EXTENDING THE REACH OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CIVIC ACTIVISM

Research Results from the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative

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Connecting People and Ideas to Create Change
The success of the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative (YLDI) is a result of extraordinary partnership, vision, and dedication by adults and young people at organizations that range from community-based grassroots groups to large national establishments. YLDI organizations across the country shared their time and their programs. We thank the staff and young people at 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth, C-Beyond, Leadership Excellence, Mi Casa Resource Center for Women, National Youth Advocacy Coalition, OUTRIGHT, Tohono O’odham Community Action, Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, Youth United for Community Action, and The Young Women’s Project.

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In 1999 the Ford Foundation saw an opportunity to explore ways to strengthen youth development through civic activism. We thank program officer Inca Mohamed and the Ford Foundation for their foresight and partnership throughout this endeavor. Without all of these people and organizations, this research would not have been possible.

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For more information onExtending the Reach of Youth Development through Civic Activism, please visit the YLDI website at http://www.yldi.org.
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Throughout the conception, implementation, and completion of this initiative, it was clear that the creators and partners of the Youth Leadership Development Initiative (YLDI) brought uncommon passion, wisdom, and heart to this extraordinary venture. At the heart of many lively exchanges was always young people’s exuberance, optimism, and limitless capacity to address unjust obstacles to their healthy development and their community’s betterment. As civic activists, young people demonstrated that youth of all races, ethnicities, classes, genders, sexual orientations, and immigrant statuses deserve a say in how opportunities are structured in our society.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1999 the Ford Foundation funded 12 organizations and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development to engage in a three-year learning collaborative called the Youth Leadership Development Initiative (YLDI). The initiative centered on building the capacity of participating community based organizations and culling lessons about civic activism as a youth development approach. This three-year initiative constitutes an important landmark for the youth development field, in that it directs much needed attention to engaging marginalized youth in community change efforts, and offers the promise of substantially shaping youth policy and practice.

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) was selected, in July 2001, to conduct a multi-level evaluation of YLDI. This executive summary presents an overview of the findings, lessons, and recommendations that are detailed in the main body of our final evaluation report. Our evaluation methods included two rounds of multi-day site visits to each YLDI site to gather interview and observational data from program staff and youth. We also conducted extensive reviews of initiative and program level documents (e.g. program descriptions, annual reports, budget data). Quantitative analysis involved two waves of youth surveys. We begin by summarizing our response to each of the research questions that guided our inquiry.

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: How is civic activism an effective approach for reaching youth not engaged in conventional youth development programs?

YLDI organizations were successful at recruiting and retaining a hard-to-reach “older” youth population. The average age of YLDI youth is 16, and some organizations recruited youth into their early twenties (22-23). YLDI leaders reported that 50% of youth come from single parent households, 43% come from households that receive public assistance, and approximately 30% deal with issues of alcohol, drug, and/or physical abuse. Many youth were referred to YLDI organizations by the courts, foster care, through group homes, etc. Further, youth we interviewed told us that they struggled with negative public perception of their abilities, limited options for employment and support, ready availability of gangs and drugs, and premature adult responsibilities and financial pressures.

Our findings identify several core reasons that older “at risk” youth migrate to civic activism. First, youth were attracted by the focus on their own cultures and backgrounds. Youth saw themselves reflected in the faces of peers and adult leaders, in the pictures and artwork that hung on the walls of the organization, in the content of workshops and presentations, and in the issues that groups were seeking to address. For the vast majority of YLDI youth, this sense of belonging was different from the types of experiences they had in other youth-serving organizations and settings. It was especially pivotal for adolescents and young adults engaged in identity-search, or for youth who had internalized negative views of themselves or their identity.
Second, civic activism appealed to these youth because it provided a forum and context for them to reflect and problem solve on day-to-day challenges faced by their families and communities. Unlike many service-oriented settings that implicitly (or explicitly) blame young people or their families for making bad “choices,” YLDI organizations frequently encouraged youth to turn the microscope off of themselves and onto their institutions and the broader society. Thus, youth were able to name some of the common place barriers facing their families and communities, such as inadequate school resources, overzealous or inadequate policing, polluted air and water, unsafe working conditions, lack of green spaces, lack of youth facilities or activities, etc. Moreover, many YLDI groups provided youth with the tools and resources to collectively strategize and take action to address those challenges.

Finally, civic activism is successful in attracting “older” youth partially because it provides youth with applied vocational and leadership opportunities. Although YLDI programs would not likely describe what they do as “vocational training,” there is no doubt that many youth gravitate towards civic activism because they are challenged to apply themselves, extend their skills, and exercise their voice in ways not available in their schools, workplaces, communities, or even, often, in their families. Further, in many YLDI groups, youth are paid for their time, and although the pay is not high, it is a motivator. Therefore, YLDI organizations are appealing because they provide a unique opportunity for young people to take on roles and responsibilities usually reserved only for adults.

**RESEARCH QUESTION #2: What is the contribution of YLDI projects to positive youth development outcomes, including the programs’ effect on identity development and the ability of youth participants to engage in positive social change and civic life?**

A high percentage of young people within YLDI organizations are consistently getting the types of supports and opportunities they need for healthy growth and development. Moreover, preliminary evidence suggests that YLDI organizations are successful at a rate comparable to or higher than that of other adolescent-serving youth development organizations. We found, for instance, that the percentage of YLDI youth who report consistently high quality relationships with adults and youth within the organization is nearly twice that of youth within other youth development organizations. The percentage of YLDI youth reporting consistent opportunities for participation and leadership was three times higher than that of youth within other adolescent-serving youth development organizations. YLDI organizations also supported youths’ safety and skill building at a rate similar to that of other youth development organizations. Thus, we found that YLDI organizations are providing youth with a well-rounded and rich developmental experience.

Looking specifically at issues of identity, we found evidence that identity-support practices lead to a more affirmed and more balanced sense of ethnic, racial, and/or sexual identity.

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identity. Our findings illustrate that identity can be supported through replicable practices, such as: the active engagement of community adults as mentors; celebration of culture and identity through art, dance, spirituality, and other forms of expression; critical education on the history of ethnic, racial, and/or sexual identity groups; workshops on issues of power and oppression; and support groups. Further, we found that identity-support practices are associated with an increased perception, among youth, that the program’s activities are safe, interesting, and challenging.

Like our findings on identity, we found that positive youth outcomes for community involvement map to specific organizational practices. Overall, YLDI youth participants indicated that they receive consistent opportunities for community involvement at a rate twice that of youth within other youth development organizations. Youth organizing emerged as a particularly effective strategy in this regard, providing consistent and structured opportunities for youth to deepen their knowledge of and commitment to their community. Youth organizing was also associated with higher levels of youth leadership and youth involvement in decision-making. We conclude that youth organizing practices—including political education, campaign development, and direct action—are particularly effective at raising young peoples’ knowledge and awareness of community issues and at creating contexts for them to apply and act on that awareness.

Both identity support and youth organizing practices had their own unique strengths.

- When compared to identity support practices, youth organizing practices were associated with:
  - Higher numbers of youth reporting they get consistent opportunities for decision making (37% compared to 12%)
  - Higher numbers of youth reporting they get consistent opportunities for leadership (26% compared to 3%)
  - Higher numbers of youth reporting they get consistent opportunities to build their knowledge of community (71% compared to 42%)
  - Higher number of youth reporting they get consistent opportunities to “give back” to community (69% compared to 46%)

- When compared to youth organizing practices, identity support practices were associated with:
  - Higher numbers of youth indicating they are consistently “interested” in program activities (50% compared to 40%)
  - Higher numbers of youth indicating they are consistently “challenged” by program activities (52% compared to 38%)
  - Higher numbers of youth reporting feeling consistently physically safe (48% compared to 38%)
Our analysis of civic activism also revealed some unanticipated outcomes. We discovered that civic activism is characterized by an emphasis on group processes and consensus building. Youth and adult leaders within YLDI organizations emphasized that leadership is embodied in the ability to listen, empathize, and cooperate. Thus, leadership, within a civic activist context, is not so much about individual achievement as it is about learning how to participate in group processes, build consensus, and subsume personal interests and ideas to those of the collective. We believe that these results indicate that civic activism emphasizes a dimension of leadership, that is yet to be explored within the youth development literature. In the course of the study, for instance, we were pushed to ask ourselves whether our notions of leadership were entrenched in white middle class assumptions about the importance of individual achievement and recognition.

We also became increasingly aware of the importance of community-change outcomes to the work of these organizations, particularly to youth organizing groups. We identified a number of intermediate community change outcomes achieved by YLDI groups, such as increased youth involvement in community decision-making, increased press or community attention to a key campaign issue, and changes in policies, rules, or regulations.

**RESEARCH QUESTION #3: How did technical assistance from the Innovation Center contribute to YLDI organizations’ ability to develop and nurture leadership skills for young adult workers and to sustain and expand their work in civic activism and youth development?**

The Innovation Center moved with agility to support the participating organizations to tackle challenges and to engage in meaningful exchanges and organizational learning. This initiative was powerful because of (1) the role of the intermediary as the constant in a context characterized by high staff and leadership turnover, (2) the flexibility to renegotiate grant objectives as the YLDI organizations focused in on their actual programmatic and organizational development needs, and (3) the promotion of common values of youth leadership across diverse organizations. Most importantly, the technical assistance consisted of a combination of group-level learning, that capitalized on the Innovation Center’s expertise, and peer-to-peer learning and individualized follow up to reinforce and extend knowledge gains and attitudinal shifts from the learning group activities.

YLDI contributed to participating organizations’ ability to develop and nurture leadership skills for young adult workers and to sustain and expand their work in civic activism and youth development. The learning partners emerged from YLDI highly committed to civic activism, youth empowerment, social justice principles, and appreciative of the importance of organizational capacity building. With increased knowledge of models, theories, and practices of civic activism and youth leadership, a number of organizational leaders were able to better articulate their program theory of change. Consequently, with this newly articulated theory of change, they were better able to communicate the essence, urgency, and importance of their work with marginalized youth.
YLDI organizations came to appreciate the value of engaging in strategic planning, developing a theory of change, engaging in self-evaluation, establishing financial systems, and documenting their best practices, policies, and procedures on paper. It should be emphasized that over the course of this initiative, documentation and evaluation, in particular, became of great significance to these groups. Both of these mechanisms allowed the YLDI leaders to prevent institutional memory loss of innovative practices and to ground their organizational and program planning in accurate and useful youth data.

Finally, many YLDI organizations expanded their programming capacity and coordination ability. YLDI organizations exchanged practices on political education, direct action, identity-specific interventions, and so on. Several of the organizations demonstrated to others that “youth-led” is not just a concept, but a reality. Hence groups were inspired to rethink how they promote youth leadership within their own organizations. In fact, many were able to report changed attitudes, and organizational structures and practices that supported the integration of youth into authentic leadership positions.

**Program-Related Lessons for Practitioners**

**Lesson #1: Building on and extending the Youth Development Framework.**

Lessons from the YLDI learning group on civic activism illustrate that there is great power in drawing on existing knowledge and frameworks within the field of youth development. After years of refinement, the youth development field is reaching some degree of consensus on the core supports and opportunities youth need for healthy development (see National Research Council, 2002). Our findings illustrate that these supports and opportunities are important for all youth serving organizations, and act as a necessary base or foundation for program-specific approaches such as youth organizing or identity-support.

**Lesson #2: Articulating the intersection between identity-support and positive youth development.**

Identity development is a key developmental task of adolescence, where youth seek to develop an autonomous and yet socially integrated and connected sense of self. YLDI organizations, therefore, are at the forefront of defining the intersections between identity formation and healthy youth development. The practices of identity support groups are often seen as tailored to youth with “special” needs. Our findings demonstrate, however, that identity-support has an important place in the standard practice of any organization that touches youth’s lives. All youth should have access to information on their unique histories and backgrounds, and be able to find adult role models within the organization. All youth should feel safe to explore their identities free from the threat of stereotyping, harassment, or rejection.
Lesson #3: Drawing on youth organizing strategies to engage youth as leaders in their communities.

Our findings illustrate youth organizing as a practical approach to bringing about grassroots community change. Youth organizing groups adopted a social justice orientation that was positive and affirming, and that helped youth channel their anger and energy into productive civic concerns. The work of youth organizing groups illustrates that if provided with a structure and framework for identifying challenges in their communities, developing a community change agenda, and engaging in direct action, youth have the interest and enthusiasm to take on community change issues. Finally, we conclude that, although not all youth serving organizations can adopt youth organizing practices, strategic alliances between youth development and youth organizing groups are effective at exposing youth to social justice issues.

Lesson #4: Creating formal and well-defined decision-making roles for youth.

Among YLDI groups, formal and independent structures for youth leadership, such as independent youth councils or boards, were more successful at promoting youth involvement in decision making than were structures that relied on youth input into adult processes. Putting two or three youth members on an adult board, for instance, may serve to inform youth about board functions and lend a youth perspective, but it is unlikely to provide youth with authentic decision-making power or influence. The power imbalance, based in the differing levels of experience and education that youth and adults bring to the setting, are too great. However, research does show that young people can successfully participate on adult boards. For youth to succeed on adult boards, organizations must do intensive training and orientation and institute changes in procedures, as many of the youth-led organizations have done, to overcome power imbalances between youth and adults.

Lesson #5: Teaching adults to “step back” without “tuning out.”

In order for youth involvement in decision making to work, adults need to “step back” and have faith that, if given the responsibility, youth will make sound and thoughtful decisions. It is equally crucial, on the other hand, that adults not “tune-out.” Even within “youth-led” YLDI organizations, adult leaders played ongoing support and advisory roles. The challenge of youth leadership is learning how to provide a high level of “support” to youth decision makers without “taking over” and usurping their authority.

Lesson #6: Creating the time for youth decision-making and input

Lack of time consistently proved to be an impediment to youth involvement in decision-making, and often differentiated youth-led from adult-led decision-making structures. Youth-led organizational processes tended to occur much more slowly in order to accommodate and respond to the learning curve that youth brought to the process. Organizations that seek to support increased youth involvement in decision-making need to assess if they are willing and able to slow down their processes so that youth can play an authentic role.
Lesson #7: Using a focused approach with a defined set of youth.

From this evaluation, we learned the importance of minimizing a “scattershot” approach to youth development, in which organizations overextend themselves in order to meet funders’ expectations to serve large numbers of youth. Many YLDI organizations were targeted in who and how many youth they wanted to reach. This was critical to their success because it allowed them to develop a population-specific program curriculum and to develop close, stable, mentoring relationships with youth throughout their leadership and organizing skill training and activism work.

ORGANIZATIONAL-LEVEL LESSONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Lesson #1: Meaningful organizational development must be tied to programming goals.

As evident throughout the implementation of YLDI, organizational development worked best when it was focused on enhancing the capacity of YLDI organizations to conduct civic activism programming. That is, strategic planning, documentation, evaluation, etc. were not done in the abstract, but, rather, were integral steps towards achieving the goal of devising ways to better support the core civic activism work with youth. For instance, much of the documentation effort centered on effective curriculum and best programming practices that enabled YLDI leaders to use this to train new staff and youth leaders to engage in civic activism and social change.

Lesson #2: Sustainable organizational development must occur parallel to—not in the place of—programming work.

YLDI “paid” program leaders to “pause” and consider issues of organizational development and sustainability. In retrospect, organizations that focused exclusively or even primarily on organizational development goals for an extended period of time, experienced low staff morale and high staff turnover. We’ve drawn a few key lessons from this. First, programming work must be the organization’s first priority and must continue alongside organizational development work. Second, when doing staff-intensive organizational development work, it is important to take extra steps to ensure staff buys in to organizational changes by listening carefully and attending to their emotional and professional needs.

