

YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAFÉ

Location: Burlington, NC

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Co-Hosts:

Center for Family and Community Engagement
North Carolina State University

Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo)

Report Authors

Jasmin Volkel, MSW
Marianne Latz, MSW
Kara Allen-Eckard, MSW
Joan Pennell, PhD, MSW

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Author's Note. For further information, please contact the Center for Family and Community Engagement, North Carolina State University, C. B. 8622, Raleigh, NC, 27695-8622, e-mail: cffaceinfo@ncsu.edu

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Youth Leadership Café sprang from the collaborative partnership between the Center for Family and Community Engagement (Center) at North Carolina State University and Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo). The planning team worked intensely to create a safe space for the development of youth leadership opportunities using an innovative method called a Community Café. The method allowed for conversation and cooperation between foster youth and child-welfare workers to empower foster youth in becoming leaders.

The Center planning team consisted of Jasmin Volkel, Chaney Stokes, Kara Allen-Eckard, Marianne Latz, and Joan Pennell. Extensive and essential administrative support was provided by Stacy Comey and Calista Wickert at the Center and Missy Seate and Paula Braswell in the college's office of research.

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CAFÉ PROCESS

Planning Process: Youth leadership is an important component of the work at the Center for Family and Community Engagement (Center) at NC State University in that it aligns with the Center’s mission to advance safe, healthy, and productive families and communities. Dr. Joan Pennell, the Center Director, in partnership with Jasmin Volkel, a social work graduate student, submitted an application to the Office of Outreach & Engagement at NC State University for a seed grant to fund a Youth Leadership Café. The Center collaborated with Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo), a youth advocacy organization, to co-host the Café. The Community Café model was selected for its relaxed environment and use of conversational leadership to support youth-family-community partnerships and bring about community improvements. A Café on foster youth leadership would allow participants to identify issues and resources and then to formulate an action plan, including steps for sharing what is learned.

Community Café Model: The Community Café model concept, which was originally used by parents to strengthen their families through parent-community partnerships, has since been modified for use with a variety of purposes including foster youth. The Community Café is a variation of the World Café model in which participants discuss large-scale issues affecting many people such as access to health care and nutrition. During a Café, participants spend approximately twenty minutes at a “Café table” and discuss assigned questions related to the event’s overall theme. Then ideas are shared with the entire group during the “Harvest.”

Youth Leadership Café: The event was held at the Family Justice Center in Burlington, North Carolina on March 21, 2014. Sixteen current and former foster youth, nine agency workers, six Center staff members, and one SaySo staff member participated in the Café. Participants arrived from nine North Carolina counties (Alamance, Cumberland, Durham, Forsyth, Gaston, Guilford, Pitt, Robeson, and Wake).

It began at 10 o’clock in the morning and lasted until 3 o’clock in the afternoon. During this time, participants viewed an excerpt from the documentary film, *From Place to Place*, about foster youth who traveled to Washington, D.C. to share with legislators their perspectives on foster care and foster youth. Afterwards, participants listened to a guest speaker who had experienced the foster care system and is transitioning to adulthood with a positive outcome. Participants ate lunch then took part in a two-hour Café activity to brainstorm ideas for implementing youth leadership in their agencies or communities.

The Café activity required that participants join one of eight “Café tables” comprised of a mixture of foster youth and agency workers. Each person stayed with his or her original group throughout the activity. The tables were set up in two rows with four tables per row (A1-A2, B1-B2, etc.). The Café focused on four questions regarding foster youth leadership. Two tables were assigned to each question. Each table contained three or four participants and a pre-selected facilitator. The groups brainstormed and captured ideas for twenty minutes before moving to the next table. The facilitator remained at the table to capture ideas from the next group.

After a short break, the groups returned to their original tables and then joined with their corresponding table (e.g., B1 with B2) that shared the same question to form four larger groups of approximately eight participants and two facilitators. In these groups, each participant chose their top idea from the list of captured responses. The ideas were narrowed down to the top three best ideas through a voting and

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discussion process. One foster youth reported out to all participants as part of the Harvest activity. The Harvested ideas from each of the four questions were written down by a table facilitator onto paper then transferred to large laminated image of a tree in the front of the room by a Center staff member. The tree (Appendix A) acted as a visual aid to convey the concept that the ideas were the “roots” of change that would lead to actions, or “leaves.” While the staff wrote, the Center and SaySo co-hosts facilitated a discussion with the group about their ideas.

Feedback: The Harvest of the question responses (tree roots), the action steps (tree leaves), and the participant survey (Appendix B) feedback were collected for this report. Each participant and facilitator will receive an emailed copy of this report along with a picture of the completed tree. The information in this report will be used in future reports, presentations, and curricula.

Follow-up: In May 2014, each participant will receive an emailed survey focusing on his or her progress towards implementing youth leadership at the agency or community level. The survey states that it is voluntary and refusal to participate will have no negative consequence for the participant. Survey findings will be shared with participants and incorporated into reports, presentations, and curricula.

Overall Message: Development of youth leadership requires commitment from both youth and the adult supporters in their lives. A stronger support system can be built through enhancing youth-family-community partnerships that provide youth with resources along with incentives and opportunities to develop personal and professional skills. Communities and agencies can support the changes needed to improve youth leadership with training workshops to nurture belief in the benefits of youth leadership while also striving to build strong partnerships with youth. The hope is that dual youth and agency commitment to youth leadership will lead to improved efficacy and outcomes for both groups.

“Watch your thoughts for they become words, watch your words for they become actions, watch your actions for they become habits, watch your habits for they become character, watch your character for it becomes your destiny.”- Laozi (Lao-Tzu)

SUMMARY OF IDEAS

Tree Roots/Table Questions

Below are the four table questions answered by the participants while in their small groups. Each letter (A-D) represents the table with that question. The top three ideas selected by the larger groups as the roots of change follow the questions.

The themes were pulled from participant responses given during the small group activity. They are listed alphabetically and **are not** in any particular order.

A. What are some ways to overcome barriers to establishing youth leadership opportunities?

1. Provide individual basic needs
2. Establish supportive, dependable, & net-working relationships
3. Encourage personal development & discover yourself

Themes:

- **Agency improvement:** Agencies can use their resources to cultivate youth leaders. Funding will allow youth to attend conferences, participate in speaking panels, fill leadership positions, receive financial incentives, and provide personal testimonies. However, agencies need to support a cultural shift towards believing in youth leadership. Agency-based trainings or workshops could focus on treating youth as equal partners, honing youth leadership skills, improved communication, and accepting youth mistakes. These actions could build trust and result in positive youth leadership.
- **Establish supportive relationships:** Youth can build their support system by seeking positive role models with whom to establish healthy partnerships. This may be a neighbor, friend, professional, or peer. The youth has to be able to rely on and trust their system throughout their leadership journey.
- **Get connected to community resources:** There are many ways youth can be leaders and develop the necessary leadership skills. Youth can turn to their communities for assistance with their leadership goals. Community programs may focus on job attainment, educational achievement, transitional living, vocational rehabilitation, or internships. Organizations such as SaySo allow youth to network and meet others in their same situation. Youth can also advocate for themselves by writing letters and grants to access resources to get their needs met.
- **Youth self-improvement:** Effective youth leaders improve themselves as well as their communities. They seek assistance with developing advocacy skills and self-awareness as needed. These skills vary but may include proper dress etiquette, active listening, goal setting, and open-mindedness. Youth leaders may effect change by using his/her past experiences to find his/her voice.

