any vocal presentation are

- **keywords/phrases (7%)**
- **presenter's tone (38%)**
- **the speaker's body language (45%)**

Conveying messages in meaningful ways involves the use of unorthodox implementation of those factors, as they are what make any message memorable.

Imagery gives stronger impressions than words. Accompany statistics and important takeaways with a unique visual to make them stick.

When preparing spiels, focus on points as opposed to writing out sentences, this makes everything less robotic and easier to recall which helps you focus on maintaining your energy level.

# GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

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## Introduction

This sets the tone for the entirety of your presentation. Use something interesting and try to add a piece of yourself to give the greatest first impression possible.

Try to add your personal introduction (who/what/where/why) after the “hook” of your opening to avoid starting on a sour note and give people a reason to want to know you before they formally do. Hooks can be stories, a video, an icebreaker activity, a series of questions, etc.

## Organizing Thoughts

Bulleted points/summarizing vs word for word: which works best for you?

Example:

1. Authentic youth inclusion is a combination of removing ageism and giving young people the chance to prove their potential without micromanagement. This means...
2. Youth collaboration
  - Removing ageism
  - Allowing young people to prove themselves
  - Examples: story about an agency

## Confidence

The audience doesn't know or care for anything that isn't immediately obvious: if your clothes aren't ironed or your hair is a bit messy it won't be the thought on everyone's mind more than the content and delivery of your presentation.

The posture you keep throughout your presentation is important because it affects how you communicate. Avoid looking down while talking, and face your audience as much as possible to keep your volume and engagement high. A recommended position to stand in is the “L stance” as it helps keep you upright and balanced to increase one's vocal projection and subconsciously keep your energy high.



# GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

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## Speech

Loud and clear!

Allow points to marinate, important statements should not be rushed out as they will be easily forgotten. Being aware of the time you have means you can be flexible in how you use it, if you believe you will be using less but getting through everything be sure to add pauses for greater impact.

Don't be too specific: going into all the details of everything is not necessary and can come across as muttering as well as padding your time.

## Facilitation Tips

Paraphrase/restate ideas but avoid elaborating on them to draw more out of your others. "So you seem to be talking about \_\_\_\_, would you like to give a few examples?"

Provide items (stress balls, fidgets, etc.) that would help keep the group engaged physically so their minds don't begin to wander.

Add a "parking lot" (list ideas that can be expanded upon later/at the end but do not fit the current topics at hand).



# GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

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## Strategies in Managing Challenging Group Dynamics

### **Someone will not stop talking**

- Try looking at other group members. If you avoid eye contact with the current speaker they may be discouraged to do so, alternatively, this may inspire those you're paying attention to try speaking up.
- Transition to an exercise. By announcing that you have an activity planned next the speaker should shorten their point so that you can move on, activities might also bring out the talking points that the speaker didn't get to speak on thus helping them vent.
- Divide the group into pairs and pair yourself with the speaker to allow them room to elaborate.
- Redirect the speaker back to the objective, ask how their points fit or if they're done addressing the theme.

### **Someone is introverted**

- Divide the group into pairs so the attendee can start to warm up.
- Try to encourage them to speak with eye contact.
- Ask if they have anything to add (when it appears they do).
- Create opportunities to participate beyond discussion (virtual collaboration boards, written responses, etc.).

### **Someone is disengaged/distracting**

- Transition to an exercise where everyone has to participate or make use of their physical space.
- Set up your meeting so that the attendees will be refocused by their peers.
- Make the issue about yourself "I can't really focus when you're on your phone, could you step out (or mute the call) when you need to use it?"

### **Someone is hostile**

- Allow the participant to talk to the group about their issue
- Allow the group to continue along with their activity while you speak with the participant privately
- Ask other participants if they feel similarly to help relax everyone

# GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

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## Considerations for a Virtual Space

### **Presentation Best Practices**

#### **Know Your Audience**

Know your audience is a phrase consistently used and heard when creating and delivering a presentation. Each audience is unique and has a specific purpose for attending.

Here are some considerations for engagement:

- Be on video when the audience enters the room. Verbally welcome participants, and start engagement early.
  - Asking a check-in or discussion question that is fun and personal or related to the topic, in the beginning, can help establish the space is open for discussion and sharing. Sites like [Mentimeter](#) and [Kahoot](#) offer a creative way to do that.
- Express your confidence by demonstrating your knowledge and expertise on the topic.
- Highlight how your innovations are beneficial to all audience members.
- Utilize and monitor the chat feature; share relevant comments.
  - Pose specific questions to the audience to answer. Reflect on their responses.