Lesson #3: Thoughtful leadership and staff transitions are key to maintaining organizational stability and capacity.

A few organizations within YLDI struggled under the weight of repeated staff and leadership transitions, often losing key pieces of institutional history and capacity with each successive departure. Two YLDI organizations, however, managed to transfer leadership smoothly, and their experiences have helped frame our understanding of best practices. First, in each of these cases, the executive directors that were leaving the organization were invested in supporting a smooth transition and were committed to continue working at the organization until their successor had come on board and felt equipped to lead. Second, great care was taken in selecting a successor whose values and approach were a good match to the organization. Third, transition plans were put into place, which served as an invaluable roadmap for incoming staff.
Lesson #4: Evaluation should be tied to the civic activism program theory of change and strategic/continuous improvement planning process.

Over the course of YLDI, organizational leaders learned the importance of making decisions on program and organizational improvement that are data-driven. Through collaborating with SPR to customize components of the YLDI youth survey, leaders gained an increased understanding of the significance of using standardized dimensions tied to research-based youth development and civic activism frameworks. Further, through the use and analysis of the YLDI youth survey, leaders were able to get feedback from youth within their programs on the relative power and effectiveness of their programming strategies. Thus, it is crucial that practitioners gain insight into how evaluation can be used for program planning and improvement.

Lesson #5: Documentation is critical for minimizing institutional memory loss and promoting best practices.

Much of what was discussed, exchanged, and developed prior to and during the initiative was documented by the YLDI learning partners. They took pains to record their innovative workshops, trainings, and best practices, so that when leaders and key staff leave the organization, not all valuable knowledge is lost. This process is key to long term sustainability because as organizations grow and expand, manuals, guides, and curricula play an important role in orientating new staff to the program philosophy and concrete strategies to engage youth.

Lesson #6: Stipends and/or hourly pay for youth in leadership positions may help with recruitment and retention of youth.

Many of the YLDI organizations paid youth a stipend or hourly wage for their time. Although the wage was often quite small, it represented conscious investment of scarce organizational resources. Stipends, or hourly pay, helped legitimize the role of young people within the organization, created a basis for the organization to hold youth accountable, formally recognized the value of young people’s time and commitment, and increased the visibility of youth leaders.

Civic Activism Practices

Practice #1: Popular education and the identification of personal and civic challenges.

One of the assumptions of civic activism is that young people are experts in their own lives (not “empty vessels”), and that the starting place for all new learning is their day-to-day experiences. Many YLDI organizations philosophically draw from a tradition of popular education, where every learning process begins with eliciting young peoples’ experiences and knowledge. Popular education sessions often sought to make connections between youths’ day-to-day lives and larger social issues, centering on issues such as racism, policing, school quality, environmental justice, and immigrants’ rights.

Practice #2: Hands-on immersion and exposure to history.

One of the most innovative and powerful strategies that characterized the work of YLDI organizations, was their use of intensive “immersion” workshops to engage youth
in history. Through “visualization” and “role-play” workshops and exercises, young people were exposed to what it was like to be in another time or place, and this helped them come to a visceral understanding of history and/or social issues and roles. These types of workshops depend upon a high level of emotional and physical safety within the group, but when done well, they help open up avenues of discussion that more didactic approaches would not.

**Practice #3: Exploring oppression through “political” and “critical” education.**

One of most universal strategies used by civic activism groups was political and/or critical education. This approach enabled youth to learn about social movements, political processes, and current events. Through political and critical education, civic activism groups hoped to support critical thinking skills and develop values and attitudes that would help youth deal with and take action against injustice.

**Practice #4: Popular youth culture as a medium for political analysis, expression and identity.**

YLDI organizations used art forms like Rap, Hip Hop, and poetry as mediums for discussion, critique, expression, and to help create a shared sense of identity. These mediums were useful because they have meaning to young people, they chronicle life stories, and they often highlight the dynamics of social class and race in the United States. The use of music and art as a medium for resistance was particularly powerful.

**Practice #5: Direct Community Engagement**

Finally, YLDI organizations engaged youth in education, advocacy, and community action. Youth presented at conferences, spoke in front of city councils, and contacted community leaders. Young people often spoke about such opportunities as chances to come into their “power,” and exercise a sense of voice. These efforts did not only build young peoples knowledge, they contributed to real community change.

**Recommendations For Funders**

As a comprehensive evaluation of a large capacity building initiative, our findings on YLDI collaborative and organizational learning outcomes can greatly inform funders about the needs of civic activism organizations and the effectiveness of key capacity building strategies. The following is a summary of our overarching recommendations.

- **Stabilize funding streams for civic activism work, including youth organizing and identity support strategies.** At the sunset of the Ford Foundation grant, many YLDI organizations still lacked a coherent and stable funding base. Their fundraising efforts were complicated by the ongoing perception that civic activism is “radical” or “contentious.” Thus, there is definite need for funders to dispel myths about civic activism to their boards and communities and to make investments that will help stabilize and legitimize civic activism within the fields of youth development and community organizing. Beyond issuing direct grants to civic activism organizations to support staff retention and direct
programming, we recommend that funders take note of the capacity building needs of civic activism groups.

- **Build capacity through the use of intermediaries and local technical assistance providers.** For a large national initiative of relatively small organizations, the use of an intermediary was pivotal to sustaining the relationships and cohesiveness of the group. The Innovation Center was able to provide organizations with a national (and even international) perspective, helping to link them to physically distant organizations and resources, while also having the ability to broker relationships with local TA providers who could offer more hands-on and individualized TA. These types of relationships and networks, between foundations, intermediaries, and local providers, have great potential to facilitate information sharing and to provide a support infrastructure for community-based groups. Such networks are, however, still underdeveloped. There is a role for funders to play in the extension of similar training and information infrastructures that could connect leaders of community-based organizations to accessible and affordable professional training, resources, and OD support.

- **Enhance networking and field enhancement by sponsoring collaborative learning communities.** The learning group structure of the YLDI initiative proved highly successful, due to several thoughtful design elements. First, the structure of the learning group meetings reflected a collaborative paradigm of organizational learning, emphasizing that all participants are teachers and learners. Second, the Innovation Center and the Ford Foundation emphasized the need for executive directors and one other high level staff to attend each meeting. This contributed to the overall capacity of the group and encouraged the transfer of knowledge back to the organization. It was clear that the learning and professional development of these practitioners was not done when the initiative ended. Many of these organizations were ready for another round of more advanced and continued group learning. A logical next step for funders to play is to provide supports for other local, regional, and national youth development networks to be mentored by these YLDI civic activist leaders and experts.

- **Build in project deliverables that help advance organizational goals rather than just report project outcomes.** YLDI deliverables were negotiated with the Innovation Center and the Ford Foundation at the onset of the grant and included training and curriculum manuals, handbooks, and documentation reports. Deliverables helped contribute to the exchange of information and expertise across groups, advance the organizational capacity building goals of the organization, and served as a key touchstone in the Innovation Center’s efforts to monitor grantees’ progress over the course of the grant.
Support further research on civic activism. Ongoing research is needed in order to test YLDI findings, expand and improve emerging measures of civic activism, and explore intriguing questions about the applicability and efficacy of civic activism in different settings.

In many ways, this initiative is a turning point in the youth development field. The pendulum has swung back a bit from a romanticized notion of programs for “all” youth, to a renewed recognition of the challenging contexts that confront many youth of different racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and immigrant backgrounds. At the same time, civic activist organizations have raised and continue to raise the bar for what youth can do. Youth within these programs are seriously engaged in critical reflection about themselves and their society, uniting with their peers in positive collective action, and engaging community leaders to see uncommon and innovative alternatives to chronic problems in our society. Adult leaders of today can choose to let the number of disenfranchised youth increase daily or be open to creating, learning, replicating, and supporting civic activism programs so that youth determine for themselves how to make our society a better and more just place to live.
I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the positive shift in emphasis heralded by the youth development movement, there were some issues yet to be fully addressed within the existing youth development framework. In particular, youth development practitioners often failed to “deal effectively with the twin issues of youth identity and meaningful engagement of young people in leadership and decision making.” Believing that many civic activism groups are effective at addressing issues of identity and youth leadership, the Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (“the Innovation Center”) argued, “positive youth development can be strengthened by integrating the theory, information, and skills of civic activism” (Roach, Sullivan, & Wheeler, 1999). The Youth Leadership Development Initiative (YLDI) was designed to inform the youth development field, whose leaders have, over the last decade, effectively shifted the dialogue from problem prevention to support of healthy growth and development of young people.

Thus, in 1999 the Ford Foundation funded 12 organizations and the Innovation Center to engage in a three-year, capacity building, learning group on civic activism, which they described as “a forceful, dynamic strategy that recognizes that young people are capable of addressing societal problems and concerns and [civic activism] provides a forum for them to do so.” This three-year initiative constitutes an important landmark for the youth development field, in that it directs much needed attention to engaging marginalized youth in youth development opportunities and community change efforts, and offers the promise of substantially shaping youth policy and practice. Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) was selected to conduct an evaluation of the Youth Leadership Development Initiative (YLDI). The goals of the evaluation are to (1) examine the degree to which civic activism is an effective youth development approach and (2) understand the organizational supports needed to sustain the work of YLDI grantees.

CONTEXT FOR YLDI

YLDI occurred within the context of a changing youth development field. The youth development approach emerged as a response to a generation of research that presented adolescents’ needs as problems to be “fixed,” without emphasizing the responsibility of communities to create and support positive activities and roles for young people in their organizations, institutions and communities (Pittman, Irby, 1996; Gambone and Arbreton, 1997). At the onset of YLDI, the youth development field had
successfully shifted the public dialogue and research-base of youth work, from one that was deficit oriented, to one that articulated the kinds of supports and opportunities young people need to become healthy and functioning adults (Connell and Gambone, 1998). As Karen Pittman articulates in the quote below, however, the research emphasis on supports and opportunities alone was not adequate for addressing the challenges faced by young people in their families and communities.

It wasn’t made clear how positive youth development applies to young people who are really in trouble…. [the youth development paradigm didn’t address] what this has to do with and for young people who are deeply involved in risky behavior…. To fully engage young people who are in communities in which a lot is not going well, it is not enough to just offer supports, you also have to offer strategies for how you’re going to make [their communities] better.—Karen Pittman (July 2001 interview with SPR)

In keeping with this sentiment, many youth development scholars and practitioners now concur that context is crucial when seeking to address the needs of vulnerable adolescents (Lerner et al; 2002; Taylor et al, 2002; Benson 2002; Granger, 2002). More specifically, young people grow up in communities not programs, and effective programs and institutions that interface with youth need to address the cultural, social, and political contexts that mediate potentially negative societal influences (e.g., poverty, discrimination, unemployment) on young people’s healthy identity development (c.f. Phelan, Davidson & Yu; 1998; Yu, Lewis-Charp & Soukamneuth, 2002) Scholars, like Pittman, in Community Youth Development (CYD) took strides towards addressing context by advocating for an approach which channels the power of youth to take action in their communities, while simultaneously challenging communities to embrace their role in the development of youth (Hughes & Curnan 2002, Cahill, 1997, Irby et al., 2001). The Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center’s focus on the role of civic activism, including a dual focus on youth organizing and identity, links youth development to this emerging field. In order to better understand the conceptual basis for their approach, we now explore each in depth in order to frame the issues and gaps in research that this study is poised to address. (Note also, that key terms are summarized in Exhibit I-1).
### Exhibit I-1
### Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

**Youth Development:** The ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded, and (2) build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute to their daily lives. (Pittman, 1993, p.8). Youth development is advanced in settings rich in supports and opportunities:

- **Supports:** Motivational, emotional and strategic supports to succeed in life. Supports can take many different forms, such as mentoring, counseling, and guidance activities, and they must be affirming, respectful and ongoing. Supports are most powerful when they are offered by a variety of different people (Newman, et al. 2001).

- **Opportunities:** Opportunities for young people to learn to act in the world around them, to explore, express, earn, belong and influence. Opportunities give young people the chance to test ideas and behaviors and to experiment with different roles. (Newman, et al. 2001)

**Civic Activism:** “A safe and constructive way in which to build a positive identity and acquire leadership skills while gaining satisfaction from building community and creating social change. Through civic activism, young people can contribute meaningfully to building communities while gaining opportunities and support for their own development.” (Innovation Center for Youth Development, 2001)

**Identity:** Identity is a self-constructed, dynamic set of motivations, abilities, beliefs, and individual history, which are shaped by an individual’s navigation of challenges at each stage of development (Erikson, 1968). YLDI groups focused primarily on ethnic, racial, and sexual identity:

- **Ethnic Identity:** A sense of group or collective membership based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a specific group. Ethnic identity is particularly linked to a collective history, religion, geography, and/or language.

- **Racial Identity:** Racial identity relates to the confluence of an awareness of others’ perceptions, treatment, (i.e. racism) and an individual’s sense of self. It is integrally linked to an ability to cope positively with discrimination (Torres, 1996; Helms, 1993; Cross, 1991).

- **Sexual Identity:** Healthy sexual identity development involves (1) resolved feelings of inner confusion and ambivalence (linked to others’ perceptions), (2) affirmative sense of self that enables an individual to accept and express his/her sexuality (Shively & DeCecco; 1993).

**Identity-Support:** Identity support is the creation of safe spaces where youth can develop a sense of affirmation and belonging rooted in their ethnic, racial, sexual and/or other identities (both their own and that of others). It is the creation of spaces where youth can learn about their identities and explore experiences of oppression without fear of being stereotyped, harassed or rejected.

**Youth Organizing:** Youth organizing is the union of grassroots community organizing and positive youth development, with an explicit commitment to social change and political action. Youth organizing is based on the premise that young people are capable of taking leadership to transform their communities.

**Civic Activist Organizations:** Place-based settings focused on supporting young people’s healthy growth and development, engaging youth in leadership and decision-making roles, and in identifying and addressing barriers facing youth, families, and communities.

**Marginalized Youth:** Young people who find themselves outside the boundaries of prevailing youth development programming due to their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and immigrant status. (Roach, Sullivan, & Wheeler, 1999)

**Civic Engagement and Gaps in Research**
Our review of the literature reveals that “civic engagement” is increasingly considered to be an important part of young peoples’ moral and intellectual development (Youniss & Yates, 1997; Lerner, et al, 2002). Although there is general recognition that “civic engagement” takes a number of forms, civic participation tends to be more traditionally defined in terms of understanding and participating in electoral politics, with an emphasis on activities like voting, calling elected officials, and donating money or time to an election campaign.

In general, researchers like Robert Putnam (2000) have drawn attention to a decline in all types of civic participation in America, among all sectors of the population but particularly among youth, while other researchers have countered his claim by citing increased rates of youth volunteerism (Edwards & Foley, 2001; Youniss & Yates, 1997). Further, much research confirms that civic participation continues to be unequally distributed by race and class, with poor people of color having the least political voice within the electoral system (Verba, et al, 1995). We know that poor youth and youth of color face numerous barriers to traditional forms of political and community engagement, including a lack of the resources, knowledge, skills, and social networks to participate actively in civic life (Schlozman, et al, 1999; Hart, et al, 2002; NAEP, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999).