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B. What strengths and behaviors should youth/young adults display as leaders in their agencies?

1. Respect (open to ideas & perspective, open-minded, accept the strengths & weaknesses of others)
2. Maturity (persistent, reliable, responsible, confident, genuine, loving, self-aware)
3. Advocate (be prepared, organized, no hidden agendas, mission driven, passionate, express needs)

Themes:

- **Role model qualities:** Leaders are often role models who demonstrate integrity, empathy, accountability, confidence, competence, open-mindedness, respect, cooperation, and humility among other qualities. Leaders often have to think quickly, take risks, and solve problems while also advocating for themselves or others. In addition to good qualities, leaders should have strong communication skills and trust in their support system.

C. What are the benefits to providing youth/young adult leadership in agencies?

1. Changes fabric of services; youth informed foundation; relevant
2. Bring better outcomes by including views of people they serve
3. Positive adult connections; connect with people who care about you; ties in with their mission

Themes:

- **Agency improvement:** Agency-supported youth leadership increases the agency's accountability and efficacy. As leaders, the youth can advocate for improvements to their current and future situations. They could ensure agency awareness of stereotypes, which would strengthen youth-agency relationship. Support of youth-focused programs, youth-inclusion on boards, and youth self-improvement could lead to increased positive outcomes, which would contribute to agency efficacy.
- **Youth improvement:** Empowered youth leaders would have an increased sense of self-worth and worth to their communities. This could result in an increased number of peer mentors with the confidence to educate others. Youth leaders could learn to network and acquire independent living skills such as business planning, advocacy, job attainment, and budgeting

D. What would support youth/young adults with becoming leaders or feeling empowered?

1. Financial incentives
2. Dedicated youth
3. While guiding youth, professionals should remember that everyone makes mistakes; listen with an unbiased ear, and be non-judgmental while youth move towards understanding their story

Themes:

- **Agency improvement:** Agencies should create an infrastructure that would allow for resources and personnel to develop youth leaders. The resources could allow for travel to and participation in seminars, trainings, and other leadership opportunities. Small incentives would help including titles, stipends, and attendance certificates. Personnel could include advisors that would help youth both personally and professionally. All agencies would

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demonstrate unbiased active listening, belief in the youth, patience, and acknowledgement of youth's input and leadership. Lastly, agencies would empower youth by helping them understand agency language.

- ***Healthy personal relationships:*** Empowered youth leaders have the support of positive influences such as professionals, mentors, SaySo, and LINKS. Attendance at leadership events, advocacy opportunities, public speaking practice, strategic storytelling, and feeling actively listened to would all aid in youth empowerment.

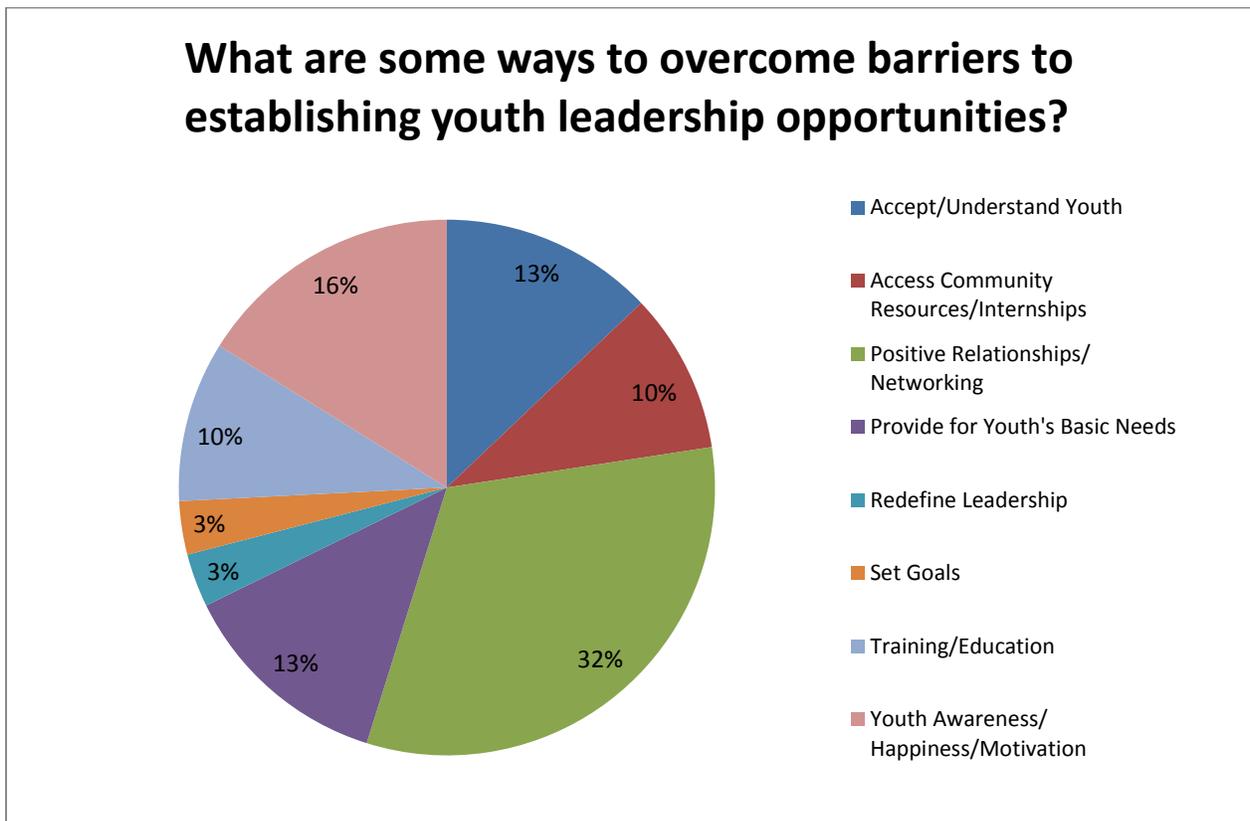
COMPILED RESPONSES

During the Harvest, each participant voted for the top three ideas that best answered the question. Those ideas were later narrowed down to an overall top three to formulate the tree roots. The graphs below are based on each participant’s top three ideas prior to the tree activity. The ideas were analyzed for overlapping language or concepts and then aggregated into eight top responses. Each graph displays the percentage of votes the concepts received out of all the votes. For example, Group A had a total of thirty-one votes prior to deciding on their top ideas. Four participants chose Accept/Understand Youth, which represented 13% of the votes.

Interestingly, top responses to all four questions led by a solid majority ranging from 32% to 48%. The groups felt that the best support for youth leaders is “Unbiased Listening to Youth.” The youth can help themselves in leadership through demonstrating “Maturity/Open-mindedness.” All could overcome barriers to youth leadership through “Positive Relationships/Networking.” Agencies, workers, and youth could benefit from youth leadership in that it can result in “Improved Agency Accountability/Efficacy.”

