



# Rippling Out!

## Supporting Youth-led Action

To take the lead, young people need adult support. But, how does one provide support that allows for creativity, growth, pride, and meaningful decision making? How do we contribute to making young people's ideas and enthusiasm a success for them, and our communities? It's all about adults having... self-awareness, knowledge, skills and commitment!

### 1. Self Awareness

The first step in supporting young people is to question your presumptions...

- \* Do you think that...
  - o Adults know better
  - o Youth participation takes too much time
  - o Youth never follow through
  - o Youth don't have the capacity to manage money
  - o Adults have a hard time giving up power
  - o Letting youth make decisions is too risky for organizations

These perceptions create barriers to youth action!

- \* Do you think that...
  - o Young people have good ideas
  - o Youth have solutions to challenges
  - o Young people are more than creative adults
  - o Youth can go further with adult supports

These perceptions support youth action!

### 2. Knowledge

The second step is to understand...

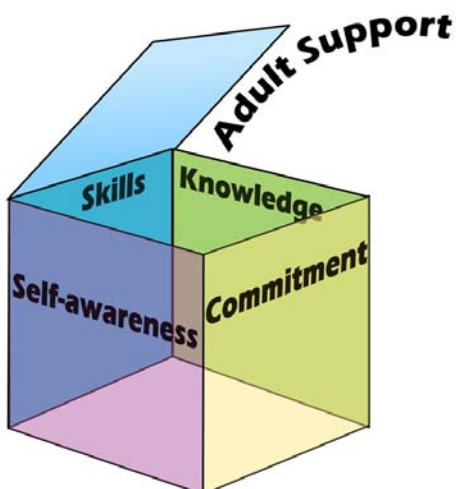
- **Child Development:** What do young people need at different stages to support their development—physically, cognitively, emotionally and spiritually?
- **Meaningful Participation:** How can young people contribute?
- **The Benefits of Participation:** How will young people, as well as other services, programs and society at large benefit?

*"A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words, and deeds is like that. We won't sit down and feel hopeless. There's too much work to do."*

- Dorothy Day

### What are the Steps?

1. Self-Awareness
2. Knowledge
3. Skills
4. Commitment

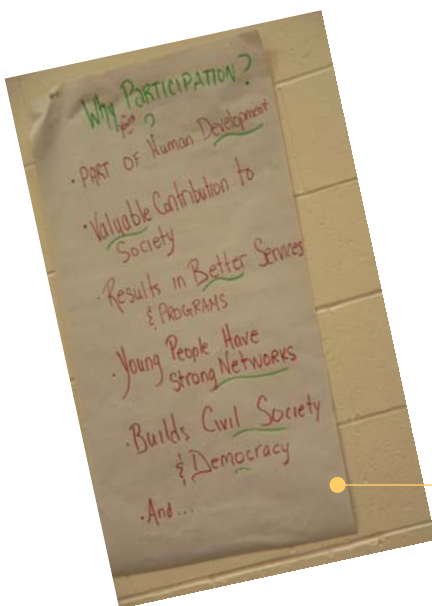


## Meaningful Participation

To understand how young people can meaningfully participate or engage, consider the level that young people are involved in making decisions...

How can you help young people move along the spectrum?

- \* Are they considered?
- \* Are they informed?
- \* Are they consulted?
- \* Are they involved?
- \* Are they a partner with which you collaborate?
- \* Do they have the power to make decisions?



### Benefits of Participation

- \* Supports children's healthy development
- \* Provides opportunity for young people to make better choices
- \* Allows young people to make valuable contributions to society
- \* Taps into young people's powerful networks
- \* Builds self esteem
- \* Builds civil society and democracy – creating leaders and engaged citizens
- \* Fosters a sense of belonging to family, community and culture
- \* Results in better programs and services

## 3. Skills

The third step is to develop the skills to effectively provide the support young people need. Learn how to provide...

Supporting youth in new ways can feel like learning to cross your arms the opposite way...

- \* Support as a peer, family, community or organizations
- \* Encouragement
- \* Respect
- \* Resources
- \* A listening ear - what are their ideas?
- \* Support to develop their organizational and critical thinking skills (without doing it for them)
- \* Help in building larger community and organizational support (e.g. city council, police etc.)
- \* Help in navigating red tape and the "ins and outs" of bureaucracies
- \* Support in dealing with discrimination and negative attitudes they may encounter along the way

## Skill Check: Where are you at?

Review the following table to determine the type of skills you will need. Circle the number that represents your current skill level with respect to working with young people. Keep this skill check to re-assess your levels in six months. What skills can you work on? What are the difficulties? Where are the opportunities for change?

1=Very Inadequate, 2=Somewhat inadequate, 3= Somewhat Adequate 4=Very Adequate

Truly respect young people's ideas	1	2	3	4
Give encouragement	1	2	3	4
Provide resources for activities	1	2	3	4
Actively Listen	1	2	3	4
Promote active participation/citizenship	1	2	3	4
Deal with bureaucracies	1	2	3	4
Build community support	1	2	3	4
Help young people get organized	1	2	3	4
Encourage critical thinking	1	2	3	4

## 4. Commitment

The last and most critical step to supporting young people to take the lead is your commitment. Without this, all of the other steps are useless.

Remember that just like learning to cross your arms the opposite way, supporting youth in a new way will feel strange at first and you will often feel like slipping back into old ways of doing things. Resist the temptation and continue to try to bring about change through different ways. It WILL make a big difference and will become second nature in no time!

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**YouthScape is about working together to create a national movement to strengthen youth engagement and build resilient communities. Embrace bold visions for change!**

YouthScape is supported by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation as part of a youth engagement strategy to foster innovative change and build resilient communities at both the local and national level. YouthScape is coordinated by the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD). Other key supporters include the United Way of Calgary and Area, TakingItGlobal and five convening organizations across Canada.