For YLDI, political involvement is particularly important precisely because it is the medium through which the contexts that shape young peoples lives are going to be transformed. Research has demonstrated that participation in volunteer and community service activities does not readily translate into political skills and knowledge (Walker, 2002), and it is these skills that are the medium through which citizens weigh in on issues of public policy and reform institutional practice. Political skills and knowledge are necessary tools for individuals to engage with power brokers, decision-makers and institutions that have the resources to transform the capacity of families and communities to provide for young people (Mokwena & Dunham). Therefore, although individuals may see great benefit from apolitical forms of community involvement (i.e. increased empathy and knowledge of community), it is only through politicized analysis of inequitable contexts and policies that shape young peoples’ day-to-day lives (schools, healthcare, public services, etc.) that opportunities for healthy youth development can be significantly transformed or changed. Thus, YLDI focused attention on organizations that were successful at nurturing political skills and critical awareness among marginalized youth, to uncover the organizational strategies and techniques that empower this population.
Despite the emerging interest in youth civic and political engagement, few empirical studies exist in this area—particularly of youth in low-income urban communities. In addition, few empirical studies have explored the relationships between youth development, youth civic participation, and youth activism in the form of youth organizing. Some emerging scholarly works on the development of an activist orientation and sociopolitical capacity, however, have begun to lay the groundwork for a study in this area. Watts, Williams and Jagers (2002), for example, explore concepts relevant to sociopolitical development among African American youth. Building on concepts from community psychology, such as oppression, liberation, critical consciousness, and culture, Watts et al claim that sociopolitical development is a key process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, analytical skills, and emotional faculties necessary for participation in democratic processes and social change efforts.

**Centrality of Identity Development**

Like civic engagement, identity support is gaining momentum among researchers and theorists as a crucial component of youth development, although not all practitioners have displayed a similar level of interest in integrating a more intentional focus on identity support in their programming. Within the psychological literature, theorists like Erik Erikson, have consistently argued that political commitment and orientation is central to healthy identity formation (Flanagan & Tucker, 1998; Erikson, 1968). Debate, however, over how identities become salient to individuals, as well as whether and to what degree they become politicized, is ongoing in the social sciences. Further, there is considerable debate about the social and psychological characteristics of individuals who participate in identity-based social movements (Stryker, et al; 2000). What is clear from the existing psychological literature, is that young people (1) need a healthy and well developed sense of self that integrates and/or helps them to cope positively with group membership (Cross, 1991; Piney, 1990; Tatum, 1997), and (2) the disjuncture between one’s own self concept and the way one is socially characterized results in psychic dissonance--a dissonance with which individuals must learn to cope (Phinney, 1990). While, at an individual level, some youth strive to disassociate themselves from the negative characteristics ascribed to their group, others join with those that share their identity to actively resist social perceptions and to transform structures and/or policies to negatively impact their social position.

YLDI’s focus on identity development, thus, has great potential for informing researchers, theorists, and practitioners on the role of identity development in political
and social action. It is clear that adolescents, particularly those who face societal discrimination, continue to gravitate towards issues of identity as a point of intersection between their development of self and their identification with peers, family, community, and broader social issues. Still there is no consensus that identity can be supported in a manner that leads young people to see its complexity and to relate across difference. Research illustrates that comprehensive identity support includes several core attributes, including opportunities to form relationships with adults and peers who struggled through similar identity issues, critique mainstream institutions and values, and heal from the effects that discrimination and prejudice have had on their families and communities (Tatum Daniel, 1997; Lewis-Charp et al, 2004; Ginwright, 2003). Given this backdrop, YLDI’s emphasis on identity provides a unique opportunity to explore how youth development organizations can better provide identity support in a way that is inclusive and that contributes to their overall social and political development.

**Summary of Research Context**

In summary, our review of the youth development and civic engagement literature uncovers some critical research gaps. First, while youth civic engagement strategies have the capacity to transform many community conditions, almost all existing research related to youth civic participation focuses entirely on service learning, volunteering or conventional citizenship measures, such as knowledge of U.S. history. Few empirical studies have explored the relationships between youth organizing, identity-support, youth development and youth civic participation. Second, while youth development has made important contributions to our understanding of the developmental process, it has done so without a complete understanding of the environments and socio-political context in which development occurs. For example, neighborhood and community factors play a significant role in the quality and availability of youth development opportunities. Researchers have found that community conditions such as poverty, unemployment and violence often impede civic participation and are serious barriers to the developmental process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Garbarino, 1995; Chalk & Phillips, 1996; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997). Finally, the current youth development frameworks have underestimated the importance of supporting young people’s sociopolitical development and the types of outcomes associated with the political socialization process (Ginwright, 2003).

Thus, the Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center for Youth Development embarked on YLDI at a pivotal time in research and funding of youth development, civic engagement, and identity. The youth development field was embarking in a new
direction, to explore how youth development programs could better address the community and family contexts where young people develop. Meanwhile, research on civic participation illustrated the dearth of opportunities for young people, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, to become politically involved. Similarly YLDI’s focus on identity occurred at a time when the need to understand identity as a central piece in young peoples overall development, including their civic development, is pressing. In all cases, there was and continues to be a scarcity of practical and field level information about how organizations engage youth from marginalized backgrounds. YLDI’s assumptions and strategies arose from this context.

YLDI TIMELINE AND THEORY OF CHANGE

Although informing academics was a goal for the Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center, their primary emphasis always remained on furthering and deepening the knowledge base that practitioners and funders draw on to support the healthy development of youth. Towards this end, initiative leaders took a three-phase approach over the course of five years (A timeline for the initiative is included as Exhibit I-2). First, they conducted research, including meetings with practitioners and researchers, to inform the design of the initiative. Thoughtful planning went into the structure of the grants, as well as the selection of grantees. Second, they awarded three-year grants to 12 innovative youth development organizations across the country that were focused on either community action and/or issues of identity. Throughout the period of the grants, these organizations participated in an ongoing learning community on civic activism, participated in site exchanges with one another, received extensive capacity building technical assistance, and worked on individual projects that would increase their organizational capacity. Third, they set aside resources for an evaluation of the 12 organizations and the initiative as a whole. The purpose of the evaluation was to gather data that would address some of the research gaps described previously, but also that would inform practitioners and funders of practical strategies for engaging marginalized young people and supporting the capacity of grassroots community-based organizations. The components of Phase I and Phase II are detailed in the YLDI theory of change (Exhibit I-3), and the details of Phase III (the evaluation) will be described further in the later part of this chapter.
Exhibit I-2
YLDI Timeline

- Design Team Meeting, October 1998
- Design Team Meeting, July 1999
- Release of YLDI RFP, April 1999
- Selection Site Visits, Summer 2000
- YLDI Launch, September 2000
- Innovation Center Site Visit, Fall 2000
- Learning Group Meeting, April 2001
- Innovation Center Site Visit, Fall 2001
- YLDI Evaluation Meeting, January 2001
- Learning Group Meeting, March 2001
- Evaluation Consulting Group, January - August 2001
- Communications Consulting Group, February - May 2001
- Selection of SPR, July 2001
- SPR Round 1 Site Visits, August - November 2001
- SPR Round 2 Site Visits, May - October 2002
- Innovation Center Site Visit accompanied by SPR, Fall 2002
- SPR Round 2 Site Visits, May - October 2003
- Youth Gathering, June 2003
- SPR Round 3 Site Visits, May - October 2003
Exhibit I-3
Youth Leadership Development Theory of Change

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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES &amp; SUPPORTS</th>
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| **PHASE II**            |                     |
| Learning Activities     |                     |
| • Annual Meetings       |                     |
| • Annual Site Visits    |                     |
| • Project Team          |                     |
| • Reflection            |                     |
| • Field Networking &   | Analysis,           |
| Dissemination          | Synthesis,          |
|                       | & Distillation      |
| Individual grants       | Generate and        |
| from Ford to each      | provide printed     |
| participating          | resource materials  |
| organizations          |                     |
| Generate and           |                     |
| provide printed        | YLDI grantees have  |
| resource materials     | increased          |
|                       | organizational       |
|                       | capacity to utilize  |
| Documentation          | civic activism as   |
|                       | a component of      |
|                       | their youth         |
|                       | development work.   |
|                       | [Indicators: supporting|
|                       | organizational systems |
|                       | in place, commitment |
|                       | to promoting this   |
|                       | work. May be        |
|                       | evaluated by self & |
|                       | IC assessment and   |
|                       | collecting individual|
|                       | stories             |
| Mini grants & TA       | A new paradigm for  |
|                       | youth development   |
|                       | theory/practice,    |
|                       | integrating aspects  |
|                       | of civic activism    |
|                       | and youth           |
|                       | leadership development. |
| Networks               |                     |
| Field Networking &     |                     |
| Dissemination          |                     |
| Consulting Groups      |                     |
| Site Exchanges         |                     |

**PHASE III**

- **SHORT TERM OUTCOMES**
  - Stimulate research, practice & policy around the practice of integrating civic activism and youth development.  
    [Indicators: Papers, New Funding etc.]
  - Analysis, Synthesis, & Distillation
  - Youth Development practitioners can access models and information on how to integrate civic activism into youth development programming.  
    [Indicators: existence, distribution & use of models]
  - YLDI grantees have increased organizational capacity to utilize civic activism as a component of their youth development work.  
    [Indicators: supporting organizational systems in place, commitment to promoting this work. May be evaluated by self & IC assessment and collecting individual stories]
  - A new paradigm for youth development theory/practice, integrating aspects of civic activism and youth leadership development.
Underlying the YLDI initiative were basic assumptions about the value of civic activism as an approach to youth development and the capacity needs of civic activism organizations. The evaluation was structured to test these assumptions.

- **Civic Activism as an Approach to Youth Development**
  - Civic activism, combined with leadership development, is a promising component of a comprehensive strategy for youth development.
  - Leadership development meets a number of young people's developmental needs and provides opportunities for acquiring a range of skills, while creating the potential for a more engaged citizenry.
  - For many young people who are disengaged from traditional youth development programming, civic activism is a safe and constructive way in which to address identity issues and the differences in opportunities aggravated by race, class, gender and sexuality.

- **Needs of Civic Activism Organizations**
  - Civic activism is often led by young adult and youth workers with limited exposure to human growth and development training.
  - Civic activism is often initiated as a spontaneous response to a community injustice or problem. As a consequence, civic activist projects often lack a theory of change, which has hindered gaining support and recognition as a viable youth development strategy.
  - Most civic activism takes place within the structural context of non-profit organizations. Young adult youth workers often lack the skills and information to effectively manage people and resources.

In order to test these assumptions, the Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center carefully selected a diverse set of civic activism organizations to participate in the three-year initiative. We now briefly describe the criteria that were used to select, as well as introducing grantee organizations, before moving forward to describe the evaluation design.

**Striving for Diversity: Selection of the YLDI Sites**

The criteria used by the Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center to choose the YLDI grantees was multi-faceted. They sought to generate a broad sample of work in the youth development and civic activism field. First and foremost, the Innovation Center valued and prioritized diversity within the initiative. Through the application and
selection process, the Innovation Center looked to choose a group of organizations serving communities diverse in race, ethnicity, geography, and socioeconomic status. Second, they felt the YLDI learning community would best benefit from a range of issue-based activism, so it was important that the organizations address different types of social issues in their work. Third, the Innovation Center desired variance in the extent to which the organizations involved or incorporated youth into their organizational structures. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the organizations were chosen based on the high quality of their work with youth, “even if none would identify themselves as youth development organizations.”

Another important consideration, for the Innovation Center, was each organization’s readiness for learning on an organizational level. They were looking for organizations that bought into “the idea that everyone had something to share coming into [YDLI], expertise in a particular area or a particular program strategy, knowledge about a particular topic,” explained the Innovation Center’s project manager. “We were going to take them through a capacity building process – doing it as a collective, everyone would benefit from group support, collective experience.” It was important to the Innovation Center that there be some organizations who were ready (and willing) to “take a leap” in order to improve and expand the capacity of the organization. They actively sought out organizations that they felt were teetering on the brink of major change and would be most impacted by the organizational capacity grant from Ford.

The Innovation Center started with applications from hundreds of organizations interested in participating in the initiative. After a series of site visits where they looked at “what was going on” in each organization – how youth were valued and involved, who from the organization would participate, what was the organization’s motivation for participating, etc. – they narrowed the list down to 12 grantees. Diverse in structure, issue focus, target population, and physical location, the final 12 grantees had very distinct perspectives and experiences to share with the YLDI learning group. Exhibit I-4 briefly introduces each organization, including their name, their acronym, their geographic location, and the youth population that they target. In addition to information presented throughout the body of the report, basic facts about each organization (i.e. mission, size, grant award) can be found in Appendix A. Further, we have produced full profiles of each organization, which are available in Volume II of this report.

As indicated by the initiative timeline, the first of three annual grants (ranging from $50,000-$80,000/year) were awarded to the 12 YLDI organizations in September, 1999.
Over the course of three years the YLDI grantees participated in three learning group meetings, one youth conference, numerous site visits and site exchanges, as well as targeted technical assistance (TA). As described earlier, from the onset of YLDI, it was understood that there would need to be a comprehensive evaluation of the initiative in order to understand the approaches and outcomes associated with civic activism as a youth development approach and to uncover lessons about the learning and capacity building process that YLDI organizations engaged in with the Innovation Center. Thus, in order to frame the findings we present throughout this report we now turn to a detailed discussion of the evaluation design.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit I-4</th>
<th>Youth Leadership Development Initiative Grantees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st Century Youth Leadership Movement</td>
<td>Selma, AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA)</td>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY)</td>
<td>Dorchester, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-Beyond</td>
<td>Concord, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Excellence (LE)</td>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi Casa Resource Center for Women (Mi Casa)</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC)</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outright</td>
<td>Portland, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tohono O’odham Community Action (TOCA)</td>
<td>Sells, AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ)</td>
<td>Bronx, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth United for Community Action (YUCA)</td>
<td>East Palo Alto, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Women’s Project (YWP)</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EVALUATION DESIGN

In 2001, we—Social Policy Research Associates (SPR)—joined the YLDI Learning Collaborative to conduct a two-year evaluation of YLDI.\(^1\) The evaluation began in July 1, 2001, during the second year of funding for YLDI grantees and built off the Innovation Center’s documentation of year 1 activities of the initiative. We developed an evaluation design that was reviewed and approved by the Ford Foundation, the Innovation Center, and an evaluation committee of grantee representatives. The evaluation used a mix-method, qualitative and quantitative case study design to test the initiatives’ assumptions, and to capture the individual and organizational stories behind the work of YLDI organizations. As in all case study research, this evaluation is *theory producing*, rather than *theory testing*. The following core research questions guided our inquiry:

- How is civic activism an effective approach for reaching youth not engaged in conventional youth development programs?
- What is the contribution of YLDI projects on positive youth development outcomes, including the programs’ effect on identity development and the ability of youth participants to engage in positive social change and civic life?
- How does technical assistance from the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development and other intermediary agencies contribute to YLDI organizations’ ability to develop and nurture leadership skills for young adult workers and to sustain and expand their work in civic activism and youth development?

The evaluation was designed to gather data on youth outcomes, as well as to glean a detailed understanding of the organizational practices within the YLDI organizations that contributed to youth outcomes. We were interested in aspects of organizational vision and culture, as well as operational efficiency and sustainability. Although we started the evaluation in the second year of the grant, we wanted to capture the trajectory of YLDI organizational change to see how they had been impacted by participation in the initiative. Details about each aspect of our study design are presented below.

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\(^1\) A comprehensive review of evaluation and dissemination activities to date is included as Appendix B of this report.
Qualitative Design and Analysis

For the qualitative study, we conducted two rounds of site visits lasting 2-3 days, to each YLDI site. Before conducting site visits, we created formal protocols for all our interviews, had the protocols formally reviewed by the evaluation advisory board, and trained our site visitors on their use. In order to increase construct validity and data triangulation, a number of protocol questions were mapped directly to constructs on the youth survey. For instance, our youth survey included questions on emotional safety, and thus we made sure that we interviewed program leaders and youth about issues of emotional safety, and looked for indicators of safety in on-site observations. During the site visits, the YLDI team:

- Conducted discussions with program leaders to learn about their theory of change, program vision, staffing, organizational capacity needs, and program design and services.
- Conducted individual and focus group discussions with youth participants and youth leaders to learn about their experiences in the program and contextual influences that may affect these experiences.
- Observed program activities and community organizing events to learn about the range of activities available to youth and to further provide the context for the evaluation. For example, we observed youth meetings, board meetings, trainings, retreats, and cultural events.
- “Shadowed” youth participants to understand their community through their eyes. Profiled youth gave us a tour of their community and introduced us to people who are influential to them, including peers, community leaders, family members, activists, etc. In some sites, these youth also served as local ethnographers, interviewing their peers about their experiences in the program and the community. Profiles of youth and/or young adult leaders were generated from this process.
- Reviewed program documentation, including, for example, annual reports, curricula, newsletters, etc. to learn from another perspective, about the content and context of the organizations.