Group A’s (Chart 3.1) aggregated top response about how to overcome barriers was “Positive Relationships/Networking” with 32% of the votes. Second was “Access Community Resources/Internships” with 16% of the votes. In a tie for third were “Accept/Understand Youth” and “Provide for Youth’s Basic Needs” at 13% each.

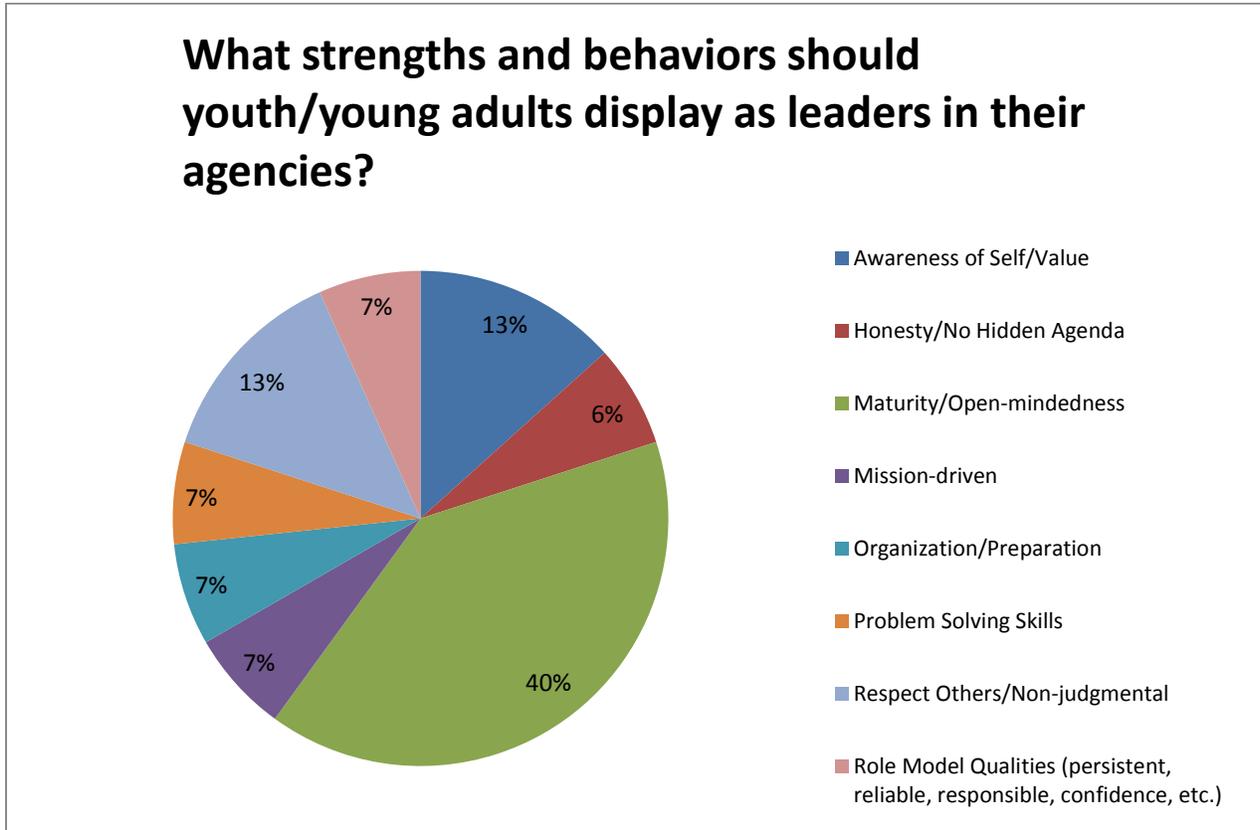
Chart 3.1: Pie Chart for Group A Aggregated Top Responses



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Group B's (Chart 3.2) aggregated top response about strengths that help youth/young adults, as leaders was "Maturity/Open-mindedness" with 40% of the votes. Two responses were in a tie for second: "Awareness of Self/Value" and "Respect Others/Non-judgmental" at 13% each.

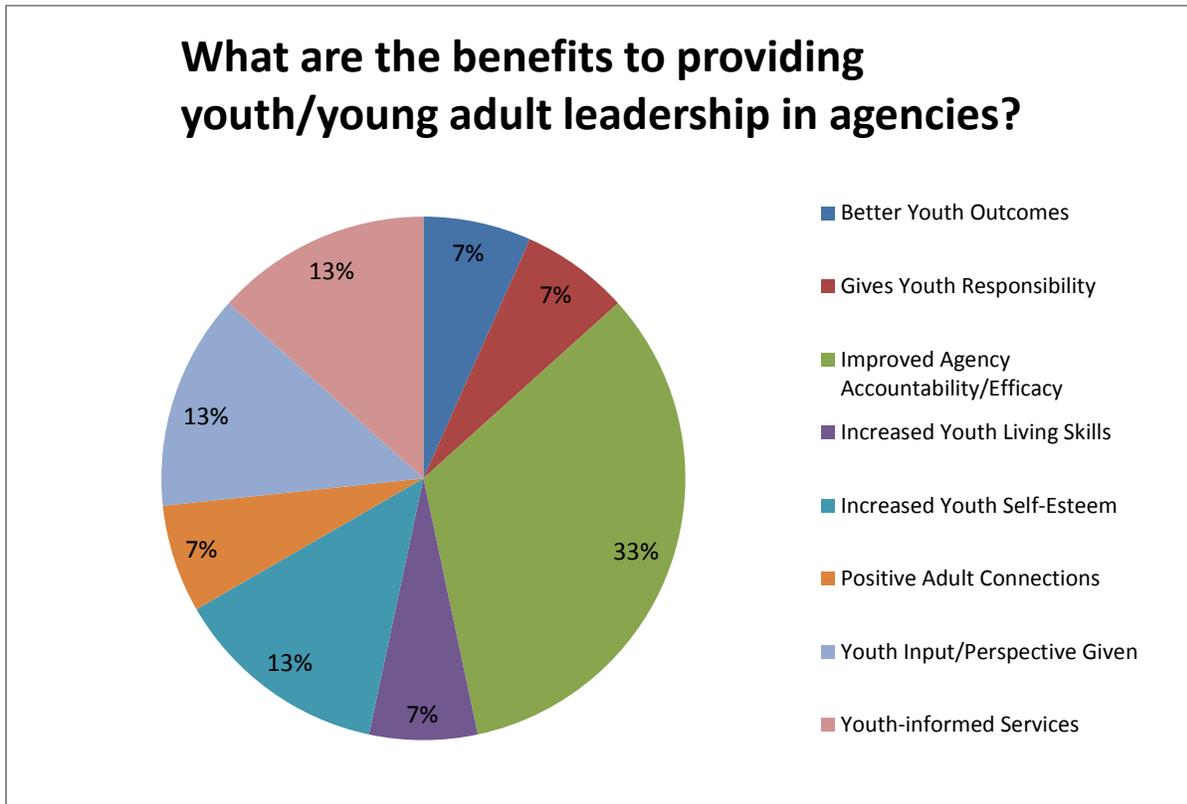
Chart 3.2: Pie Chart for Group B Aggregated Top Responses



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Group C's (Chart 3.3) top aggregated response regarding benefits to providing youth/young adult leadership in agencies was "Improved Agency Accountability/Efficacy" with 33% of the votes. Tied for second were "Youth-informed Services" and "Increased Youth Self-esteem" at 13% each.

