



# Leading Successful Meetings with Young People and Adults

Part of “walking the assets talk”—doing yourself what you tell others to do—is having both youth and adults participate in leadership and decision making. But how do you make sure this is a good experience for everyone involved?



## GETTING STARTED

- ✦ **Be creative and sensitive about meeting times and places.** For example, if evening meeting times interfere with adults’ time with their families and Saturday times are bad for Jewish youth, meet on a week-day at lunchtime in the school cafeteria. Identify group members who can offer rides to others who need them.
- ✦ **Understand the needs of all participants.** Offer child care if needed. Provide meeting notes for those who cannot attend.
- ✦ **Since many youth don’t carry calendars with them, have adults make reminder phone calls** a day or two before each meeting.
- ✦ **If adults don’t know the young people’s needs, have them ask the young people** and then ask again after a meeting or two.
- ✦ **If youth don’t know adults’ needs, have them ask the adults** and then ask again after a meeting or two.
- ✦ **Serve snacks!**

## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE ISSUES

- ✦ **Talk openly about language issues.** Will you all go by first names? Is the term “kids” offensive to some participants? What about statements like, “You’re too young to understand” or “You’re too old to understand”?
- ✦ **Become aware of and confront your biases.** Watch for unconscious stereotyping by age, appearance or clothing style, gender, race, ethnicity, or economic class.
- ✦ **Give each participant—youth and adult—a chance to talk,** and give each speaker your full attention.
- ✦ **Talk with each other seriously** and be ready to redirect the conversation if one generation starts to talk too much, interrupt or ignore others, or be critical or scolding.
- ✦ **If youth are hesitant to speak up or tend to respond “I don’t know” to questions they probably have an answer for, help them identify the reasons for their reticence** (e.g., fear of put-downs, difficulty telling when people are done talking). Be encouraging when young people do speak up.

## TRAINING, SUPPORT, AND PROCESS

- ✦ **Make sure to bring new people—youth and adult—up to speed.** Review the group's goals and provide pre-meeting training for newcomers about basics such as meeting structures, discussion ground rules, and agendas and reports.
- ✦ **Be aware of the developmental needs of young people and accommodate the preferred learning styles of all group members.** This may mean adding more experiential meeting elements, augmenting written and verbal communications with visual aids, and breaking into small groups.
- ✦ **Start off with an icebreaker, game, or other fun activity** that helps participants with the transition from other activities to the meeting.
- ✦ **Have youth and adults periodically evaluate the role of participants.** For example, are youth being given only insignificant or peripheral tasks?
- ✦ **Be clear about each participant's role** and level of authority, the time and number of meetings, and the expected duration of the commitment.
- ✦ **Plan concrete projects.** Give youth responsibilities early, and expect achievement.
- ✦ **Let everyone learn from her or his own mistakes.**
- ✦ **Balance leadership roles** and positions between youth and adults.