After the conclusion of the initiative, we conducted a post-YLDI follow-up with program leaders to learn about issues of sustainability, organizational or programmatic

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2 We did not visit NYAC, as they are a national membership organization and as such, they did not have a program to observe. They had subgranted YLDI funds to five community-based organizations across the country. We trained the program director at NYAC in our protocols, and he in turn visited each of the five organizations and conducted interviews. We were given transcripts of those interviews and included them in our analysis.
evolution, staffing, and the organization’s ongoing relationship to other YLDI organizations and the Innovation Center.

Our qualitative findings were analyzed first by site visitors, as they synthesized program documents, their site visit notes, and interview transcripts into 40-60 page analytic site profiles of each organization. The analytic profiles were crucial because they provided a rich picture of the organizational context, which, in turn, provided a framework for understanding differences in youth outcomes across sites. The principal investigators and project manager for the evaluation carefully reviewed and commented on the analytic site profiles several times, raising questions to be addressed by site visitors either during the second site visit and through follow-up phone calls. This process ensured consistency of data across sites. Leaders within each of the organizations were also given opportunities to read and provide feedback on portions of the profiles. During cross-case analysis, data from each of the organizations were coded and thematic data matrices were created. Data from site profiles was cross-referenced with each organization’s final report (submitted to The Ford Foundation), and we created various analytic tools (e.g., tables, graphs and displays of data) to better understand the relationships between various aspects of the data.

Quantitative Design and Analysis

In addition to the qualitative components of the study, we administered two waves of surveys to systematically understand youths’ experiences within the organization. The YLDI Youth Survey used in this study consisted of measures of youth development, civic activism, identity, and coping. The youth development measures were replicated from a standardized, national survey developed by CAYP and the identity development and coping measures were adapted from the works of Phinney, (1992) and Connell (2001). Through this project, we developed the multi-item civic activism scales, using confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach alpha to test their construct validity.

The survey research served primarily to inform our case study analysis of YLDI groups and secondarily to provide feedback to organizations to improve their program effectiveness. The survey instrument was designed to be effective in capturing the effects

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3 A sample of the YLDI youth survey is included as Appendix C of this report.

4 Community Action for Youth Project, a cooperative project of Gambone Associates and the Institute for Research and Reform in Education.
of program practices on youth development and civic activism outcomes. The majority of the questions were phrased in a manner that explicitly linked youth’s experiences to particular program practices. The survey data presented in this paper are the results of the second wave of surveys administered during the Fall of 2002 to youth at 10 of the 12 YLDI organizations (283 youth total).

We used “threshold analyses” to analyze the survey data which examined the results in terms of youth’s experiences measured against a standard, rather than mean levels. The standard is created by looking across the questions for each of the supports and opportunities (e.g., supportive relationships) and developmental outcomes (e.g., civic activism) to see whether the pattern of answers indicates that youth are consistently experiencing all the relevant developmental dimensions of that area at optimal or insufficient levels. (For a more detailed explanation of this threshold method of survey analysis, see Gambone, 2002)

In addition to the survey data on YLDI groups, we drew from data of other agencies that have used this survey in their work with YDSI or CNYD. YDSI provided data for a group of five agencies that serve youth of a similar age range to see where there were similarities and differences. We have survey data from a total of 363 young people within these five other agencies. We use this data with some caveats, as these agencies represent a cross-section of organizations focused on youth development and job training for youth, and were selected using the same criteria as were YLDI organizations. They are admittedly a “convenience sample” and as such they can provide us with only a rough idea of how YLDI groups compare with other organizations that serve adolescents. Demographics on both groups that took the survey are provided in Exhibit I-5.

Overall, the survey results gave us a “snapshot” of the kinds of supports and opportunities available for young people within these organizations, and provided us with an opportunity to compare this composite “snapshot” with other youth development organizations. As a result, we were able to create a fuller case study based on both quantitative and qualitative data of civic activism as a youth development approach.

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5 Youth Development Strategies, Inc and Community Network for Youth Development.

6 The survey administered to these groups did not include questions related to identity, civic activism, or coping. It did include, however, all of the other supports and opportunities (relationship building, safety, youth participation, skill building, and community involvement).
Now, we turn to some of the unique elements of our evaluation that contributed the quality of our data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit I-5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civic Activism Survey Respondents (262)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Range</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage between 16-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time in Program</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At org &lt; 1 Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At org for 2-3 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At org &gt; 1 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of Attendance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend every day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participatory Evaluation Strategies**

From the outset of the evaluation, we sought to make the evaluation both rigorous and participatory. We believe that the quality of the information we were gathering could only be improved through the development of trusting and reciprocal relationships with participants in the YLDI learning group. Towards this end, we engaged organizational leaders and youth in various aspects of tool development and data collection. Further, we gave both project leaders and young people opportunities to reflect and comment on our
findings at the annual learning group meeting and during one-on-one meetings with YLDI leaders.

The first opportunity learning group members had to give input on the evaluation was when an evaluation workgroup of YLDI grantees reviewed and gave feedback on evaluation proposals, and helped to select SPR as the initiative evaluator. The second wave of feedback occurred as site visitors worked with program directors to modify and add questions to the YLDI survey so that it would capture questions that they needed to know either for reporting to funders or for their own program improvement. Third, we worked with organizations in an ongoing way to improve their internal evaluation tools, methods, and procedures. Finally, we shared evaluation results in different formats with organizational leaders throughout the evaluation, soliciting feedback from them while also helping them to interpret the results for their own organizational improvement.

SPR also involved youth in different aspects of the evaluation. We hired a youth from one of the 12 organizations to help us with data collection and interpretation. Randa Powell, from Leadership Excellence, worked at SPR as a youth evaluation intern for one year and during that time she participated in site visits, reviewed and commented on our youth survey, and interviewed participants at the July 2002 YLDI Youth Conference. Her perspective helped us assess the youth friendliness of our data collection tools and methods, and provided a “reality check” for our early evaluation findings. In addition to hiring a youth intern, we involved youth from many of the sites as data collectors. We trained youth interviewers to video tape and conduct youth interviews at the YLDI youth conference. We also engaged young people at several sites as “youth ethnographers,” asking them to interview their peers.

**Research Validity**

Our main strategy for maintaining the validity of our data and interpretations was to build in as many external and internal “checks” on our work as possible. External checks included feedback from organizational leaders and youth participants, as well as feedback from an advisory group of evaluation experts in youth development and civic activism. Further, because we wanted to employ a more culturally sensitive approach to

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The advisory board met in person in July 2001, at the outset of the evaluation, where they reviewed and gave feedback on the research questions, conceptual framework, data collection plan, and protocols for the evaluation. Subsequently, advisory board members met with SPR and the Innovation Center via conference call to discuss mid-evaluation findings.
understanding TOCA’s model of youth leadership, we asked Dr. Johnel Barcus, a Blackfeet American Indian researcher, to accompany us on our second site visit and to help us to modify our evaluation design for that site. She helped serve as an external check on both data collection and findings, as she reviewed and commented our protocols and read through and contributed to our site profile. Internally, we involved eight different researchers in different phases of data collection and analysis, and had a three-person leadership team that oversaw all aspects of the evaluation. Validity stemmed from the variety of perspectives and interpretations that were solicited in team meetings, and through a rigorous peer review process. For instance, as described earlier, all analytic site profiles were formally reviewed by at least two of the principal investigators. This process ensured that we had consistency across sites, and also that holes in the data were identified and addressed in subsequent data collection. In addition to internal and external checks, our evaluation design included several core design elements that helped to increase validity. Each of these are described further below:

- **Data triangulation**—One of the primary strategies we used to increase validity was triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data collection. We collected youth surveys, observed program activities, reviewed program documentation, and interviewed individuals at all levels within the organization. We also interviewed community members and former program participants.

- **Consistency and Clarity in Evaluation Constructs.** We created formal protocols and mapped constructs in the protocols to constructs in our youth survey. We conducted trainings for all site visitors, to insure that they understood key evaluation constructs and each of the protocol questions. This insured that we not only had multiple data sources within each organization for evaluation constructs of interest, but that they were framed similarly across interviews and across case study sites.

- **Case Study Design includes Multiple Sites.** Having multiple case study sites provided a validity check on our data and, more importantly, the conclusions we drew from the data. Theories or generalizations about how something works could be tested by looking for consistency across sites. In those cases where generalizations did not hold up, we needed to look for alternative explanations for what we are seeing or explain why certain sites were dissimilar from one another.

- **Multiple Rounds of Data Collection.** We had neither a pre-post nor an experimental design to data collection, as the YLDI initiative had already been active for almost two years before we started data collection. We chose, however, to do two rounds of data collection as a check for reliability of the information that we were collecting. Overall, there was a high level of consistency across site visits in both the qualitative and
quantitative results, although, as is described further below, the end-date of the grant did prove to be a factor during the second site visit.

**Study Limitations**

Given the theory-building purpose of this evaluation, there are some limitations that could not be avoided. Study limitations included (1) late onset of the evaluation, (2) uneven participation of case study sites, (3) variable data sets, and (4) small sample sizes. Each of these are explored in some detail below:

- **Late Onset of the Evaluation.** SPR did not join the YLDI initiative until the second year of funding, and this meant that we could not implement a pre-post or experimental evaluation design to measure the pure impact of the initiative. We, did however, draw on the Innovation Center’s documentation and interviews to give us a picture of what occurred prior to our involvement.8

- **Differing Levels of Participation by Case Study Sites.** For a variety of reasons, not all organizations were able to fully accommodate evaluation requests. Due to issues of cultural appropriateness, for instance, TOCA did not administer the youth survey or provide us with information on participant risk factors. Similarly, although we made site visits to all organizations,9 program leaders were not always able to set up all of our requested interviews.10

- **Variable Data Sets.** Variations in program design and program documentation across sites made it impossible to get exactly the same level of detail on each organization. Further, in trying to be responsive to sites and their wishes, we modified certain aspects of our data collection tools and approach in ways that led to variability in the data set. For instance, program directors at both C-Beyond and YUCA felt strongly that the identity questions on the YLDI survey should address multiple identities (race, sexuality and gender). Per their requests, the questions were modified to include more than one identity category, but this, in turn, made the questions essentially “incomparable” to those of other organizations.

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8 The Innovation Center’s documentation was not based upon an analytical framework to guide the type of data collected.

9 As stated previously, we trained the NYAC program director in our protocols and he made site visits to each of NYAC’s 5 grantee organizations.

10 At times this was due to events outside the control of program staff. Three site visits (YMPJ, Mi Casa, AIWA), for instance, were scheduled on September 11th, 2001. Site visitors in New York and Denver were stranded for days, and many scheduled interviews with youth and program staff were cancelled.
- **Small Samples Sizes.** Some of the organizations were very small (C-Beyond, YUCA, and AIWA), and/or had a small cadre of youth engaged in civic activism (YWP, YMPJ). The small sample sizes make the conclusions, particularly those based in the survey results, less secure—especially when such organizations are compared to large organizations that surveyed all of their young people (Outright, Mi Casa, Leadership Excellence-2nd round).

Throughout this report, we will highlight areas where these limitations factor into our findings. In general, these limitations are endemic to case study research, and constrain our ability to make external generalizations from our data. That is, we cannot say unequivocally that our findings would be applicable to all civic activism organizations. We can generalize across the groups within this sample to make assumptions about the strengths and weaknesses of civic activism as an approach, but in order to be proven, those theories will need to be tested using an experimental or quasi-experimental approach. Thus, as is generally true for case study research, this evaluation is designed to contribute to *theory building* rather than *theory testing*.

**REPORT OVERVIEW**

This report presents our findings from the two-year evaluation of YLDI. The report is divided into two volumes. Volume I, the volume you are now reading, includes a summary of our primary findings across all sites. Volume II, our supplemental volume, includes profiles of each of the 12 YLDI sites, profiles of youth and youth leaders within many of the organizations, and a summary of survey results for each organization.

The remainder of Volume I focuses on cross site findings and recommendations. In Chapter II, we focus on the community and organizational contexts of YLDI organizations, and the characteristics and risk factors faced by YLDI youth. Chapter III presents a typology of civic activism, outlining key approaches to civic activism and different models for youth leadership and community change. Chapter IV focuses on youth and community outcomes. Chapter V addresses challenges facing YLDI organizations and initiative design elements. Chapters VI present collaborative level outcomes, while Chapter VII focuses on organizational outcomes and sustainability. We conclude with Chapter VIII, where we summarize our response to our core research questions and provide recommendations for practitioners, funders, and researchers.
II. DEFINING THE CONTEXT:
YLDI COMMUNITIES, ORGANIZATIONS AND YOUTH

CAPAY’s work is like a concentric circle, it branches out from you, your family, and your community. You have impact on all of those levels and they have impact on you. Because of CAPAY young people are educating themselves on what’s going on in these spheres; [as a result], there’s more of a direct correlation to those spheres. – Staff (Capay)

This quote, which captures fundamental aspects of Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth’s (CAPAY) theory of change, illustrates the ways that organizations both impact, and are impacted by, the environment in which they operate. Organizations funded by YLDI operate in highly diverse community and organizational contexts. These contexts influence the ways in which they approach their youth programming and how young people experience their development.

In this chapter, we contextualize the work of YLDI organizations by looking closely at the communities and youth that they serve, as well as their organizational characteristics. This context sets the stage for our subsequent presentation of the civic activism typology, youth outcomes, organizational outcomes, and collaborative level outcomes (Chapters III-VI). Building on core concepts in the models developed by CAPAY, we begin by defining our own contextual model for understanding the layered contextual influences on young people’s development (Exhibit II-1). From this base, we move on to discuss the nuances of these layers, emphasizing the role of YLDI organizations in helping youth mediate the barriers they face.

A MODEL TO DEFINE ORGANIZATION’S CONTEXT

Research demonstrates that healthy youth development is dependent on the contextual influences of the family, community, and society in which it occurs (National Governors’ Association’s Center for Best Practices, 1999; National Research Council, 2002). Further, given this the focus of this study on civic activism, it is crucial that we understand the many ways that communities influence the methods, approach, and strategy employed by youth organizations, as well as the resulting outcomes for youth. Our contextual model, in Exhibit II-1, illustrates the many contextual influences that affect youth development, both positively and negatively. We draw on this contextual model throughout this chapter to understand the contexts of the YLDI grantees. These three contexts include community, socializing systems, and organizational characteristics.
We elaborate on each of these contexts from the broadest level to the core element – the target youth population.

Exhibit II-1
Contextual Model of YLDI Youth and Organizations

This model recognizes that young people grow up in communities, not programs. Youth spend far more time in socializing systems such as schools or families, which often do not provide the positive support and guidance youth need, than they do in community based organizations. Similar to Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) conception of the multiple systems that affect youth development, this model enables us to understand how youth development is facilitated by meaningful linkages between different settings. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner asserts that the institutions youth participate in are part of the larger social system and are influenced by a variety of social forces. Organizations doing civic activism work intentionally affect how these social forces play out in the community through their community change efforts. Often, civic activism organizations

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1 Bronfenbrenner describes the following systems that affect development: 1) Micro-systems, the adolescent engaged in the settings of her or his daily life (school, families, etc.); 2) Meso-systems, the interlinkages among different settings or micro-systems in an adolescent’s life (i.e. linkages between parents and teachers), 3)Exo-systems, the larger community in which a child lives and the set of connections that occur within the institutions of that community; and 4) Macro-systems, the culture and society that provide the frame for development.
are working to give youth in the community a voice in the decisions being made for and about them. This model, therefore, highlights the effect communities have on organizations and the youth they serve, and also the effect organizations and youth have on communities.