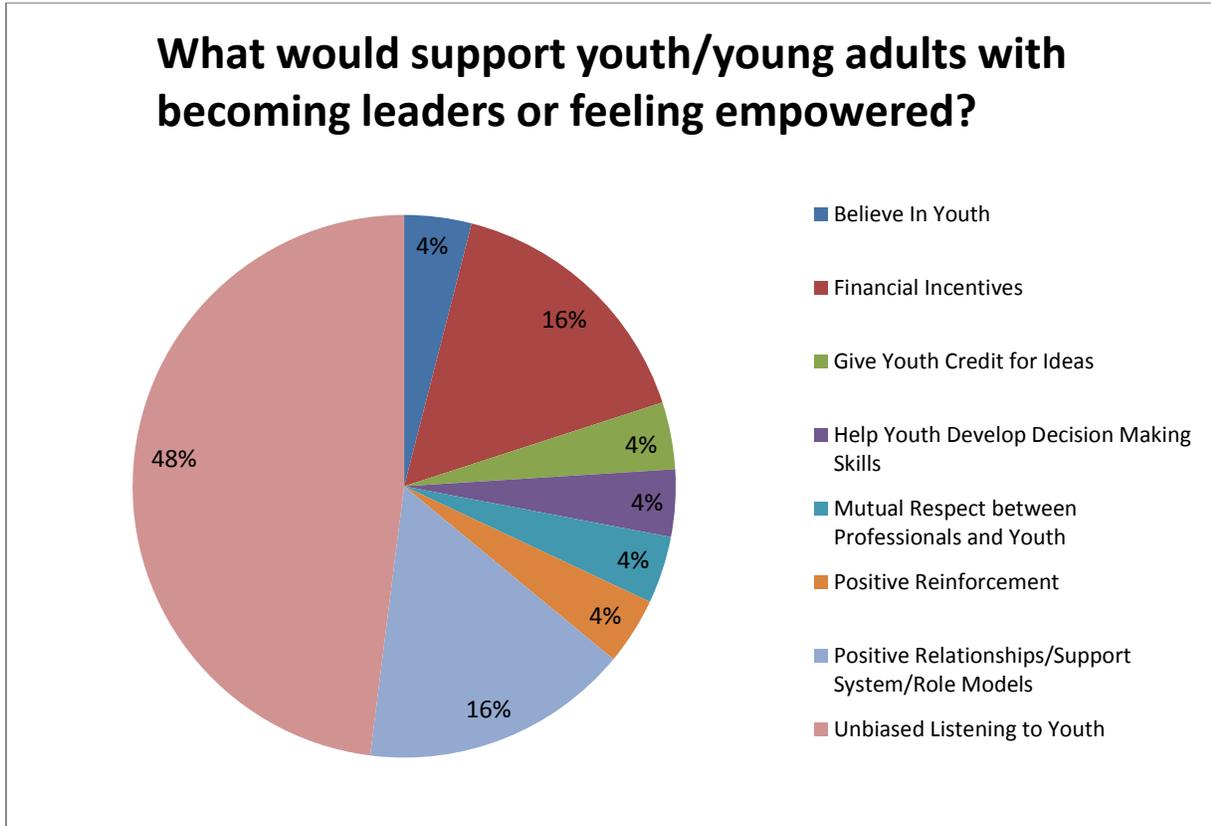
Chart 3.3: Pie Chart for Group C Aggregated Top Responses



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Group D's (Chart 3.4) top aggregated response to what would support youth/young adults in becoming leaders or feeling empowered was "Unbiased Listening to Youth" with 48% of the votes. In a tie for second were "Financial Incentives" and "Positive Relationships/Support System/Role Models" at 16% each.

Chart 3.4: Pie Chart for Group D Aggregated Top Responses



ALL WRITTEN RESPONSES

Participants developed the Tree Leaves/Action Steps together during the Harvest.

Tree Leaves/Action Steps:

1. Adults who advocate for the need for youth advocates
2. Advocacy boards
3. Article writing
4. Learning self-advocacy
5. Positive leadership to encourage youth involvement & leadership
6. Remember everyone is a unique individual
7. Respect self
8. Skill building opportunities
9. Stable housing
10. Teaching and supporting advocacy & self-advocacy
11. Youth board of directors
12. Youth speaking on panels

Below are the answers provided by participants during the small group activity. As part of the Harvest, each participant chose the three top ideas that best answered the question. The total number of votes per idea is bolded in parentheses next to the response. In some instances, no one selected an idea from a particular group; therefore, those groups will have no votes indicated.

Table 1: Participant Table A1, Overcoming Barriers

Participant Table A1 Question	What are some ways to overcome barriers to establishing youth leadership opportunities?
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get connected to alternative job programs/education programs • Get engaged in TLP • Reach out to community resources (1) • Establish supportive relationships (3) • Supportive internship programs (1) • Vocational rehab in school • Mentors (neighbor, friend) • Adults who are open to partner with youth • Educated on proper attire/dress etiquette (NO BS) • Educate youth on overcoming society stereotypes • Finding yourself & happiness (2) • Get over yourself • Ask for help & reach out • Don't allow your past to dictate future • Setting goals (1) • Taking risks • Finding self-motivation (2) • Exploring different options • Networking • Redefine leadership to meet you (1)

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Participant Table A1 Question	What are some ways to overcome barriers to establishing youth leadership opportunities?
Group 2	<p><i>Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence • Supportive adults • Fear of inadequacy • Negative attitude • Not having a support system • Not having resources • Transportation • Lack of affirmation from loved ones • Stereotypes <p><i>Ways to overcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive attitude • Having role models • System needs to provide opportunity • Providing training & education to young people/adults (2) • Training why important to be receptive to youth • Establish “happy” place • Learn to trust people • Join community to accept & support you • Networking & using those resources (2) • Setting short & long term goals • Solicit community supporters - write letters, grants • Bring awareness • Be yourself • Be consistent • Provide information • Don’t be a hypocrite

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Participant Table A1 Question	What are some ways to overcome barriers to establishing youth leadership opportunities?
Group 3	<p><i>Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradition • Fear of past, success • Being passive • Not being observant • Living condition • Lack of opportunity/no platform to develop skills • Money for incentives <p><i>Ways to overcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think outside the box • Revamp the “norm” • Trainings/workshops • Mentor program • Be in tune with self & emotions • Boost leadership skills • Be more knowledgeable • Raise awareness about importance of youth leadership • Bring something unique to table • Be more active in community (personal)

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Participant Table A1 Question	What are some ways to overcome barriers to establishing youth leadership opportunities?
Group 4	<p><i>Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Status quo • Culture • Dependability • Transportation • In transition • Interest • Confidence <p><i>Ways to overcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the value as youth/adult – meet balance • Guidance from professionals • Creating relationships – increase dependability (2) • Funding opportunities (create position) • Provide leadership training • Let youth do things they wouldn't do (conferences) • Youth testimonies • Give youth opportunities to express self • Recognize youth skills & passions • Create opportunity to network • Meet youth where they are (1) • Be open minded • Opportunities for tangible tasks