#### **Utilize Your Resources**

Establishing a network of support is beneficial on multiple levels. Inviting peers to join your audience to uplift you with their presence or words of encouragement/agreement in the chat can be a great addition to your network. When confronted with a challenge, lean on this network of support to help foster engagement, redirect the conversation, offer perspective, and any other needs you may have to ensure your workshop runs smoothly.

# GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

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## Be Prepared

Outside of knowing your content and your platform it's important to prepare for as many circumstances as possible. Give special care and attention to these items, and prepare as best as you can.

- **Session time and day:** Ensure that during your session you are able to be fully present. Position yourself in a quiet space, and inform everyone when you will be unavailable. Small things to remember are: silencing your phone, having someone else to entertain your pets, and exiting out of additional screens on your device.
- **Technical Difficulties:** Ways to avoid technical difficulties include testing and checking your video and audio before your workshop. Arrive 15 to 30 minutes early in your space to confer with other members who are helping moderate and present. This time will ensure everyone is feeling prepared.
- **Addressing Feedback & Questions:** When introducing new ideas you can expect a lot of response from the audience. It can range from fully supportive, to inquisitive, to opposition. Acknowledge that all perspectives are possible, and prepare a plan for responding to varying feedback. Some ideas are:
  - Create shared agreements surrounding respect for presenters and other audience members to help set boundaries.
  - Listen to someone's perspective and reflect back. A possible reply structure could be... some people have [this perspective].... Other people have this [different perspective]... How we are looking at this is with [your perspective]
  - If it is a question consider redirecting the question back to the audience for a wider view, or rephrasing the question and providing an answer in a way that best represents the information you are trying to get across.
  - If audience feedback begins to detract from the workshop or others' ability to engage, reclaim the space and move on. A way to do this while allowing audience members to feel heard is by stating... Thank you for your feedback/comment, that offers a lot to take into consideration. Let me think on this further as we continue on. Or, I appreciate this discussion/question. I want to honor the time we have for presenting and save this for the Q&A portion.
- **Own your space:** The most valuable thing in being prepared to present is owning your space. Ultimately, you and your co-presenters set the tone, the rules of engagement, and the boundaries. You determine the best way for the audience to receive the knowledge and information you have to offer. Knowing and understanding those facts is critical for your decision making in how the workshop will flow. You are the main conductor, and there are supports to help you maintain the things you put in place.



# GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

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## Facilitation Approach

### Breakout Rooms

- Be on video when participants enter the room. Verbally welcome participants and let them know your role:
  - *Hello and welcome! My name is <NAME> and I'm the <JOB ROLE> at <ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATE>. I'll be facilitating this breakout discussion. I'll make sure:*
    - *Everyone has a chance to speak or contribute in the chat*
    - *That this space remains a safe environment for sharing*
    - *We end on time, and*
    - *We record highlights of the discussion*
- Prepare (or collect) discussion questions for your breakout session in advance.
- Request a volunteer as notetaker or announce you will be taking notes of key points and questions to submit to conference organizers.
- Request a volunteer to, or announce you will, monitor the chat feature and share relevant comments.
  - Read the chat responses aloud, invite the person to come on camera (if willing), and explain further/respond to a follow-up question.
- Moderate a rotation of speakers to ensure all voices can be heard. Provide instructions on how to join the discussion via video.
- Advise speakers that they need to click the "Share Audio & Video" icon. This will add them to a queue and the moderator can then select who will come on screen (this is covered in the rehearsal session).
- Facilitate questions and answers (particularly if you have a panel of speakers).



# GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

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## Breakout Rooms Continued

- Keep an eye on the clock.
  - Remind the group at the start that you need to shift to the next session on the agenda at <INSERT TIME>.
  - Alert people that you will keep track of time and remind them (roughly) when the session is half done and when there are 5 minutes remaining.
- After a question is posed, don't rush too soon to fill the silence--pause and count to ten before speaking again. Invite people to come on video to share.
  - If, after 10 seconds, there is no discussion:
    - Offer some thoughts to open the conversation,
    - Ask a grantee what their experience has been like, and/or
    - Read comments from the chat.
- Make sure no one is dominating the conversation.
  - If so, ask others what they think, or say, "let's hear from some others that haven't weighed in yet."
- Consider Talk-show style (ahead of time): engage a partner (grantee/FPO) in a dialogue on-screen sharing your own examples and experiences.
- Share your own experiences on a topic and then prompt:
  - Does this resonate with others? Why or why not?
  - How does this look in your organization/community?

**Have fun!**

## Contact

For more information about the Youth Catalyst Team, or to request training, consultation, brainstorming, coaching, or other project partnership, email us at [yct@youthcollaboratory.org](mailto:yct@youthcollaboratory.org).

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