On the broadest level, individuals and community based organizations are influenced by many facets of community context, such as the economic, geographic, demographic, and social characteristics that contribute to the social environments of each community. Geographic characteristics, such as the location and the population density of the communities where organizations are located, impact the accessibility of resources for organizations and youth. In addition, regional trends in community participation and involvement affect the strength and number of networks available for youth membership. Economic characteristics, such as per capita income and the rate of poverty, give us a rough sense of the opportunity structure within a given community. Demographic characteristics such as race and ethnicity give us a sense of who lives in the communities, how diverse the neighborhoods are, and what kinds of barriers youth might face. Factors which influence how organizations and youth relate to communities, such as political climate, crime rates, and the availability of resources, are called social characteristics in this model.

Moving inward in our contextual model, the next section addresses the influence of socializing systems in a young person’s life and how YLDI organizations relate to such systems. Families, peers, schools, and other youth services are the primary influences on the way youth see and approach the world. Youth may become politicized through their families or may first encounter racism or discrimination at school. Pressure from peers affects a young person’s decision-making ability and interactions with other youth serving organizations or institutions, such as juvenile hall, can profoundly affect a young person’s self perception and long-term goals. Researchers concur that interconnections and consistency between these socializing systems (i.e. good teacher/parent relationships, parental involvement in community based programs) help promote healthy youth development (Phelan, Davidson, Yu, 1998).

Moving still closer inward, we examine the characteristics of YLDI organizations and target populations. The organizational context includes an analysis of the structure, history, budget, and staff characteristics of YLDI organizations to set the stage for our discussion of the organizational challenges and outcomes in chapters V and VI. Finally, in our discussion of the target populations of YLDI organizations, we acknowledge that
the YLDI programs are just one of many factors that influence the development of a young person’s competencies (personal/social/cultural, vocational/citizen, cognitive/creative), needs (safety, belonging, support, etc.), and cognitive or psychosocial development. This section looks at the defining characteristics of youth in each organization and the hurdles to healthy youth development that they face. Note that more detailed information on each YLDI organization, as well as profiles of youth and young-adult leaders in each organization, can be found in Volume 2 of this report.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITIES**

This section focuses on the communities in which the YLDI grantees are located in order to provide a sense of the environments in which the organizations operate, how they compare and contrast across grantees, and the nature of organization-community relationships. This analysis is crucial for understanding the evolution of community change goals within the YLDI organizations, as well as the climate for engaging youth in activism.

**Geographic Diversity**

The YLDI grantees span several geographic settings across the United States. Looking at the map in Exhibit II-2, however, it is clear that there are concentrations of grantees in the San Francisco Bay Area and along the Eastern seaboard. The four west coast programs are all located in the San Francisco Bay Area, while the four east coast programs are more evenly spread along the north coast, with two programs headquartered in Washington, D.C. There is one organization in each of the South, Southwest, and Midwest regions.

The rate at which people are engaged and connected to their fellow community members and community institutions varies regionally across the country. For youth involved in YLDI, these social connections are equated to the amount and quality of community-wide supports and opportunities available for young people. The ways in which youth are connected or disconnected from their communities affect the opportunities they have to participate in community decision making, voice opinions, or affect change.
The YLDI organizations fill particular niches within their communities where community bonds may be weak or non-existent. As was commonly cited by YLDI organizations, in the absence of positive supports and opportunities, youth may seek them “from groups, such as gangs, that fill developmental needs for leadership, independence, self-esteem, and autonomy” (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine; 2002). YLDI organizations and other community-based youth organizations, in contrast, are an important and necessary forum for youth, particularly those that are disconnected from school or the workforce, to form long-term positive social capital. Equally important is the presence of a strong philanthropic community, like that in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area, to support the infrastructure of youth non-profits through training and organizational development supports.

Looking at the geographic distribution of sites, one can also see that YLDI provided a unique opportunity for the organizations to network with and learn from promising programs and physically distant organizations across the country. Learning group meetings allowed program staff to learn how similar work is being done in strikingly different social, political, economic, and cultural contexts and through different approaches. For example, in the California political context, many youth organizing groups have formed out of opposition to a state proposition (i.e. propositions 187 and
209). The diverse representation of organizations in the initiative allowed for the program staff to come together in a non-competitive learning community, where they shared program practices and strategies freely. For some groups who were isolated in areas with few programs for youth, the initiative provided a network of collegial support and insight. Through the connections and relationships forged through these meetings, program staff helped one another leverage funding, create new programming, and solve similar organizational problems.

**Socioeconomic and Population Characteristics**

Jacksonville is not a good place to be queer…This is some great city if you’re some white, middle class, Baptist family, 2 to 3 kids, dog, white picket fence. If you’re like that, sure it’s a great community. But if you’re outside of that very narrow, All-American thing, you’re just completely put outside and nobody gives a damn about you. Everything that goes wrong is your fault; people find a way to make it your fault. –Youth (NYAC)

There are numerous factors that contribute to a youth’s sense of belonging in their community, as the above quote illustrates. Many youth participating in YLDI organizations feel very marginalized within their communities, whether because of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or socioeconomic status. Thus, one way to characterize the communities served by the YLDI grantees is to consider how the socioeconomic status and neighborhood distribution of the population might influence the supports and opportunities available for youth growing up in the community. As the contextual model in Exhibit II-3 depicts, we assume that the economic, social, and demographic factors in a community influence its youth and youth-serving institutions.

We have identified four categories of settings of the YLDI organizations based on location and neighborhood context where they are located. In this process, considerable thought was given to the associations linked to terms such as “urban” and “suburban,” and how the communities fit into these designations. We see from Exhibit II-3 that the majority of YLDI organizations are located in urban communities, with the remaining

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2 The classifications of urban, urbanized, suburban, and rural are based upon our qualitative data collection on site at each organization. The classifications, therefore, do not conform with the US Census classifications of “urban” and “urbanized,” which categorize areas based on a formula for population density. For this report, urban refers to densely populated metropolitan areas, suburban refers to a residential area outside of a city, urbanized refers to areas that are suburban in proximity to a city center yet have taken on urban characteristics, and rural refers to areas that have sparsely distributed populations and are geographically isolated.
located in urbanized (2), rural (2), and suburban (1) communities. Analyzing our data in this way allowed us to look at challenges that different types of communities face.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban (6)</td>
<td>LE, AIWA</td>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YWP</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mi Casa</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YMPJ</td>
<td>Bronx Borough, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outright</td>
<td>Portland, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanized (2)</td>
<td>YUCA</td>
<td>East Palo Alto, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAPAY</td>
<td>Boston Area, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban (1)</td>
<td>C-Beyond</td>
<td>Concord, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (2)</td>
<td>TOCA</td>
<td>Sells, AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21st Century</td>
<td>Selma, AL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two southernmost YLDI grantees, 21st Century and TOCA, are the only two rural locations and also the poorest communities within the YLDI group. The national office of the 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement is located in Selma, in the heart of Dallas County, Alabama, and what is called the “Black Belt.” This term refers to the region’s history as a place where large numbers of Blacks tilled the soil, first as slaves, later as sharecroppers, and eventually as independent farmers. The region remains home to among the nation’s highest concentration of African Americans (70%) and because of the south’s rich social history, it is fertile ground for civic activism. Further, Dallas and its neighboring counties are among the state’s poorest: “As you live down here you see the extreme poverty. It almost overwhelms you that people live in these conditions in this day and time,” related one program staff. “You have to realize that people are living in houses that don’t have plumbing and running water and living on dirt roads that are barely accessible.” Though Selma is a city, it is a rural city, as isolated and impoverished as the surrounding areas. More than half of 21st Century’s local chapters are located in

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3 NYAC is not included in this chart because it is a national organization with membership organizations spanning the country.
Alabama, with other chapters in California, Illinois, Louisiana, Georgia and Mississippi. The rural Tohono O’odham Reservation in Arizona faces even more severe poverty than 21st Century: the per capita family income is $6,998, with 32.6% of households bringing in an annual income less than $10,000. Forty-one percent of families on the reservation live below the poverty level. Like many impoverished rural communities, the Tohono O’odham reservation is geographically isolated and lacks community resources, social services, and job opportunities.

The term “urbanized” describes the areas that are suburban in their proximity to a city center, yet lacking the affluence typically associated with the suburbs. These are non-urban areas faced with urban-like blight and poverty. For example, YUCA is located in East Palo Alto, a small city of predominately low-income residents, an hour south of San Francisco and bordered by suburban Palo Alto where Stanford University is located. Though East Palo Alto is not urban in classification – the city rests on only 2.5 square miles – it is indeed contextually different from its neighboring suburban communities. East Palo Alto has a median family income of $44,342, while families in the neighboring affluent city of Palo Alto have a median income of $117,574. African Americans and whites make up 23% and 27% of the East Palo Alto community, respectively, while in Palo Alto, 76% of the population is white and only 2% is African American. Further, East Palo Alto faces many of the same challenges that urban areas face, such as the displacement of low-income families due to gentrification and commercial development, ethnic/racial tensions, and environmental hazards related to the presence of industrial development such as toxic plants. The urbanized areas are also quite racially diverse, with a smaller white population than suburban and urban areas.

The urban areas are also quite racially and ethnically diverse, but the level of diversity and composition of the communities varied considerably. Six of the YLDI grantees are found in five urban areas: two in Oakland, California; and one in Denver, Colorado, the Bronx Borough of New York City, New York, Portland, Maine, and Washington, D.C. Three of the five urban areas, have larger African American populations than white populations, namely the Bronx, Oakland, and Washington, D.C. Denver has a large Hispanic population, and Oakland also has a sizable Asian American community (about 15%). Portland, on the other hand, is a very different type of urban center than the other four cities considered in this analysis. In terms of population

4 Made urban in nature; taking on urban characteristics.
density, Portland is the urban center of Maine, though the city shares few of the debilitating urban characteristics of the other urban areas, due to the overall demographics and relative affluence of the state of Maine. Maine is also the “whitest” state in the country, with 96.9% of its residents being white. Portland, in comparison, is somewhat more racially diverse than the state overall.

Statistics about urban areas can be a bit misleading given that most urban populations are quite bifurcated, and thus the overall statistics for a city fail to capture the concentration of poverty and crime within specific neighborhoods. These differences are intensified when we consider variations between urban areas within the YLDI group. For example, comparing Portland and Washington, D.C. presents some dissimilarities. Washington D.C. has a violent crime rate of more than 5 times higher than that of Portland, and, moreover, the percentage of families with children below the poverty line is 24.5% in Washington, compared to 16.7% in Portland. Still, for youth in the inner-cities of most of these communities, poverty has given rise to a number of social problems including high rates of crime and, in some cases, a high-level of police presence. Some youth indicated that excessive policing in their communities has resulted in intimidation and undue harassment by the police, causing tension between the community and the police department. One program leader observed that the tension between the police and urban, minority youth is an ongoing social problem that needs to be addressed. She says, "The police are not supportive of the community and law enforcement can be a detriment in an urban community because that force preys upon the community members."

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the focus of YLDI on marginalized or vulnerable youth populations, only one YLDI grantee targets low-income youth in a suburban area. C-Beyond works in Concord, CA, a community that is 70% white and 20% Hispanic. The property crime and violent crime rates in Concord are among the lowest in the YLDI group, and per capita income is among the highest. Only 7.4% of the families in Concord with children are below the poverty rate – a percentage that is by far the lowest of all the communities. The conservative suburban context of the community is cited by C-Beyond staff as one of the primary reasons why it is difficult to get youth motivated and engaged in political issues. This and other challenges faced by YLDI organizations are discussed further in Chapter V.

Each of these factors – geography, demographics, socioeconomic status – contextualizes the communities the YLDI grantees are being impacted by and are
impacting. The information communicated through crime rates, racial composition, and geographic location tells a larger story about the social forces at play in the lives of youth and the institutions who serve them.

**SOCIALIZING SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

The contextual model introduced at the beginning of this chapter (Exhibit II-2), highlights the influence of socializing systems, such as family, peers, schools, and other youth serving institutions on youth development. These contexts are important because they are the primary settings and influences on young peoples’ development. This is supported by a number of cultural theories, including youth’s multiple worlds model (Phelan, Davidson, & Yu; 1991, 1998) and Bronfenbrenner’s eco-cultural theory (Bronfenbrenner; 1994) which each focus on the influence of contextual “worlds” on young people’s development. Research clearly shows that for adolescents, meaningful linkages and congruency of values, expectations, and beliefs between parents, schools, peers, and youth serving institutions facilitate healthy development (National Research Council, 2002). The absence of linkages between one context and another can add to a youth’s sense of stress. Breakdowns within communities, such as poverty and violence, make the linkages between families, peer groups, and schools very difficult to create and sustain. Community organizations can play a formidable role by fulfilling youth’s need for supportive, positive relationships and facilitating these connections. For example, in some communities, the YLDI organization is the only source of services for youth interested in a particular identity or in social justice issues. Thus, these organizations are a vital resource to youth within their communities that face innumerable challenges. Next we discuss each of these socializing systems in more detail, with an emphasis on how YLDI organizations actively reach out to them.

**Family**

The family is the most influential part of a young person’s immediate world, influencing all aspects of development from language and nutrition, to security and health. Research has consistently confirmed that families play the central role in supporting positive youth development. Further, the more a young person’s family is linked to the other institutions that directly influence them, such as schools and community based organizations, the higher the young person’s future aspirations (Azmitia, Cooper; 2002).

For communities that are challenged by poverty and have few resources and supports for families, community based organizations, like those in YLDI can play a role
in linking a young person’s family to the other key youth-serving and community-based institutions. Recognizing the importance of family, several YLDI organizations reached out to the families of their participants. For instance, AIWA and CAPAY have used several common techniques to cultivate trusting relationships with parents, such as offering English language and citizenship classes at AIWA and college application assistance at CAPAY. Helping parents gain English skills and learn more about the college admission process is one way these organizations are creating linkages between youth’s family and school “worlds.” In addition to gaining the trust and respect of parents and community members, addressing the specific needs and expectations of community members allows these organizations to advance their social change agenda.

Some YLDI organizations have established outreach to parents as a core aspect of their program. For example, 21st Century staff seek out contact with parents in order to increase the amount of parental involvement in the lives of the youth participants. According to one staff member, whose son is a former 21st Century member, overworked and often impoverished single mothers are often unable to be sufficiently involved with their children.

When a child joins a chapter, it’s not just the child that joins. The whole family has to join. You have to be involved with the family. A lot of parents don’t have time to be involved with their kids. These parents love their children but they’re just trying to survive. A lot of it is the education level of the parent. They feel intimidated about getting involved with the Chapter. – Staff (21st Century)

With parents' often limited capacity for sufficient involvement, 21st Century adult staff and volunteers frequently fill the breech. "We have permission to discipline their children and go to their school and check up on them. We monitor grades and attendance and their activities. Sometimes, principals will call us first before they call the parents.” Similarly, programs offered by Mi Casa are multi-faceted and targeted at all levels of a young person’s life. Youth can access information on financial aid, admissions, and college enrollment requirements, free after school and summer programs, a drug and alcohol abuse prevention program, and even family counseling, mentoring, and intensive case management for students and their families.