Table 2: Participant Table A2, Overcoming Barriers

Participant Table A2 Question	What are some ways to overcome barriers to establishing youth leadership opportunities?
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security = provide basic needs (Maslow’s hierarchy of needs) (4) • Funding = \$ money for opportunities • Establish close/positive relationship (1) • Access to quality education (1) • Youth finding their voice • Learning to be self-advocates for themselves • Understanding the need/importance of supports • Treating youth as equals in partnership • Meeting youth where they are (2) • Active listening (not just physically hearing)
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being given opportunity to tell your story • Money → financial resources to get you to places to share your story • Support from management/administration → have to be able to communicate/advocate for what you need from management • Have to have the desire to be a leader (not everyone wants to be a leader) • Need to be able to motivate/build (1) • Confidence in potential youth leaders (help overcome fear of public speaking) • Having exposure to other positive youth • Leaders/role models (1) • Partnership between social worker & youth = social worker opens doors for youth
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to connect/understand youth people (accept them for who they are) (1) • Adults should realize/acknowledge how powerful/positive youth feedback/input is = valuable • Let people make mistakes (both ways) • Agencies can help create opportunities/events/speaking panels for adults to hear from youth • Planting the seed so youth recognize their potential = they can be leaders • Logistics = \$, time, resources, policy (adult supporters for youth) (1) • Administrative approval/support • Awareness of youth making a difference (education = inspiration = role models) • When opportunity knocks = open the door (be fearless)

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Participant Table A2 Question	What are some ways to overcome barriers to establishing youth leadership opportunities?
Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust = building it • Directly involving youth • Creating opportunities for youth to be heard • Challenge certain fears/obstacles & learning from them • Explain benefits of youth leadership (school, resume, networking opportunity) • Providing youth with resources to help better themselves first = help prepare to become a leader • Telling youth about opportunities; create youth leadership trainings • More adult support & encouragement (agency) • Connecting youth (not engaged) to = exposure = outreach to other youth leaders (Ex: SaySo event) (1) • Using your past to help improve your future & others futures • Connecting youth to their inner passion (what they want to speak on/advocate for) • Immediate incentives/rewards = financial resources \$ • True adult supporter with a youth leader = partnership (trusting & reliable relationship)

Table 3: Participant Table B1, Leadership Strengths and Behaviors

Participant Table B1 Question	What strengths and behaviors should youth/young adults display as leaders in their agencies?
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatability • Honesty • Support • Being a role model • Being positive instead of negative • Empathy = understand from my point of view • Accountability • Confidence • Competence • Open-minded/willing to change for the better (1) • Integrity • Awareness/ both audience and self (1) • Mission driven (1) • Learn to work with others • Not having ONE youth at the table because everyone’s perspective is different
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maturity (2) • Honesty • Loyalty • Respect • Tactful/communication • Open-minded • Knowing your triggers/limitations/boundary • Not being afraid to ask for help • Get and stay organized • Have a plan • Stand up for what you believe/ self-advocate • Be yourself • Self-motivation

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Participant Table B1 Question	What strengths and behaviors should youth/young adults display as leaders in their agencies?
<p>Group 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humility/humble • Gratitude/appreciation • Observant • A spirit of cooperation • Concerning • Integration & work with others • Learn how to deal with disrespect • Modesty • Consistency • Discerning • Motivation • Organized • No hidden agenda (1) • Structure/routine • Inner-strength • Communication, positive • Tone • Confidence • Passion • Relevant • Problem solving skills • Initiative • Compassion
<p>Group 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachable/willing to follow instruction • Respecting • Being accountable • Discipline/focus perception/goal • Communication/written, verbal, body language • Be unique team plays • Boldness with resolution and boundaries • Center • Routine • Business-mind • Open-minded • Unity with others as well as self • Self-aware • Community aware

Table 4: Participant Table B2, Leadership Strengths and Behaviors

Participant Table B2 Question	What strengths and behaviors should youth/young adults display as leaders in their agencies?
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication skills (openness, understand your audience) → understand your story and be able to talk about how your story is “bigger” and can inform the system → passion about sharing and informing the system to do better or different • Persistent, reliable, responsible, patience, maturity, confidence, loving & genuine (1) • Problem solving skills – creativity in finding solutions (1) • Willingness to learn what it means to be in a leadership role • Follow to learn protocol so you can be a better leader; will help those at the table learn to respect you and hear you • Respect – don’t judge, listen, don’t laugh at others (1) • Acknowledge your own strength & value – you are a valuable resource and voice (1)
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong personalities – able to be who you are and willing to genuinely share and understand • Able to think on your feet • Trust and be able to be less defensive helps when in leadership → maturity looks like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don’t wear your emotions – put it aside so you can participate effectively but don’t lose the genuine nature of your experience (2) • Being able to advocate for yourself and let others know what you need • Able to listen and know when & how to communicate your point • Able to know your own skills and strengths and put them to use for maximum benefit • Able to get along with different personalities • Accept the strengths & weakness of others (show respect, don’t judge) (1)

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Participant Table B2 Question	What strengths and behaviors should youth/young adults display as leaders in their agencies?
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead by example • Remember you are speaking for others as well – listen to their stories so you can share for others when you have a leadership role • A desire to make a difference and the strength to try • “Watch your thoughts for they become words, watch your words for they become actions, watch your actions for they become habits, watch your habits for they become character, watch your character for it becomes your destiny.” • Keep your motivation positive • Remember humility – the learning and growing continue/you are not a finished product • Be open to different perspectives, ideas, & willing to broaden your agenda (1) • Be prepared and have proactive responses that promote finding solutions • Strategic story telling – knowing when & how to share your story so it has impact
Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest & straight forward – share the truth • Be honest with yourself – what am I okay sharing, doing, what are my limits • Trust and commitment → goes both ways (youth need to be able to trust process & other at the table & partners need to trust the youth to be honest & present) • Appreciative of what you have and what has been given to you and of who has helped along the way (find strength in your story; appreciate those who have stood up for you or helped change things for you) • Being organized and being prepared (1) • Self-directed (have internal motivation) • Take initiative and be dependable • Have a vision – purpose/goal/end game • Willingness to work in a group/collaborate (sometimes lead and sometimes follow) • Willing to take a risk – i.e., offer ideas and be okay if they don’t work or need to be changed – at least be in the conversation → be willing to fall and get back up

Table 5: Participant Table C1, Benefits to Providing Youth/Young Adult Leadership

