



## FAQ

### **What is the “Youth Driven Spaces” Initiative?**

The Youth Driven Space (YDS) initiative is a 2-year project, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, in which six to eight youth-serving programs in Michigan will serve as pilot sites to receive intensive training and coaching/consulting. Through training and coaching/consulting pilot sites will develop and support opportunities for older youth to authentically lead programs and share in their organizational governance.

### **Why would my organization want to participate?**

For many youth serving agencies it’s hard to attract and retain large numbers of older teens. Youth-serving organizations know teens want ownership for how they spend their time, but historically, it has been a struggle to give it to them within the context of after-school programs.

The Youth Driven Space approach has been effective in increasing participation of older youth, helping provide higher quality programs that are exciting for teens and helping them develop a range of important “21<sup>st</sup> Century skills”.

### **What are the expected outcomes?**

Specifically as a result of the Youth Driven Space initiative, we expect the following to happen at each pilot site:

- more teens will participate and be strongly engaged in programs
- teens will develop 21st century skills: leadership, communications and critical thinking
- programs will better meet the needs of youth by bringing in youth voice and leadership when designing projects and initiatives
- organizations will increase authentic youth leadership by involving youth in higher order roles within their organizations

### **What are the activities that will be a part of the YDS Initiative?**

After selecting the 6-8 pilot sites, a three-day, residential training in August 2010 begins the program. Teams of teens/adult staff & volunteers from each youth-serving organizations will participate in training with the following goals: 1) (better) understand the principles of youth-driven practice; 2) learn program and organizational strategies that support youth-driven practice; and 3) make plans for organizational and program changes that they will apply in their setting to support youth-driven practice.

For the 15 months following the training, each pilot site will receive a series of on-site visits that include consulting, coaching and training for staff, youth and volunteers. These components provide a means to support, evaluate and monitor youth-driven practices and training strategies. They also provide a chance for agencies to continue to develop and implement youth-driven practices with consultation.

**Who is overseeing and running this project?**

The grantee for this project is the Neutral Zone, Ann Arbor's Teen Center. The Neutral Zone is one of a few teen centers in the country in which youth decision-making and involvement permeates multiple levels of organizational governance and program operations. Our youth-driven philosophy rests on two core practices: 1) genuine partnerships between adults and youth, and 2) opportunities for youth to take on real, meaningful organizational roles.

Other organizations and people will partner with us to lead this work. The David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, a prominent research, development, and consulting organization, will lead delivery of the YDS intervention with pilot sites and support the content development and research teams. Michigan State University's Center for Community Evaluation and Research, evaluators for over 300 youth-serving programs across the state of Michigan, will lead work the project's evaluation and assessment. Additionally the project will receive support from Stephen Y. Nose, a former Neutral Zone Board member and consultant with S|Y|N Associates LLC.

**What are the benefits for my organization if I were to be selected to participate?**

Youth-serving organizations will receive the following benefits as a result of their participation:

- 3-day intensive residential training institute for (up to) 10 staff/adult volunteers AND youth participants; all travel, lodging, meals and training material expenses are covered.
- 15-month coaching/consulting/on-site training with certified High/Scope trainers and staff/teens from the Neutral Zone, Ann Arbor Teen Center.
- A \$4,000 award, over the 18-month project, to help offset staff time for participating as a pilot site.
- A host of resources to support on-going implementation including guidebooks, access to on-line tools.
- Helping to create a new network of youth-serving programs throughout Michigan.

**What commitments do I have to make as an organization selected to participate?**

In order to ensure successful collaboration on this pilot initiative, sites must consider their commitment to the following items:

- Organization's key stakeholders (Board, staff, youth, key volunteers or community supporters) are informed and support the project's goals, philosophy, and activities.
- Executive staff are open to support organizational changes in policies and protocols based on practices learned in training & coaching, with a focus on bringing youth into meaningful roles within the organizational structure.
- Executive staff commit themselves and key staff to participating in professional development activities and being an integral part of planning and implementing processes
- An interest and commitment exists among core youth participants to have increased leadership roles and become involved in the leadership of programs and organization
- Completing evaluation documents and supporting the monitoring of progress on the implementation of new practices, organizational changes, and youth outcomes.

**Where can I get additional information?**

For additional information, please contact:

John Weiss, Executive Director  
Neutral Zone - Ann Arbor Teen Center.  
310 E. Washington  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
734.214.9995  
[weiss@neutral-zone.org](mailto:weiss@neutral-zone.org)