Some YLDI organizations, however, do not systematically reach out to parents and this often results in parents’ misunderstanding of the organizations. The parents of youth involved in youth organizing programs, for instance, do not always understand the activist nature of their involvement, and often broadly interpret their work as community
service. CAPAY, for example, intentionally does not reach out to parents because in the past, parental support for CAPAY has been mixed, at best:

For parents, not having tangible results related to school grades or going to college, it’s harder for them to understand our work especially parents who don’t speak English very well because you can’t explain community organizing because you don’t know the words, or you can’t explain leadership development. A lot of students have difficulty with how to communicate with their parents about what they do. – Staff (CAPAY)

When parents do know of the activist orientation of the group, they often fear that their children will get arrested or will “stir up trouble.” This is an ongoing challenge for C-Beyond, who by the end of YLDI, was seeing an increased need to reach out to parents in order to maintain their membership. The following quotes are representative:

[My mom is] like “don’t go to protests!” She’s afraid that something is going to happen to me. I want her to understand that what I do helps people. I want her to see that but it’s really hard. She doesn’t see that. – Youth (C-Beyond)

We’re trying to get out there and reach the adults. ‘Cause like we get the youth in and the adults get upset because of what they’ve heard about C-Beyond and the walk-outs we’ve had in the past. So now at the new membership meetings we’re trying to get parents more involved in what we’re trying to do. We’re having parents orientation so that parents know what their [sons or daughters] are doing here so they won’t listen to …negative rumor about C-Beyond and [pull their sons or daughters] out of the program. – Staff (C-Beyond)

Thus, family outreach is important not only for young people’s welfare but for creating the community networks and supports necessary for community change work.

Peers

Peers are often cited as a source of negative influence on youth development. Research has found, however, that peers are both resources and challenges to youth’s academic and social success (Azmitia, Cooper; 2002). The importance of social acceptance during (particularly early) adolescence causes friendship networks during this period to be relatively rigid cliques. Several theorists have argued that these peer groups or cliques have a powerful effect on a young person’s identity development (Brown, 1990). Still, more often than not, adolescents agree more with their parents’ views on major issues, such as morality, the importance of education, politics, and religion (Ruben et al., 1998). As will be discussed further in Chapter IV, community organizations like
the those participating in YLDI often provide youth (including those who are socially isolated) the opportunity to connect with youth who share their interests and/or background. By creating and supporting peer groups around youth’s common interests, these programs help foster positive influence peer associations, that can, in turn, support their development of a positive sense of self.

Civic activism often requires that youth recruit their peers, speak in front of groups of other youth, and take a public stand on political issues (through protest, petitions, etc). This can be socially challenging for some young people, especially if their peer groups are not highly politicized.

It’s not the coolest thing to do. For instance, on September 11th, [a C-Beyond youth] got thrown out of his classroom and one of the other kids was threatened because he wasn’t chiming in with “kill all the Palestinians.” So it’s not the coolest thing sometimes to be a really political kid. – Staff (C-Beyond)

There are no social justice cliques in the south…Youth gain popularity by being on the football team. – Staff (21st Century)

For other young people, organizations like the YLDI groups inspire and empower them to speak up to their peers about issues they care about. At YUCA, youth are able to share their knowledge, insights and experience with family and friends outside of YUCA. One current youth participant explained that YUCA “makes me a better person because I can educate and challenge my friends and peers about issues.”

**Schools**

The relationships youth develop with adults and peers in school are critical to their positive development because they involve large amounts of time and opportunities for youth to make connections outside of the family. Research has demonstrated that to effectively reach students and classrooms, schools must build partnerships within their communities in a collaborative effort to perform all the functions involved in educating a young person (Dorfman et al., 2001). Collaboration with resources outside of the school setting can enhance both the academic and civic engagement skills of young people.

Many of the YLDI organizations strive to partner with schools in order to improve the school experience of the youth they serve. YUCA works closely with schools, with staff acting as case managers as they make sure youth are keeping up with their studies.
Five YLDI organizations\(^5\) provide academic support and tutoring. Often, YLDI organizations use school partnerships to educate and enrich the experience of youth at their school. For example, C-Beyond and YUCA youth give presentations at school to raise youth awareness of political issues and activism. Meanwhile, CAPAY youth give presentations on Asian American history in the community high schools, and to sustain these relationships, CAPAY staff hold partner meetings regularly to “touch base” with teachers. Similarly, Outright does “speaking engagements” at schools in order to reach out and raise awareness of LGBTQ issues. In all, the direct linkages between YLDI organizations and schools had multiple goals, including the provision of academic assistance, the creation of safer and more inclusive school environments, and youth recruitment into activism and community change efforts.

In addition to working directly with schools, the YLDI organizations often provided a forum for youth to discuss their experiences in school and take action against perceived injustice. C-Beyond, CAPAY, YMPJ and YWP, for instance, have all taken action to address funding and policy decisions that they perceived as unjust. These efforts will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

**Other Youth Serving Institutions**

In the same way that schools cannot provide all of the supports and services youth (especially vulnerable youth) need to succeed, no single community organization can provide the range of developmental, preventative, and intervention programs and services that give young people the experiences they need to mature into successful adults. Fulfilling all of these needs requires collaborative planning by a community’s youth-serving agencies, other social services and educational institutions, policy makers, community leaders, and young people (National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, 1996). In order to facilitate such collaboration, several YLDI organizations collaborate with other youth serving institutions, such as the welfare system, juvenile justice and law enforcement systems, other community-based organizations, and the policy community. For instance, many youth who attend Leadership Excellence’s one-week camp are required to attend as a condition of their probation, and school counselors and teachers often refer young women to YWP. These youth-serving institutions recognize that the YLDI organization can provide certain growth opportunities these youth need that they are not able to provide. Many of the youth organizing groups, like AIWA and C-Beyond,\(^5\)

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\(^5\) 21st Century, CAPAY, AIWA, Mi Casa, YMPJ, and LE
partner with other civic activist groups to coordinate their efforts and strategies around particular issue campaigns.

YWP staff are taking a proactive approach to developing meaningful relationships with other community-based organizations. YWP staff believe that these partnerships will enhance their relationship with the Washington, D.C. government and policy community, and will support their efforts to impact community and institutional change. Through the organization’s focused work on issues of sexual harassment, foster care and HIV/AIDS, YWP has begun to develop relationships with organizations in the community that focus on these content areas.

**Organizational Context**

This section presents background information about the grantees, such as the number and age of youth served, the type of programming offered, decision-making strategies, and organizational structures. The YLDI organizations vary considerably along all of these organizational dimensions. Ranging from small, community-based groups to national networks of programs, the unique outcomes of each organization depend on their location, type of programming, and organizational capacity. For instance, some organizations work intensively with small groups of youth, but reach larger numbers of youth through conferences, trainings, and campaign outreach. We consider these contextual aspects in detail so that we may examine their relationship to youth, community, and organizational outcomes, which we detail in Chapters IV, V, and VI.

**History of Organization**

The organizations chosen to participate in YLDI represent diverse organizational models and histories. Many of the YLDI organizations were founded by an inspired, charismatic leader, some were spin-offs from a successful event or campaign of a larger organization, and other organizations sought to fulfill basic community needs or elevate these needs to a level of national consciousness.

The histories of these organizations tend to have a common element – the challenge of transferring leadership from the initial founder, whose energy and vision has permeated the entire organization, to a new leader, who must also be charismatic and inspiring in their own right, as well as accepting and supporting of the organization’s mission, values, and goals. In addition, a new leader must have the expertise to succeed at the helm of the organization at whatever stage of development it is in. Several of the
organizations underwent difficult founder and leader transitions during the grant period, and many are still struggling to transfer power effectively, a process which we will describe further in Chapter V.

In addition to the influence of charismatic leaders, many organizations began as grassroots efforts in communities. Several programs were founded on the heels of a successful community organizing campaign or a catalytic conference that highlighted a need for action (like CAPAY). Other organizations were created as a response to a basic need in a community. For instance, the idea to create a youth leadership organization in Selma germinated in 1985 during the 20th anniversary of the historic voting rights marches and the Voting Rights Act. Increases in youth-on-youth violence, drug abuse, and crime, compounded by ongoing racism and poverty underscored the need to better support youth. Responding to this need, several veteran civil rights activists started the 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement. Similarly, Mi Casa was created to provide educational and employment services for Latina women and families, and Outright started as support groups for LGBTQ youth. These programs, grassroots in origin and responsive to community needs, aim to ameliorate pressing social problems in their communities.

Within the YLDI group, one organization stands out for its national scope and large program membership. NYAC was founded to address advocacy around LGBTQ youth issues at a national level, uniting grassroots organizations across the country to work toward a common cause. Though different in origin and age, each of these organizations brought to YLDI the desire to learn, share, and improve their programming in key areas: organizational capacity, youth leadership, and civic activism.

**Budget/Funding Structure**

The YLDI programs also look very different financially, ranging from well-established organizations that have been around for many years, to newer organizations just getting off their feet. The readiness of each organization to benefit from YLDI, especially in the sunset of the initiative, often depended on each organization’s diversification of funding sources, staff size and capacity, and level of documentation around organizational policies and procedures. Exhibit II-4 displays the size of the grant given by Ford in relation to the overall program budget to express just how large an impact this grant, and the end of this grant, had on several organizations.
As will be discussed further in Chapter VII, those organizations whose budgets were halved at the end of the three year grant found sustaining any work begun under YLDI to be a considerable challenge. The challenge of transitioning off the grant proved too difficult for these groups. Note also, in Exhibit II-4, the age of the organizations. Some young organizations like YMPJ, are considerably larger than older organizations that began as volunteer-based organizations, like Leadership Excellence or Outright. Thus, within this group of organizations, the age of the organization is not directly correlated with the project budget.

Nine of the twelve organizations had 501(c)3 status and functioned as independent non-profit organizations. The exceptions are CAPAY, C-Beyond, and YUCA, who are under the fiscal oversight of larger non-profits. All of these organizations are also, interestingly, youth-led organizations with small annual budgets. CAPAY is fiscally sponsored by the University of Massachusetts, and benefits from the use of space, financial systems, and a large volunteer pool through the university. Currently, the Youth

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6 Note we will describe further the youth leadership structure of each organization in Chapter III.
Empowerment Center serves as the fiscal agent for C-Beyond, with a board of directors that (very loosely) oversees the organization. Similarly, YUCA’s board of directors has committed to starting the process of becoming a 501(c)3 that will result in YUCA becoming independent from the Tides Center, its current fiscal agent.

**Leadership Structure and Staff Characteristics**

A range of organizational and leadership structures exist among the YLDI grantees – the organizations vary in leadership style and by the structure and level of involvement of their board of directors. The degree to which youth are involved in decision-making and leadership roles varies significantly, for diversity in this area was one of the guiding criteria the Innovation Center used when selecting grantees. This aspect of their programming is discussed in detail in Chapter III. The staffing structure, size, and characteristics of staff members reflect differences in the scope and capacity of the organizations – YMPJ, for example, is the largest employer in its neighborhood, while other organizations, such as CAPAY and Outright, depend on volunteers to keep their programs up and running smoothly.

Almost all of the organizations have an executive director who oversees all of the organizational functions. The exception is CAPAY, which is a youth-run organization, fully governed by a steering committee of youth. CAPAY, however, is overseen by a project coordinator, who handles all of the administrative, financial, and organizational issues that would be under the auspices of an executive director. Within the YLDI time period, Outright operated for almost a year without an acting executive director, before eventually bringing back their founder to help manage staff and fundraise for the organization. As described more detail in Chapter V, executive directors within these organizations tend to take on many overlapping roles and responsibilities, including that of fundraiser, youth support staff, program and staff manager, community outreach coordinator, and so on. These multiple roles make the executive director role very important within these organizations and also, as spoken of previously, very difficult to replace.

All of the organizations have boards of directors, though some have much more of an influence on the functioning of the organization than do others. For example, the board of directors at 21st Century is composed of young people and acts as the main decision-making body of the large, chapter-based organization. Outright has a very hands-on board of directors that makes all of the organizational decisions. On the other end of the spectrum is TOCA’s board which is composed of community members and
elders, which rarely comes together for whole group meetings. Instead, as a substitute for
traditional board meetings, the co-directors visit each board member personally to discuss
issues in the community and the organization and informally measure opinion on issues.
In another conception of a board of directors, YMPJ has leadership circles composed of
senior staff, regular staff, and youth. The “circle” is intended to provide for a collective
decision making process.

Overall, most of the organizations have largely traditional leadership structures,
consisting of an executive director, a small full-time staff, and often a network of
volunteers, with the level of youth leadership being the main variable. Staff size varied
across the grantees (and varied within organizations throughout the grant period), as did
the number of youth staff and volunteers each organization incorporated into their
structure. Further, as is true of many non-profits and as is discussed in Chapter V on
organizational challenges, YLDI organizations experienced substantial turnover in
leadership and key staff positions during the three-year initiative. Exhibit II-5 provides a
snapshot of staffing arrangements at each organization, though these numbers have
probably shifted since the data was collected. Some organizations, such as TOCA or
YMPJ, have larger full and part time staff because they are one of the only employers in
their communities. Large organizations, such as Mi Casa and 21st Century, handle their
many programs and the broad scope of their programming in very different ways. Mi
Casa has 50 full time employees, while 21st Century runs its seven satellite Techno
Houses through youth staff and over 100 adult volunteers.

Almost all of the organizations employ some youth either as summer interns or as
youth trainers. Typically, the YLDI groups give their core youth stipends for the large
time commitment they make working on campaigns. YWP pays their teen staff $6 an
hour, while youth staff at Outright get paid an hourly wage along with benefits. CAPAY,
one of the only organizations with no youth staff, used to provide stipends for their youth
council, but are not able to do so given their current budget constraints. Having youth on
staff, especially those programs that hire a high number of youth, lends an employment
training dimension to their programs, particularly within youth organizing groups.7

7 Although the pay youth receive within these organizations is low (often 5-6$/hour or a set
stipend), it, coupled with the focus on job-skills, maybe a contributor to the ability of these groups to
attract and retain an older (14-20) youth population.
Staff Characteristics

One of the guiding assumptions of YLDI was that young adult leaders needed key training and supports. Particular challenges faced by young adult leaders are detailed in chapter V, but, in an overarching way, we found that young leaders were often isolated and overworked. Pay for staff and organizational leaders was low, causing some to take on other jobs in order to support themselves. For instance, in addition to their full time responsibilities within the organization, one former staff at CAPAY held other part-time jobs and attended graduate school. As discussed previously, staff and leaders often juggled multiple organizational responsibilities with minimal training, support, or oversight.

Despite these challenges, young adult leaders were deeply committed to these organizations. Their distinct characteristics and experiences, coupled with their enthusiasm, motivation, and idealism, are responsible for program, youth, and organizational outcomes described throughout this report. YLDI leaders drew their inspiration for youth work from varied sources – one from a background in community organizing, another from experiences growing up as a person of color, and another from a

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8 All numbers from Wave 2.
career in education. One leader described how her experience in the organization differed from her experiences teaching in traditional school settings:

Teaching Asian students who want to be there is such a different experience than teaching in schools because they want to be there, whereas high school students are there because they have to be there. It was really an interesting experience for me watching them take this information and being completely changed by it or seeing different things about the world or understanding themselves differently because of what they are learning. – Project Director (CAPAY)

Very often, the leaders who are most successful at engaging and connecting with youth in their programs come from similar backgrounds and neighborhoods as youth participants. The four leaders working in the two predominately Asian youth serving organizations reflect diverse Asian heritage – Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Laotian. The leaders of the two predominately African American youth serving organizations are all African American themselves. Selecting leaders and staff with such characteristics, who could also serve as role-models for youth, was a high priority within these groups. In several organizations, youth were involved in interviews to insure that staff were to their liking.