Participant Table C1 Question	What are the benefits to providing youth/young adult leadership in agencies?
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings about better outcomes – by including views of the people they serve (1) • Have representation of who they are working with – youth led • Having youth there helps agencies to look , focus on youth’s needs & barriers to change for better outcomes • Youth in a leadership position in agency provides a role model for other youth to follow • Hear them, give more quality – been there, know it, understand – youth know what needs to happen (1) • Helps agencies- gives them chance to really listen and learn about what is going on with young people and start from there – using the youth’s own skills at surviving, living, being successful (1) • Helps change to come faster – with their voice agency’s more susceptible to listen to try to do better earlier • Gives youth the leadership experience- job skills that can transfer • Gives youth sense of being valued in community
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having successful & confident youth • Proving statistics wrong, improving chances & opportunities • Providing youth with different opportunities they’ve never had before • Networking, connections • Builds self-esteem • Changing impressions/stereotypes – agencies look at you for what you’ve done not where you’ve been • Able to advocate for what they need – help youth after them • More opportunities for leadership - gives experience • Motivation toward other youth – makes it possible for others • Help convince upper management to give support and make changes as they see youth as leaders • More respect – for both • Gives youth responsibilities –take on and handle new things (1) • Improving communication between partners, youth agencies - make other want to get involved

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Participant Table C1 Question	What are the benefits to providing youth/young adult leadership in agencies?
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have internal passion/motivation (youth, young adults) that outsiders don't have • Youth/young adults have personal investment • Youth/young adults have a part, a voice, and are a part of discussion & process • Agencies & youth/young adults both get something out of it – WIN/WIN • Young adults/youth bring different perspective (1) • What agencies are trying to do affect youth – by involving them they are working with them • Multiple opportunities to get voice heard • Young/youth leaders inspire & motivate other young adults • Young adults/youth share with friends/peers about experiences as leaders – BUILD NETWORKS, get others involved • Peer role models (same experiences, concerns) • Positive adult connections – connect with people who care about you – ties in with their mission (1) • Supports transformations for both • Builds deeper connections (youth/young adult agency) has longer impact
Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change within the youth – personal change - becoming a leader • Other youth encouraging other youth (peer relationship improving) • Provides another view to the situation • Personal benefit, feeling relevant, sense of belonging and being a part of someone's life or a part of their change • Youth bring an active energy • Inspires agencies – hold them accountable; INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICES (2) • Helps youth take ownership in what's going on and feel proud in the changes they are helping make for themselves & others (1) • Having a youth/young person at the table is a success • Success stories help build community's engagement with agency – building mutual trust • Opens opportunities for networking, jobs, learning skills, etc. • Agencies can invest in youth/young adults to work and be a part of agency (training, jobs, etc.); “promote within” “internal mentoring” • Supporting young people through their “journey” supports leadership at all steps of the journey • Helps agencies create other programs for youth • Youth aged out of care – mentor youth in care → help teach MAPP classes • Youth voice gets community involved in more meaningful ways

Table 6: Participant Table C2, Benefits to Providing Youth/Young Adult Leadership

Participant Table C2 Question	What are the benefits to providing youth/young adult leadership in agencies?
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing uncommon things to make them common; e.g., dressing up every day - teaching by example • Requires culture shift to support true partnership • An opportunity to feel appreciated for personal contribution, which gives hope & goals & self-worth (1) • Provides motivation & brings meaning to workers' day • Valued for experience & potential outside status, job role, education • Informing & changing system, acting on what learned • Helps provide hope systems will change
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn independent living skills (business planning, advocacy, job seeking skills, budgeting, teaching from experience) (1) • Need a place to fall back to as age out of care • Prepare early & along the way • Training leaders of tomorrow • New unique perspectives • How to take initiatives in own affairs & when to ask for help • Allows them to see how the system works • By being on a board you learn (how to compromise; how to agree & to disagree; how to care beyond yourself for group, others; how to be open-minded; how to be accountable; how to be dedicated; appreciation for own strengths) • Learn new perspectives

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Participant Table C2 Question	What are the benefits to providing youth/young adult leadership in agencies?
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps keep professional current in their knowledge & ideas • Leadership opportunities can help young people learn financial ways to help later in life & agencies know relevant programs to create • Energy & hope from working with youth form new ideas • Helps agencies see new ways to improve system • Look to Adoption Recruiter for each child & listen to kid what they need in a home to reduce placement • Empowerment by leadership opportunity • Learn how money can be better spent more effectively • Changes the fabric of the foundation of the services – services are youth-informed and relevant (2) • Building a new reputation – e.g., of dependability; gives others something to look up to, hope to be able to start again • Promotes awareness between facts vs. stereotypes • Bridges the gap between lifestyles & gaps • Promotes relevant productivity (1) • Helps stop the cycle of the same reaction, behavior, etc. – opens up new ideas & provides more guidance in life (1) • “We do better when we know better.”
Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes independence • Teaches responsibility • Increases resilience • Teaches life skills • Motivates the group – role model • Motivates on to want to help others • Provides networking opportunities to help get job • Promotes confidence • Promotes accountability – want to be a better person • Being willing, learn to be open – people, jobs, opportunities → emotional intelligence

Table 7: Participant Table D1, Supporting Youth/Young Adults in Leadership

Participant Table D1 Question	What would support youth/young adults with becoming leaders or feeling empowered?
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy personal relationships (1) • Listening to young people (1) • Providing ways to implement youth ideas • Professionals understanding youth • Being part of something bigger (community) • Surrounding yourself and people who have leadership qualities (1) • Giving youth opportunities to speak and be themselves • Knowledge of situation • Having experience in the topic • Practice public speaking • Giving youth choices to feel empowered • Allow youth to make mistakes and guide youth through the process of making healthy decisions (understanding that failure is going to happen) (1) • Understanding that failure is an opportunity to grow • Providing organizational support (culture shift) • Having an equal voice at the table • Understanding the change in dynamics when youth are at the table
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a good relationship with the professionals • Recognizing boundaries of self-care • Listening to youth and applying what they say will build a mutual respect between professional and youth which will prevent tokenism (1) • Give youth tangible things that follow-up with them • Give youth freedom to “do it themselves” • Professional need to build structure for youth before inviting youth • Understanding agency limitations • Adults/agency letting go of control, support and believing in youth while remaining positive • When listening be unbiased (1) • Help make connections • While guiding youth, professionals should remember that everyone makes mistakes, listen with an unbiased ear, and be non-judgmental while youth work towards understanding the highlights of their story (6) • Providing more than one opportunity, even after past mistakes (wrong choices) • Life conflict courses – standard values and expectations • Exposure to opportunities that can help implement ideas • Traveling to seminars – skill building motivational

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Participant Table D1 Question	What would support youth/young adults with becoming leaders or feeling empowered?
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic storytelling – telling your story to leave them with a lasting impression • Understanding the highlights of your own story • Self-realization • Understanding the audience your are speaking to • Having a good partnership to help you share your story • Self-confidence and boundaries to know when to say “no”
Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being non-judgmental (1) • Build on youth strengths • Get support from leaders in community • Networking • Rites of passage • Life skills • Education/career path • Personal advisor to track success (personal/professional life) • Giving youth credit for ideas being used (1) • Understanding leadership is a process • Understanding and seeing the bigger picture • Having a strong foundation

