

Tips for Building Effective Youth – Adult Partnerships

Youth people need to be an essential component of any community partnership exercise. In the words of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan – *‘Young people should never be seen as a burden on any society, but as its most precious asset’*.

Young men and women bring unique community building contributions, including –

- have fresh perspectives
- are great collaborators
- make the dollar stretch
- are passionate about critical issues like the environment, sustainability etc
- attract the attention of the media
- are impatient; and
- know best what other young people think and want.

A. Key Elements of Effective Youth – Adult Partnerships

1. **Understand the concept of partnership** – a partnership is a relationship characterised by mutual respect, cooperation and responsibility and seeks the achievement of specific goals.
2. **Establish clear purpose for the partnership** – both young people and adults should understand the reasons, goals and intended outcomes for establishing the partnership.
3. **Define roles and responsibilities** – everyone in the partnership should be clear on each others roles and responsibilities.
4. **Share decision making responsibilities** – maximise decision making and accountability by young people.
5. **Share credit** – all partners need to share the credit for the partnership’s accomplishments.
6. **Be selective** – select specific roles for both young people and adults. Young people vary widely in there level of development and readiness to assume responsibility, and adults vary widely in their ability and degree of commitment to work with young people.
7. **Allow time** – allow time for partnerships to develop and evolve.
8. **Provide skill development** – both young people and adults may need training and skill development. Create opportunities for growth.

9. **Include room for growth** – provide opportunities for young people to advance in terms of increased levels of responsibility.
10. **Be realistic about time commitment** – young people often have a range of commitments and priorities. Work with young people to develop levels of involvement and responsibility that matches their time and commitment.
11. **Avoid any expression of Adultism** – adultism is any behaviour, action, language or limitations placed on young people's rights and participation that does not afford them the respect as a partner. It is often predicated on the belief that because someone is young, they lack skill, intelligence or ability.

B. Tips for Young People Working with Adults

1. Most adults have good intentions, but may simply not be use to working in partnerships with young people. Show patience!
2. Many adults may not be aware of the full capabilities of young people, and will only learn this fact through seeing it occur.
3. Do not be afraid to ask for clarification. Often adults use words, phrases and acronyms that may not be fully understood.
4. Adults have often lost that wonderful youth trait of 'win win' – teach them how to collaborate.
5. Realise that many adults may be uncertain of directions, but have learnt to disguise it well.
6. Every person (including adults) needs positive affirmation and feedback.

C. Tips for Adults Working with Young People

1. Strive to ensure involvement is fun, interactive and rewarding.
2. Allow participation by choice.
3. Maximise the opportunity of success through adequate provision of information, training support, time and space.
4. Create opportunities for young people to lead and teach.
5. Address opportunities and issues that are valued and respected by young people, their peers and the community.
6. Involve young people from the start.

7. Be open to and non judgemental about young peoples insights and suggestions.
8. Constantly find ways expressive how much young people's continuation and ideas are valued.
9. Avoid pigeon holing of young people generating about their behaviour, opinions or ideas.
10. Keep expectations realistic. Do not expect more of a person than is expected of an adult. However hold young people to expectations.
11. Schedule meetings when young people can attend, and at some convenient locations.
12. Treat young people as individuals. Do not assume one young person represents the views of all young people.
13. Make sense of, and demystify adult structures and processes.
14. Start with the talents, capacities, assets and skills of young people, rather than their problems and deficiencies.