Although many of these young leaders are college graduates, their experience with non-profit management varied significantly. It was often a challenge to find leaders with the right amount of idealism, ability to connect to young people, and who also has the technical and managerial expertise to run the organization. While it is important for staff to be well-versed in youth culture and able and willing to meet young people where they are, the organizational challenges posed by an inexperienced staff can threaten the livelihood and sustainability of a well-meaning program. As detailed in the following section on participant characteristics, finding staff who do mirror the experiences of the youth served by an organization can be especially challenging given the many risk factors faced by today’s youth.

**TARGET POPULATION/PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS**

YLDI was structured around the assumption that civic activism programs are more successful at reaching youth who are overlooked by traditional youth development organizations. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners use various terms to describe the youth population the Ford Foundation sought to target through YLDI. *Disconnected or dislocated, marginalized, disenfranchised, at-risk and vulnerable* – these terms attempt to describe a population of young people who, for many reasons, are not receiving the
supports and services they need to grow up to be healthy, productive adult members of society. *Disconnected* youth refers to youth who are not in school, working, in the military, or married (for 26 weeks or more out of any calendar year), and therefore disconnected from many mainstream societal institutions. Disconnection from mainstream society is not uncommon for youth ages 17 and over – characterizing up to 8% of whites, 13% of blacks and up to 15% of Hispanics (Yohalem, Pittman; 2001).

The term *vulnerable* has surfaced lately as one that encapsulates those youth for whom mainstream institutions are not readily available. Vulnerability can stem from several circumstances or events – life and family circumstances, such as poverty, violence, and job loss; discrimination through systems such as education and juvenile justice; and transitions inherent in adolescence (between schools, etc.) (Yohalem, Pittman; 2001). Race and class are influential factors in who is vulnerable. Vulnerable youth often experience discrimination from the very systems that are intended to support them, evidenced by their disproportionate involvement in the juvenile justice system, over-representation in special education, and poor access to health care services. These experiences combine to send a very negative message to youth of color and poor youth about the expectations they should have for themselves and their communities. The term *marginalized* refers to young people who find themselves outside the boundaries of prevailing youth development programming because of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and immigrant status, and they are often motivated by the desire to change the societal forces that relegate them to the margins (Roach & Wheeler, 2001). Throughout this report we use the terms *vulnerable* and *marginalized* to encompass these qualities of the YLDI target youth population. Although we were not able to assess all these negative factors and influences at play in the lives of YLDI youth, the following sections outline some of the many barriers they face. Before talking about the specific barriers these youth populations face, the next section describes the types of youth targeted by the YLDI organizations.

**Core Youth vs. Broad Membership**

The type of youth populations served by the YLDI organizations often require intensive and individualized support. The number of youth who experience this support varies from one YLDI organization to the next. Exhibit II-6 provides an overview of the number of youth served by each organization, including both what we are calling their “broad membership,” who have relatively low levels of contact with the organization, and their “core youth,” who receive more intensive services. Core youth often participate in
organizational decision-making, conduct outreach and workshops, and help coordinate campaigns. Meanwhile, the “broad membership” often receives a low dosage of services through their participation in a rally, attendance at a membership meeting, or attendance of one or two support groups.

Exhibit II-6
Size of Broad Membership & Core Youth Participants

For example, the core youth in AIWA’s youth organizing program differ from the broader membership and the youth interns by their contributions to the governance of the organization, and program and organizational planning. There youth may be involved in outreach efforts, developing programs, event planning, assisting in writing grant proposals, and conducting grassroots fundraising for AIWA’s projects. In addition, YUCA has 40 support volunteers from local high schools that are recruited by the core group of YUCA youth. These unpaid volunteers advise the core group and participate in some organizing work such as attending a protest. They are both a support base for the core group and a source of new core members as the older core members graduate or leave the program.

Although many programs do reach hundreds of youth each year, our evaluation focuses on the outcomes of youth involved in the smaller, more intensive programs. We focus on these groups for two reasons. First, as discussed further in Chapter IV, we feel
that it is unfair to hold organizations accountable for achieving outcomes among youth with whom they have had infrequent contact. Second, we focused data collection specifically on those aspects of civic activism focused programming influenced by YLDI, and this often meant that we were focused primarily on their core membership.

For many youth, overcoming the challenges we have outlined in this section and succeeding as either staff or youth participants in their organizations require the support and consistency of regular meetings, roles and responsibilities, and the close-knit relationships with peers and adults that a small program provides. These program characteristics resounded throughout our qualitative data, with many youth speaking about the program in which they participated as family-like.

Due to their youth organizing and identity development approaches, the YLDI organizations attract and retain adolescents and older youth who are generally not targeted by traditional youth development organizations. The age range of youth in each organization is depicted in Exhibit II-7. All of the YLDI programs reach 16-18 year olds, while ten of the programs serve youth between the ages of 14 and 18. Differences in the age range of participants served by the organizations correlates with the approach of the programming, a topic discussed further in Chapter III. As exhibit II-7 illustrates, the majority of programs serve high school aged youth, ages 14 through 20. Other larger organizations had programs for younger youth, though often these younger age groups were not the focus of our analysis.
Youth Characteristics

The YLDI grantees serve demographically very different populations, yet most fall into the category of vulnerable or marginalized youth. The following demographic data reflects the survey respondents from each organization surveyed. Though these samples are fairly representative of the larger population served by each organization, the specific percentages are based on the exact number of youth who filled out a survey. The YLDI groups do serve a larger percentage of young women than young men, largely due to the three organizations who specifically target young women – YWP, AIWA, and Mi Casa (illustrated in Exhibit II-8).

Although none of the programs focus exclusively on young men, two of the organizations that served LGBTQ youth (Outright and NYAC) serve a larger percentage of male than female youth. Further, the dichotomous categories of “male” and “female” failed to capture some aspects of diversity, as evidence by the gender breakdown within Outright, illustrated in Exhibit II-9.

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9 TOCA did not participate in the survey.

10 Rarely did all of the participants in the organization complete the survey, but the majority of organizations did attempt to get as many respondents as possible.
As a result of the Innovation Center’s intentional effort to create a diverse learning group, the organizations differed drastically in the racial and ethnic populations they target. These differences come from the varying communities in which the organizations are located, as well as the specific intention of some organizations to only target one racial or ethnic group. Exhibit II-10 gives a snapshot of the racial and ethnic composition of the youth population served by each organization.
Four organizations serve only one racial or ethnic group – TOCA, located on an Indian reservation, serves only Native American youth in the Tohono O’odham Tribe; CAPAY and AIWA target Asian youth, though there is some variance among the specific Asian groups youth identify with; and 21st Century targets African American youth. Leadership Excellence also targets only African Americans, however some youth at LE identify as multi-racial. Interestingly, Outright and NYAC, the two organizations targeting LGBTQ youth, serve the largest percentages of white youth. These organizations are both currently involved in some racial justice and awareness efforts to make the LGBTQ outreach efforts and organizational cultures more inclusive to non-whites.

Some organizations such as C-Beyond identified a specific target group. In its inception, C-Beyond targeted white students who “wanted to serve as allies to people of
color in the struggle against racism.” Their organizing strategy was to mobilize white people who would then organize other white people against racism, as part of building a larger, national movement. As Exhibit II-10 above illustrates, however, the organization started attracting increasing numbers of Latino and Asian youth because of the issues C-Beyond targets. This shift in membership led to C-Beyond revising their mission to focus on youth of color in 1999.

**Risk Factors Faced by Youth**

Though the youth participating in the twelve different YLDI grantees reside all over the country, represent different races and ethnicities, and have very different backgrounds and experiences, barriers to healthy development exist within all of their environments. In order to better understand how these youth are vulnerable, we asked program leaders to report on the percentage of young people within their organization who faced various risk factors. We received this information from 10 of the 12 YLDI groups.\(^\text{11}\) In addition, we used qualitative methods (such as case studies of individual youth), to further understand the nature of these risk factors. Exhibit II-11 highlights the percentage of young people within each organization who face key challenges.

When compared with various statistics gathered on general youth population, it is clear that YLDI young people face more barriers and risk factors. A high percentage of YLDI youth come from single parent households (41.5%), struggle with low academic achievement (39%), and have limited proficiency in English (11.4%). A history of drug and alcohol use (30%) is also high relative to the general youth population, as is sexual abuse (19%) and attempts at suicide (19%).

\(^{11}\) Tohono O’odham Community Action (TOCA) and National Youth Advocacy Council (NYAC) did not supply us with this information.
Due to targeted efforts on the part of organizations to reach youth with particular characteristics, certain risk factors tend to be concentrated within specific organizations. For example, in one organization, 85% of youth come from single parent households; 80% of youth at another organization struggle with low academic achievement; 100% of youth from two of the organizations come from homes where a language other than English is spoken; and 70% of youth within one organization come from families on public assistance. Similarly, 72% of youth at one organization face problems with drug and alcohol abuse, compared to the average across case study sites of 29.3%. These variations by site suggest that in many ways, the YLDI organizations serve youth with risk factors that are above and beyond the cross-site average and the national average.

This information on participant characteristics was confirmed in our interviews of staff and youth. While some staff report that they can connect with youth in meaningful ways because of their shared experiences, others are continually stunned by the life

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challenges that youth face. According to staff, many youth come from "harmful" spaces including schools that promote oppressive and racist practices, communities infiltrated with environmental pollutants, and families that lack adult role models to guide and support youth. Many youth also struggle academically in school; attributing their difficulty to inadequate resources, biased curriculum, and their experiences of discrimination by teachers and peers.

**Youth Challenges**

At the same time, YLDI youth identified a number of life challenges they face, including: (1) communities and adults have negative public perception of youth, (2) youth have limited options when it comes to education and other supports, (3) services available to youth focus almost exclusively on solving their “problems,” (4) youth face visible negative structures and coping strategies, such as gangs and drug use, and (5) youth have adult responsibilities and financial pressures. Each of these are described in more detail below, with examples of how they relate to youth within the YLDI organizations.

**Negative public perception of youth.** In 1997, the Public Agenda found that the majority of adults (67%) of all backgrounds agree that youth today are “undisciplined, disrespectful and unfriendly” (Farkas, et al, 1997). This characterization of youth *in general*, only becomes more negative when the group being characterized is defined more narrowly as African American youth, immigrant youth, poor youth, or LGBTQ youth. YLDI youth within these highly vulnerable groups have a heightened awareness of adults and the broader societies’ negative perceptions of them. Moreover, these groups often report experiencing racism, discrimination, and harassment from their peers, which in turn leads them to feel more socially isolated. For instance, youth we talked with who were recent immigrants reported being regularly singled-out and teased for their difficulty with speaking English. One AIWA youth reported, “When I go to school I don’t know how to communicate [to] my classmates. They know I don’t speak English and stuff, and so some people make fun of me and say ching-ching, chong-chong. And I know they make fun of us…at that time I feel really depressed and feel like all the pressure come to me.” In addition to the negative perceptions of adults and peers, youth from several organizations discussed the influence of community-wide or state-wide policies that are distrustful of youth. For example, youth at C-Beyond organized against the institution of a youth curfew in Concord as well as a state initiative that increased mandatory adult-sentences for youth offenders.
Limited options when it comes to education and other supports. Low-performing schools, inadequate teachers, and few job alternatives leave vulnerable youth ill-prepared to succeed in the job market and in life. For low-income, minority youth in particular, the school environment often presents a number of challenges. YMPJ youth, for instance, raised the issue of the use of police officers and metal detectors in schools, saying that it contributed a negative, criminalized self-perception. Youth at CAPAY, 21st Century, LE, and Outright talked about the role of schools in perpetuating a Eurocentric and heterosexist curriculum. Youth also spoke about being tracked into low level classes and not being pushed to excel within school settings. A staff member at 21st Century accused the public school administrators in the community of discriminatory practices such as tracking students without testing. She explained that teachers had the authority, without conducting thorough aptitude assessments, to assign students to levels “appropriate” to their aptitude based on a teacher’s subjective determination. This policy led to black students being disproportionately placed in remedial classes. “When you have white teachers with that power who come from a segregated culture, they replicate it in the schools,” she said. For youth in the community, being able to connect with program staff who reflect their own background and experiences is valuable, especially when 80% of the public school students in Selma are black, and 80% of the teachers are white.

Multiple services, focused almost exclusively on solving their “problems.” Vulnerable youth are often in contact with many social systems – welfare, education, law enforcement, and juvenile justice, yet the very systems set up to support them often fail. Part of the problem is that so many of these programs view youth from a deficit perspective, failing to recognize their gifts or talents. Vulnerable youth are often discussed largely as a potential cost to society, and are not given constructive ways to contribute to the community. Further, interventions which see youth (particularly those of color) as potential “criminals,” “gang members,” “drug addicts,” and “drop outs,” only serve to further marginalize them. When talking to YLDI youth, we found that the high level of policing, including the criminalization of youth activities (such as “hanging out with friends” or “skateboarding”), reinforced their sense of alienation from community and institutions. YLDI program staff voiced concerns about youth involved in the foster care system who often do not get the services they need, homeless LGBTQ youth with no where to go, and, of course, the rising incarceration of African American males, in particular.
**Visible negative structures and coping strategies, such as gangs and drug use.** In many communities, increasing gang violence is a threat to the safety of youth involved in the YLDI organizations. “In gangs they kill each other because this person’s wearing red and this person’s wearing blue,” explained a youth. “Little kids get involved, they see other kids and think it’s cool.” In one community, a gang rivalry also exists between the two schools that YUCA youth attend, and the office is in a gang-controlled neighborhood. One program staff noted that increasing gang participation “makes sense” because young people are not connected to a positive culture. In his words, “Gangs provide a clear sense of identity, role, and structure,” that youth seek. Without clear positive role models, youth replicate the drug and alcohol use and abuse they see in their peer groups, families, and communities. “There is always something happening related to drugs and alcohol. It starts at age 9 or 10, at home, the influence of the parents…it’s just a chance they want to take, to see how it will feel. Marijuana, cocaine, and heroine too. Young kids know what it is, “weed” isn’t considered an illegal drug anymore.” Thus, YLDI organizations strive to create healthy alternatives and activities for youth.

**Adult responsibilities and financial pressures.** Many YLDI youth work to supplement their family income, serve as a caretaker for siblings or their own children, or play a role as the cultural translator for their immigrant family. One staff member from YMPJ noted that, “Some of the things that the young people experience now are far more unimaginable than what I went through as a child. Like a 19 year old has to support him and his mother through his stipends here. His stipends (as an intern) supports whatever he needs and her needs, pays the rent, and his mother takes his check for other needs.” A youth at AIWA expressed that, “I have to go with my aunt and mom to like translate at welfare offices or something. Because they never have a Chinese translator there. So I have to go, and sometimes I miss school. And it really bothers me sometimes.” Further, youth often struggle to find childcare for their children or the siblings for whom they are responsible and as a result they may miss classes or work.

While these statistics and quotes provide a compelling picture of the risk factors faced by YLDI youth, program leaders of the YLDI organizations believe that these conditions, and the awareness of injustice or inequity, are the “seeds of discontent” that can mobilize young people and the larger community towards social action. The YLDI organizations play an important mediating role between the pressures and stresses of youth culture and adolescence and those of the institutions youth must interact with on a daily basis. The YLDI programs appear to provide the support, safety, and resources for
Youth to constructively analyze and work to change situations of inequity that they experience.