Table 8: Participant Table D2, Supporting Youth/Young Adults in Leadership

Participant Table D2 Question	What would support youth/young adults with becoming leaders or feeling empowered?
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated adults • Attending leadership events • Knowing that what they say matters • Confidence – high self-esteem • Faith/spiritual beliefs • Good social workers • Connecting and networking • Opportunities to partner and do things • Knowing what opportunities are out there • Freedom to be yourself • Honest people around you • Reliable communication • Local leadership (SaySo chapters) • LINKS • Positive role models (1) • People explaining what’s going on • Constant support even when discourage or when we make mistakes
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors • Being believe in (1) • Feeling comfortable with your own story • Stepping up and being prepared and able to speak • Positive reinforcement (1) • Being motivated by positive messages from social worker • Being accepted for and as I am • Accountability partners • Agency staff/professionals are actively interested in and listening to me • Feeling met halfway or meeting me where I am • Being allowed to grow from where I am and not expected to act like other people • Personal connections • Extra push • Being held accountable and holding other accountable • Having a conflict or struggle and working through it • Finding a common ground – something in common • Show that you care or have had a struggle – don’t just say I don’t know what you’ve been through or going through and then tell me what to do or what I need • If you do not know don’t act like it – ask dedicated youth (3)

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Participant Table D2 Question	What would support youth/young adults with becoming leaders or feeling empowered?
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a title • Be given an opportunity to be a leader • Constant encouragement from their adult • Peer relationships with younger youth as a leader • Knowing that they have a say so with what's going on • Having a great supportive system backing the youth leader (1) • The adult supported having patience with the youth leader • Monetary incentive/reward/stipend • Information/being informed • Being a part of different leadership groups such as SAYSO and getting credit for what they do • Certificates/acknowledgments for attending, speaking, informing, meeting, etc. • Having responsibilities • Adults/agency trusting the youth leader to do the job • Opportunities and resources (clothes, cards, transportation) • Being given space to do the work
Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial incentives (4) • Having a vision of change that can go on your resume • Knowing or being told that your uniqueness is your strength • Opportunities to do & see things • Opportunities to travel • Time to get to know yourself • Training and knowledge • Help with vocabulary – cheat sheet for agency words – how to put things into words • Knowing that you matter • Knowing that your voice matters • Being given choices about your future • Positive perspective about yourself from you and other people in your life • Ability to persevere • Knowing that the concerns (“issues”) you face are a part of a larger picture and you can be a part of that change

PARTICIPANT SURVEY FEEDBACK

The two participant feedback charts below represent the average responses per question from the post-Café survey. The survey utilized Appreciative Inquiry, which is a method that focuses on the positive aspects of the topic instead of the deficits. The participants specified positive ways to improve upon the Café and foster youth leadership.

Overall, the participants viewed the Café favorably and plan to use the brainstormed ideas to develop action steps that lead to lasting change in their agencies and communities.

In comparison to youth, workers and facilitators reported greater satisfaction with the Café especially when responding to youth leadership questions. This is possibly due to their viewing the Café as a networking opportunity more so than the youth did. They may also feel more confident in their ability to create leadership opportunities at their agencies.

The youth gave a lower, though still positive, average rating when questioned about making connections at the Café. There are several possibilities for their responses including (1) less experience with networking when compared to the workers and facilitators, (2) not viewing the Café as a networking opportunity, and (3) prior relationships with each other outside of the Café.

In regards to the open-ended questions, participants provided mostly positive responses. When asked what they liked most about the Youth Leadership Café many noted the productive conversations between the youth and the workers. Some participants appreciated the small group size and the keynote speaker, Marcella Middleton, a college senior and former foster youth.

When asked what would have made the Café better, responses ranged from occurring more often and having more interactivity to including more participants such as judges, legislators, administrators, and Guardians Ad Litem (GALS).

When asked about long-term implementation of the brainstormed ideas many indicated that they would continue to support youth through advocacy and conversation. Others indicated more concrete ideas such as developing local chapters, creating leadership opportunities, and providing this report to SaySo chapters and LINKS supervisors.

Table 9: Participant Feedback about the Youth Leadership Café Event

QUESTION	Avg. Foster Alumni Response (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree)	Avg. Worker/Facilitator Response (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree)
Today's Café ran very smoothly	3.3	3.8
The table questions were relevant to the topic	3.6	3.8
Today's topic was relevant to foster youth leadership	3.7	3.8
The group conversations between youth and youth-serving workers were beneficial	3.5	3.8

Table 10: Participant Feedback about Youth Leadership

QUESTION	Avg. Foster Alumni Response (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree)	Avg. Worker/Facilitator Response (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree)
The Café allowed me to establish connections with others at my agency or in my community	3.1	3.6
Youth leadership is a goal that I will work towards at my agency or in my community	3.3	3.9
The Café increased my belief that youth leadership is important	3.5	3.9
Youth leadership is supported at my agency or in my community	3.3	3.4

Table 11: What Participants Liked Most about the Youth Leadership Café

Survey Question: What did you like most about the Youth Leadership Café?	
FOSTER ALUMNI	WORKER/FACILITATOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the opportunity to discuss with youth-worker as well as youth. Worker bring a great perspective. • Seeing some old SaySo friends and being able to vocalize my opinions about youth leadership. • The conversation/food. • My perspective was valued and I knew it was being documented. • I like the collaboration between the youth. Moderator, & youth-serving workers! • Getting to meet other youth from care & listening to keynote speaker. • The group activities and hearing everyone’s responses to their questions within the different group. • The conversations. • The interactions between everyone. The information shared. • How great the people and speaker were. • Presenters & dedication of the supporters & staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing the youth speak out in a positive way. • How open-minded everyone was with their ideas. • Small enough groups to connect meaningfully. The facilitators did a great job letting youth formulate the ideas and did a great job confirming that they were writing the ideas down as youth intended. • The small group interaction. People seem to be more willing to share in smaller groups. Also, the brainstorming was fun and produced some great ideas. • That I could not choose where to sit when I came in- good move. • Opportunity to hear youth’s perspective & experience w/youth leadership & gain ideas about how to incorporate it into our agency. • I enjoyed the opportunity to connect and interact with other youth and workers. • Youth speaker = Marcella. Video piece to help engage youth. • The youth & adults coming together to discuss and learn from one another. • Meeting youth and the video. • The new experience for me to meet new people and their ideas. • I like the questions that were asked at each table. • That the youth & volunteers bring it exciting to the table & they were able to process. • Group discussions.

Table 12: What Participants Thought Would Make the Youth Leadership Café Even Better

Survey Question: What would make the Youth Leadership Café better?	
FOSTER ALUMNI	WORKER/FACILITATOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline discussion/schedule. Have it on a weekend so I don't have to miss school. • Maybe a nicer venue, it was okay though. ☺ But all in all, it was great. • More movement. • Have more diversity in youth and professional disciplines. Always, more funding. • I would increase attendance by involving judges & legislators. • More time; more games; more informational stuff for the upcoming youth. • Nothing it was great. • More people. • The group talks shorter. • More participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have more frequent. • To me you all are doing a great job. I would say make it open for youths in the community who's unaware of this event. • Fruit (apples, bananas) with lunch instead of chips as a snack. 1 less round: people were a bit worn out by the time we voted. • If youth were leading (as in being the facilitators) the group discussions and the larger discussion. • Cozier atmosphere. • 10-2 time frame. Be offered annually & engage administrators, community stakeholders, GAL, judges, etc. • I though the event was helpful-maybe provide more concrete next steps. • We needed a larger group in the Café- it would have led to better, deeper conversation. • More interactive activities. • The table discussion were lengthy. A lot of down time. • More space & a room that will be able to keep down the noise level • Everything was perfect.

