



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT LEARNING EXCHANGE REPORT

*Summary of Conversation and Emerging Best Practices
Van Asselt Community Center, December 7, 2019*



Youth Engagement Learning Exchange Report

Overview

This report summarizes an initial conversation on youth engagement involving representatives of three of the four coalitions participating in Communities of Opportunity-Rainier Valley, including Onboard Othello/HOSTED, Multicultural Coalition (MCC), and the Rainier Beach Action Coalition (RBAC).

This gathering represents one of three deliverables of an Emerging Partnership Needs and Opportunities project funded by the Community of Opportunity Learning Community. The other two pillars are Citizen Journalist trainings led by RBAC with HOSTED and MCC youth and a year-end Youth Engagement Recognition Celebration.

The overall goal of this project is to build on the initial experiences of citizen journalist trainings led by RBAC with HOSTED to launch a process for encouraging and documenting collaborations around other emerging best practices in youth engagement across COO-Rainier Valley.

At the end of the scheduled time, participants expressed an interest in reconvening next year to go into greater depth on specific challenges and practices and to identify additional opportunities for collaboration.

Thanks to Haregu Kidane, the coordinator of COO-Rainier Valley steering committee for her assistance in mapping out and documenting this meeting. We also express our gratitude to Puget Sound Sage, for agreeing to serve as fiscal agent for this grant.

Structure of the Learning Exchange

Eight representatives from OBO/HOSTED, MCC, and RBAC met for two hours on Saturday, December 7, 2019, to introduce their respective youth engagement activities, highlighting challenges, successes, and emerging best practices. Sharing overviews of each program occupied the majority of our time together, with preliminary discussions on challenges and successes to be supplemented by an online survey and ongoing conversations.

In attendance

Onboard Othello: HOSTED (Healthy Othello Safe through Environmental Design) in partnership with New Holly Youth Leadership and Enrichment Club

- Cynda Rochester, HOSTED Program Director
- Phillippia Goldsmith, New Holly Youth Leadership and Enrichment Club, Community Builder
- Ivory, New Holly Youth Leadership and Enrichment Program, Adult Advisor

Multicultural Coalition (MCC)

- Asmeret Habte, Program Director
- Shiku Wainaina, Youth Engagement Director

Rainier Beach Action Coalition (RBAC)

- Rashad Barber, Corner Greeter Coordinator
- Makayla Miles, Beach Five
- Ken Gillgren, SE Seattle FreedomNet

Communities of Opportunity-Rainier Valley (COO-RV)

- Haregu Kidane, Steering Committee Coordinator

Key Aspects of Youth Engagement Programs at HOSTED, MCC, and RBAC

The following information was collected from participant answers to the question:

How does your project or organization currently engage with youth to participate in activities that promote community connection?

Rainier Beach Action Coalition (RBAC)

Program Overview

- RBAC has operated programs specifically focused on youth engagement for about 10 years, while also engaging youth in earlier community activities such as the Back2School Bash.
- RBAC Programs are organized into four Action Areas: (1) A Beautiful Safe Place (including public safety and the arts), (2) A Place for Everyone (inc Economic Development), (3) Lifelong Learning, and (4) Growing Food to Develop Healthy Industry
- Corner Greeters is a public safety program that reclaims five areas identified as crime "hotspots," or sometimes referred to as "pearls," by holding biweekly "pop-up" events rotating through the locations that engage the community in fun activities, resource and information sharing, and surveys
- "Pop-up" events are preceded by scouting activities in which youth meet with local businesses and other stakeholders
- Other youth engagement programs include the Farm Stand, Beach Five, and YATTA Rising, in which youth participate in specific project and learn about system change.
- Farm Stand Fellows undergo significant training in customer service skills and gain knowledge about where food actually comes from
- The FreedomNet citizen journalism program is RBAC's longest, continuously running youth engagement activity and was launched to help shape the public narrative, establish RBAC's presence, and document accomplishments and milestones in near-real time.
- The Rainier Beach News Wire is a Twitter list of entrusted community sources including youth who have been given individual accounts, published on RBAC's Web site for access by those who do not use social media such as Twitter.
- FreedomNet is written into youth job descriptions as an intrinsic component of their work and not a separate job.

Representative Challenges and Successes

- Challenge of developing connections/relationship with families
- Challenge of balancing monetary compensation with other types of incentives

- There has been a 30% reduction in crime since the start of the Corner Greeter project under the A Beautiful Safe Place for Youth (ABSPY) initiative, which also includes organizations such as King County Boy's and Girls Club and Safe Passageways

Emerging Best Practices

- Youth engagement in establishing processes and owning the work
- Incorporating scouting, or onsite conversations with local businesses, the week before a "pop-up" event.
- Developing a pathway for continuing to develop more focused skills for youth aging out of a program.
- Everyone trained in a standard set of skills, such as citizen journalism, with assignments rotated weekly to maintain the freshness of near-real-time documentation and constantly build capacity for expansion
- Youth mentors/program coordinators
- "Business" social media accounts with built-in safeguards
- Community-based, youth-driven "credentialing" program for "certifying" youth in a variety of skills that they have identified and are deemed relevant to career development

HOSTED

Program Overview

- "Place-based" events and physical improvements to reclaim public spaces; staffed by middle school-aged youth from New Holly Youth Leadership and Enrichment Club
- Monthly planning meetings and events that involved youth in environmental improvements and community engagement activities
- Conducting surveys to confirm program directions and priorities
- Engaging youth in deciding fun, community-engaging activities and environmental change priorities

Representative Challenges and Successes

- Paying youth didn't guarantee they would know what they were doing; called upon adult advisors to serve as guides and mentors during planning and activities. Need more training for adult advisors
- Reported mistrust of youth by elders; having youth and elders engage in positive activities together in public spaces, gaining respect, support and self-confidence
- Coordinating schedules with youth and advisors; youth advisors beginning to step up to assume more responsibility
- Partnering with Enrichment Youth Program lets us leverage their family connections

Emerging Best Practices

- Base decisions on publicly available data, community input and youth engagement in planning and implementation
- Draw upon partners experience and resources to address specific challenges
- Actively involve youth in improving quality/content of surveys and public materials
- Cross-generational activities, particularly between youth and neighborhood senior citizens
- Job skill preparation

- Tried Citizen Journalism but requires more resources to be able to continue and grow

New Holly Youth Leadership and Enrichment Club

Program Overview

- New Holly Youth Leadership and Enrichment Club serves around 40 youth in two age-level programs, organized by gender at community request; meets weekly
- Funded by parent-led funding effort, Parent C-Design, focused on ensuring youth have positive adults in their lives
- Creating space that encourages youth to speak up
- Program activities include a work component and the youth engagement component with HOSTED
- Limited resources as program under Seattle Housing Authority
- Serving residents of New Holly community
- Staffed by youth engagement specialist, community builder, education engagement specialist, and 10 adult advisors
- Connecting older youth to employment opportunities and assisting with development of life skills, including college applications and preparation
- Provide safe gathering space on Wednesday afternoons, including quarterly events, enrichment experiences, for youth who are not in other organized programs,

Representative Challenges and Successes

- Shifted focus for HOSTED program to middle school youth after discovering that high school youth were already juggling multiple priorities
- Many kids coming from large households with significant family responsibilities; mentors and staff maintain direct contact with families through texting, phone calls, visits

Emerging Best Practices

- Focusing on community building activities and events in their own community; helping to claim and maintain safety of "our space."
- Youth-elder activities, such as manicure sessions, paint and sip, New Year's celebrations
- Modeling Wednesday gatherings after My Sisters Keeper/My Brothers Keeper mentoring programs

Multicultural Coalition (MCC)

Program Overview

- Working with ethnic/community-based organizations rather than geographic focus
- Every MCC member organization has a youth component
- MCC is focusing on shared programming in two major areas:
 - Youth for Peace, a two-year initiative led by Urban Family, focusing on leadership, civic engagement, championing policies against violence (domestic and street violence); made a presentation at Rainier Beach High School.
 - Career Pathways in four areas, STEM, Aerospace, entrepreneurship and medicine
- Horn of Africa working at South Center on diversion programming, including youth women from New Holly

- Somali Services has tutoring program, cultural presentations, perform dances, intergenerational.
- Anticipating move into common facility at Othello Square, and therefore emphasizing leadership development

Representative Challenges and Successes

- Parent denial is one of the largest links in diversion programming

Emerging Best Practices

- Job skill development framework (couldn't always here what Shiku and Asmeret were describing, so please fill this part in, since there was significant interest)
- Intergenerational activities involving youth and elders
- Focusing on cultural traditions and the arts, including public performances
- Peace circles

Emerging Best Practices in Youth Engagement

√: Currently implemented (√): Partner program +: Adding in 2020 (+): Like to add but need additional resources

Emerging Best Practice	Examples	HOSTED	RBAC	MCC
Youth engagement in establishing processes and owning the work	Monthly or weekly planning meetings	√	√	
Incorporating scouting, or onsite conversations with local businesses, the week before a "pop-up" event.	Including onsite preparation prior to event on later date	+	√	
Developing a pathway for continuing to develop more focused skills for youth aging out of a program.	Corner Greeter → Clean Crew, Beach Five or YATTA		√	
Youth mentors/program coordinators	Including adult advisors, participation in planning and activities	√	√	√
"Business" social media accounts with built-in safeguards	FreedomNet	+	√	
Community-based, youth-driven "credentialing" program for "certifying" youth in a variety of skills that they have identified and are deemed relevant to career development	Corner Greeter program, expanding into all youth programs	+	√	
Base decisions on publicly available data, community input and youth engagement in planning and implementation	Including public safety data, specifically designed research projects	√	√	
Draw upon partners experience and resources to address specific challenges	Citizen journalism, adult supervisors, farm stand operations	√	√	√
Actively involve youth in improving quality/content of surveys and public materials	Testing, revising, administering, and reviewing results	√	√	
Cross-generational service activities, particularly between youth and neighborhood senior citizens	Farm stand elder participation, "pop-up" events	√	√	√
Job skill preparation	Customer service, operating coffee shop, farm stand, interviewing, team building	(√)	√	√
Focusing on community building activities and events in their own community; helping to claim and maintain safety of "our space."	Inflorescence Park, Corner Greeter "hotspots," town meetings, festivals	√	√	
Youth-elder recreational activities, such as manicure sessions, paint and sip, New Year's celebrations		√	√	√
Modeling Wednesday gatherings after My Sisters Keeper/My Brothers Keeper mentoring programs		(√)		
Job skill development framework (couldn't always here what Shiku and Asmeret were describing, so please fill this part in, since there was significant interest)				√
Focusing on cultural traditions and the arts, including public performances	Traditional arts and crafts, including performance arts	+		√
Peace circles			√	√
Incorporating citizen journalism into programming to engage youth In near-real-time documentation and shaping public narrative	Public story, event documentation, milestone tracking	(+)	√	+