Table 13: What Participants Plan to Do about Youth Leadership

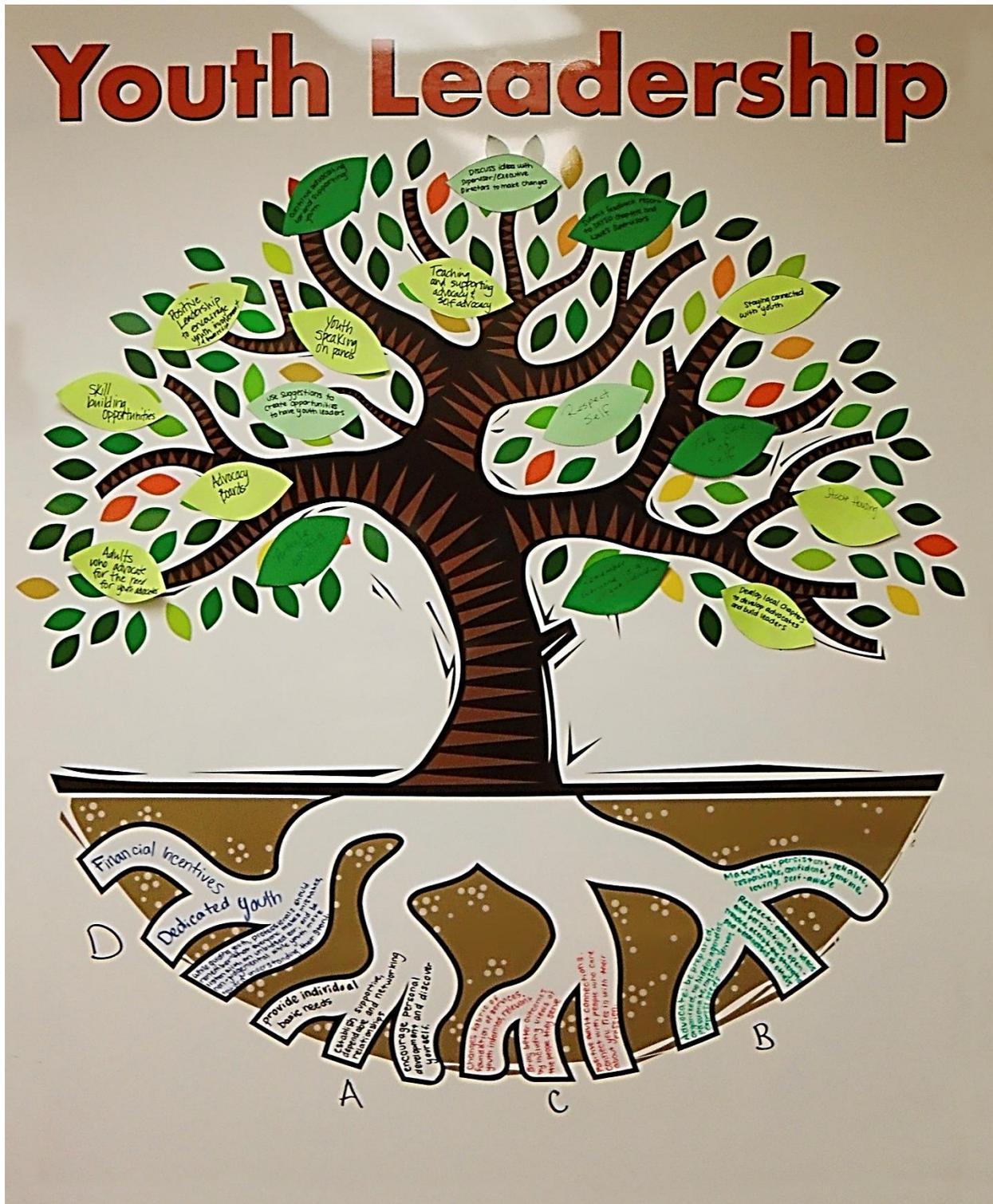
Survey Question: What will you do to ensure that the youth/young adult leadership ideas developed today are implemented at your agency or in your community long-term?	
FOSTER ALUMNI	WORKER/FACILITATOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit the report I receive, discuss this with my SaySo local chapter and LINKS supervisor. • I don't think I will, if asked, I will, but otherwise I know this event will be discussed. • I will just keep on pushing community projects for youth until it happens. • I will keep them in mind & pass them along. • Stay in contact with people & share ideas w/my agency. • To keep it alive; keep bringing it up at LINKS & SaySo meetings. • I will continue to advocate for myself and others. • Commitment and leadership. • Tell every and any one who will listen. • Develop local chapters in the region. Advocate and build leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate. • Continuing going to my meeting and checking my emails. • Continue to build relationships & trust. • I will make sure I advocate for these ideas as valid and important to the agencies I work with now and in the future. • Great youth opportunities to exercise as many of their ideas as possible when possible. • Stay connected w/young people. • Connect with supervisor/Executive Director to develop long-term vision for youth leadership. • I will take ideas into my agency & try to ensure they are considered & utilized. • Start using the suggestions and placing youth in positions to become youth leaders. • Continue to connect and form relationships with youth. • By having people you will build support. • I really need support from upper management. • I'd make sure that I was able to communicate what matters to the youth & how they develop ideas, thoughts & processes to become better advocates. • Stay involved.

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APPENDIX A: YOUTH LEADERSHIP TREE



APPENDIX B: YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAFÉ PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Youth Leadership Café Feedback Survey

March 21, 2014

Please take a moment to let us know your thoughts on the Youth Leadership Café and foster youth leadership.

The goal of the Youth Leadership Café today was to develop the youth-family-community partnerships that support the leadership of current and former foster youth. With that in mind, please answer the following questions about today’s event and about foster youth leadership in your agency and community. Results from this survey will be compiled and used to improve future Café’s and advance our understanding of foster youth leadership.

1. What was your role at today’s Café? Check as many as apply to you.

- Foster Care Alumni Youth-Serving Worker Other _____

2. Thinking about today’s event, rate each of the following on a scale of 1 to 4.

Today’s Café ran very smoothly.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
The table questions were relevant to the topic.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Today’s topic was relevant to foster youth leadership.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
The group conversations between youth and youth-serving workers were beneficial.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree

3. Thinking about for foster youth leadership, rate each of the following on a scale of 1 to 4.

The Café allowed me to establish connections with others at my agency or in my community.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Youth leadership is a goal that I will work towards at my agency or in my community.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
The Café increased my belief that youth leadership is important	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Youth leadership is supported at my agency or in my community.	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree

4. What did you like most about the Youth Leadership Café?

5. What would make the Youth Leadership Café better?

6. What will you do to ensure that the youth/young adult leadership ideas developed today are implemented at your agency or in your community long-term?

7. Comments:

Thank You for participating today and for taking the time to provide feedback.