**Youth Recruitment and Retention**

Faced with the myriad challenges mentioned above, how do the YLDI organizations attract and maintain the attention and participation of these vulnerable youth populations? YLDI youth seek companionship and camaraderie with like-minded peers. They often find safe havens in the YLDI organizations, away from the dangers of their communities and the harassment of other youth and adults. As one staff put it,

> It’s hard for the youth to find guidance at home because most of the people here are first generation Americans. If they tell their parents their problems, they won't understand. So they need a place where there are other people their age who were born here so they can identify with their issues. At home it’s difficult to get your message across. If you’re having problems at school, your parents say, ‘Oh, tell the teacher or ignore it.’ Here we actually try to support and do something about it. It’s more like strength and safety in numbers because if you’re alone at school and no one at home will help you, then you find support. – Youth (CAPAY)

Other organizations provide specific advocacy services to youth at their time of need. In the case of a transgendered youth who was being continually harassed at school, the organization was able to help bring in a lawyer to evaluate the school’s ability to protect the youth. The youth described, “So that is how I really got involved in Outright. They basically swooped in and saved the day. They helped advocate for me.” Youth get involved in YLDI programs through various avenues – through direct recruitment strategies such as giving presentations in classes, specific events, mass flyering and phone calls, or an application and interview process; through referrals by probation officers, parents, foster parents, and social service providers; and through recommendations from school counselors, teachers, and current participants. For some organizations, recruitment has been an ongoing challenge, especially when the issues the organization is addressing do not immediately spark the attention of youth.

Challenges youth face in their everyday lives also impact how involved they can be in the organization. Many youth are involved in other extra-curricular activities at school and are busy with homework, limiting their commitment to the organization. Others must work second jobs in addition to their role at the YLDI organization to help support their families. Staff at one organization noted that they cannot pay youth in stipends as much as they would earn in most other part-time jobs. “Being at YUCA is a sacrifice for
some of them but they want to do it,” explained the executive director, “some youth have left YUCA because they needed to make more money.” One program director noted that successful youth development leads to young people leaving the organization, mostly to go on to college, and though this is a positive outcome, the organization is left with a dearth of young people prepared to take on more active leadership roles. Though many of the YLDI organizations involve vulnerable youth in time-intensive programs that require a high degree of commitment from the youth themselves, techniques such as stipends, homework assistance, and informal types of case management services (such as advocacy within the school system or college advice) make it possible for youth to balance their roles in the organization and their academic and personal lives.

From this grounded perspective of the communities, organizational structures and youth populations that the YLDI organizations are nested in, we move to a discussion of the unique approaches and models these organizations use to engage youth in civic activism in Chapter III. The contextual information provided here will also help to understand the youth, community, and organizational outcomes discussed in Chapters IV and VI.
III. DEFINING A TYPOLOGY OF CIVIC ACTIVISM

With the Youth Leadership Development Initiative (YLDI), the Ford Foundation set an important precedent by investing in organizations that support youth action towards social change. The twelve YLDI-funded organizations—unique in their philosophy and approach to youth development—represent different models for engaging youth to actively address the social issues facing their families and communities. In this chapter we define a typology of civic activism, seeking to understand the principles and assumptions that emerged from our cross-case analysis. Further, we explore the unique marriage of individual and community change goals which define the work of these organizations.

TYPOLOGY OF CIVIC ACTIVISM

Our analysis of YLDI case study sites revealed that youth organizing and identity support are two primary, and relatively independent, approaches that characterize civic activism. The Ford Foundation funded five groups primarily focused on identity-support and five focused primarily on youth organizing. In the few cases where the line between identity-support and youth organizing was blurred (21st Century, AIWA & YWP), we classified organizations based on the aspect of their program that we collected evaluation data and which we believed was their primary emphasis. In each of these situations, we are confident in our final characterizations of groups, as subsequent quantitative and qualitative data analysis illustrated that our groups did hang together. Additionally, our analysis revealed that youth involvement in decision-making is somewhat independent of the civic activism approach, so we analyzed this dimension separately. We identified four different structures for engaging youth in decision making, ranging from youth-led organizations to adult-led organizations with youth input. We’ve developed a typology (Exhibit III-1) to represent the intersection of these two dimensions. In this chapter we define, in detail, these civic activism approaches and decision making structures.

Exhibit III-1 captures some of the fundamental differences between the groups. For instance, youth organizing groups were more likely to be either youth-led or to be youth-led projects within adult organizations. Identity-support groups, on the other hand, were more likely to use an intergenerational model or to be adult-led with youth input. Below, we have defined all of the major constructs within the typology, going into depth.
about the characteristics of organizations and the practices that characterize each approach.

### Exhibit III-1
Grantee Classification

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<thead>
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<th>Decision Making Structure</th>
<th>Primary Approach</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Identity-Support</td>
<td>Youth Organizing</td>
<td></td>
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<td>C-Beyond, YUCA</td>
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<td>AIWA</td>
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<td>Adult-led Organization with Youth Input</td>
<td>Mi Casa</td>
<td>LE, TOCA</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

### DEFINING A CIVIC ACTIVISM APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

A civic activism approach to youth development is one that holds at its center a dual priority on individual and community change, while placing an emphasis on developing youth’s internal capacities to interface with the larger society. Here we explore these priorities within the work of YLDI organizations, within a context that seeks to define the core characteristics of identity-support and youth organizing.

#### Primary Approach #1: Identity-Support

We believe that before you go out into the community and make change, you have to really understand where you’re coming from and understand yourself. This is about identity development, the history of your people, where your people stand in the bigger picture. – Staff (CAPAY)

As evidenced by this quote, identity-support organizations prioritized a type of activism which focused on raising awareness and strengthening individuals’ ability to
navigate and negotiate the challenges they face. There were five “identity-support” organizations within our case study, each of which served youth within marginalized ethnic, racial, or cultural groups. Within this sample, 21st Century and LE focused on the development of positive African American identity, TOCA focused on restoring traditional cultural values and practices in Tohono O’odham Native American youth, Outright focused on providing safe space and services for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (GLBTQ) youth, and CAPAY focused on supporting Asian American identity among diverse Asian teens. Identity-support organizations engaged youth using strategies tailored to their particular population, and yet still shared certain guiding principles. They all, for instance, stressed foremost the importance of culturally and socially appropriate adult role models, with an emphasis on creating safe spaces for youth to explore their identities. Towards this end, three of the five identity-support organizations actively recruited and trained adult volunteers to work with and support young people. Strategies used by these organizations included a focus on history and its relevance for current social conditions, celebration of cultural symbols and values, support groups, and immersion workshops designed to raise awareness of discrimination and internalized oppression.

Central to the work of identity-support organizations is the idea that a commitment to social change is rooted in a sense of pride for personal identity (i.e. their unique skills, interests, and capacities) and group identity (connection to others of the same race, gender, sexual orientation, etc). Identity-support organizations believed that through their work on identity they were helping youth come to see themselves as unique individuals and to situate themselves within a larger community and social context. Research supports this approach for engaging youth (particularly from marginalized groups), since self-efficacy is rooted in the ability to cope with barriers and visualize a way of overcoming those barriers (Bandura, 1994). From this core base, identity-support organizations believed that youth would be better prepared to take on healthy adult roles, including that of civic actor and social change agent.

Towards this end, most identity-support organizations offered “critical education” about youths’ history as an entry point for social justice issues, in order to help youth understand the legacy of oppression and identify present-day challenges facing their identity group. Leadership Excellence (LE), for example, believes that the barriers faced by African American youth are best addressed once youth have considered the legacy and impact of their own history, including the painful scars left by slavery and segregation.
LE suggests that youth need to reflect on and “heal” these scars so that they can transcend internalized racism and learn to effectively function in society. LE’s approach is consistent with Watts et al.’s argument (2002, p.3) that African Americans benefit from an understanding of the social structure of power and privilege. In their struggle against oppression African Americans can “benefit from a strong sense of self that incorporates both the cultural and sociopolitical aspects of their African American heritage.”

Identity-support organizations moved beyond the exploration of the history of particular identity groups, seeking instead to emancipate youth through a process of deep critical analysis and reflection. Organizations were intentional about pushing youth out of their “comfort zone,” by asking that they interrogate their assumptions about themselves, each other, and about the society around them. One youth, at CAPAY, captured this aspect of this approach when he said, “I don’t think it’s about being comfortable all the time. It’s about learning different circumstances that make you uncomfortable, where you have to stand up for what you say, even if it’s not the majority opinion. It’s about getting over the discomfort you feel.” Thus, youth within these organizations were pushed to extend their thinking, to confront their own biases, and to ask hard questions of the leaders within their communities. Further, they analyzed issues of oppression and considered how their own personal experiences relate to the struggles of others within and outside of their own community. This kind of identity support, in turn, created a sense of purpose in young people to take a civic activist stance and to work with others in their communities to end various forms of oppression.

All of the identity groups had a community engagement piece to their work, but this varied considerably by site. Their efforts to engage community were generally in the arena of education and advocacy, but also included efforts to register voters, boycott corporations or businesses who acted in discriminatory ways, and weigh in on issues of resource allocation in their communities (i.e. schools funds). For instance, 21st Century engaged youth in super Tuesday voting drives, going to high schools in order to register 18 year olds to vote. CAPAY conducted a boycott and protest of a clothing company because of their stereotypical depictions of Asian Americans. Although this type of activism was perceived as pivotal to young people’s development, it was consistently less structured and comprehensive than that of youth organizing groups. These groups also often partnered with direct action organizations to support youths’ interest in more structured and ongoing types of activism. As a whole, identity-support groups engaged youth in community in order to support young people’s development as community
members and social actors, rather than from a desire to achieve discrete community change goals.

Finally, the driving force for social change within identity-support organizations was personal healing and relationship building. Philosophically, they frame their work in a way that emphasizes the creation of positive affirming spaces for youth rather than emphasizing their role in actively breaking down negative environments that already exist in young peoples’ lives. These, of course, are not mutually exclusive, and in many ways they seek to do both, but, nevertheless, they do represent two starting points for creating change. This philosophy or approach is captured well in the following quote by one of the executive directors of TOCA:

There’s a difference between rebellion and revolution. Rebellion is opposing the current order. Revolution involves creating an alternative, creating a new order, new structures…. A lot of people you think of as activists, they tend to be oppositional. I always wonder, “what are you fighting for? What are you creating? Not only what are you opposing, but what are creating? What would you want to see in it’s place?” – Executive Director (TOCA)

Identity-support organizations, therefore, work hard to create positive and affirming spaces for youth from marginalized identity groups because that is the world that they believe all young people deserve. In this way the spaces these organizations forge out are intrinsically radical. For instance, Outright believes that to create a space where GLBTQ youth can express themselves freely, without threat of condemnation, is itself a form of “revolution” or “activism” in a homophobic and heterosexist world. It is a form of activism that is in some ways similar to and in many ways different from that supported through youth organizing.

**Primary Approach #2: Youth Organizing**

We really focus on developing people. A lot of times, organizers are focused on quantitative measures of membership… We develop qualitative goals around analysis, around leadership development, around personal growth…. We look at people’s minds and people’s beliefs as centrally important. It’s not just about having 30 youth holding signs. We would rather have 12 youth who really consider themselves activists. – Staff (C-Beyond)

As illustrated by this quote, the priority that youth organizing groups’ place on young peoples’ personal growth distinguishes their work from that of more traditional community organizing. Youth organizing groups provided diverse young people, largely
from resource poor communities, opportunities to explore and act on social issues. They used fundamental or core activities from the broader field of community organizing, such as political education, community and/or power mapping, issue identification, and membership development. In most cases, community change goals were the ultimate driving force behind the work of the organization, while youth development was seen as essential to building the capacity and sustaining the commitment of youth organizers. In contrast to identity-support groups, youth organizing groups all had youth on staff as paid organizers. In addition, they had a non-paid “membership” base who participated in meetings and events. Issues addressed by youth organizing groups arose from the context of their local communities. At times, however, organizing groups teamed with other local and national organizations to weigh in on matters of state or national policy.

Although identity-support was not the focal point of youth organizing groups, they implicitly and explicitly appealed to a shared sense of identity when seeking to mobilize their organizers and membership. For instance, groups often used identity-based phrases to describe themselves, such as “youth of color” and “youth committed to social change.” The common theme was one of “youth” and young people, and this was nurtured through an emphasis on the language and images that characterize contemporary youth culture. For instance, the mediums that characterize the “hip hop” generation, such as hip hop music, poetry slams, zine newsletters, etc. were used to promote an inclusive vision of diversity, multiculturalism, and activism within these groups. Further, in order to explicitly address issues of prejudice and bias, youth organizing groups educated youth on “isms” to increase youths’ understanding of and tolerance for differences. For instance, youth at YUCA participated in summer workshops to address racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia “within the context of working for social change.” The workshops provided opportunities for youth to work through biases that might impact their ability to work together, so that they could coalesce around issues of shared concern. Beyond this base of identity-support, however, particular individual identities were de-emphasized so that youth could focus their attention on shared issues of oppression.

One of most universal and potent strategies used by organizing groups was political education. This approach enabled youth to learn about social movements (e.g. the civil rights movement), political processes (the electoral process) and current events (e.g. racial profiling and the effects of 9/11 on immigrant communities). Through political education, youth organizing groups hoped to support critical thinking skills and develop values and attitudes that would move youth to act against injustice. Political education
sessions often sought to make connections between larger social issues and youths’ day to day lives, centering on issues such as policing, school quality, environment justice, and immigrants’ rights. On one level youth were seen as experts on these issues, and they were encouraged to share their experiences, as well as compose and defend their own opinions. On another level, youth were pressed by program leaders to think about these issues abstractly, on a scale beyond their individual experience, including a consideration of the international or global characteristics of power and oppression.

From a base of political education, youth organizing groups progressed towards the development of a clear and manageable community-change agenda. They sought, at the most basic level, to empower youth to take leadership on issues in their lives, emphasizing their role as grassroots leaders within their communities. As one program leader said, “Our final vision isn’t to develop youth but to give youth a voice in their communities.” (Former ED, C-Beyond). The first step in that process was to identify what issues were most salient to the youth who participate in the organization. The second step was to ask youth to actively seek out the perspectives and concerns of other community members, in an effort to find issues of broad concern that could serve as the basis for sizable coalitions and collective action. Thus, the issues that youth organizing groups addressed were reflective of issues that community members faced. The process of listening to and raising awareness about such issues was seen as a high priority in and of itself. According to a program director, “Social change happens at the personal level, at the gut level, and has to come out of self interest. People mobilize because their daughter has asthma and they need to do something about it.” Issues identified as most relevant to youth and their communities included the lack of recreational spaces for young people, lack of green spaces, environmental pollution, sexual discrimination in schools, policing and increasing incarceration of youth offenders, and unfair working conditions.

Finally, youth organizing groups used a variety of mechanisms or levers (“direct actions”) for change, including letter writing campaigns, petitions, public presentations, meetings with people in power, protest, and boycotts. In taking such approaches to civic engagement, youth organizing groups dispel some of the stereotypes that characterize their work as “oppositional.” They emphasized the need to work within the system to the extent possible (i.e. through participation in decision-making bodies), while always being prepared to apply pressure from outside the system (i.e. protest and boycott). In the words of YUCA’s director, “We’re clear that being in the system or out isn’t important.
YLDI Report. Chapter III- Typology of Civic Activism

It’s a strategy that’s rooted in systems change that is important.” Further, YLDI youth organizing groups embraced a philosophy of non-violent and peaceful activism. They were concerned that youth develop a social justice orientation that was positive and affirming, because they believed that this was necessary to sustain social action in the long run. The following quote, by a YMPJ staff member, speaks to this issue:

We don’t organize out of hate, but out of love, our love for people. Because hate is very defeating, and can motivate and charge you to do something about injustices. But [we ask youth] how long is your hate going to sustain your commitment to social justice? – Staff (YMPJ)

Hence, these organizations promoted spiritual and/or human rights arguments for social justice. In doing so, they sought to strike a delicate balance between supporting youths’ ability and opportunity to actively question authority, while at the same time resisting cynicism that could potentially lead to social distrust and/or alienation.

The identity-support and youth organizing approaches used by the YLDI organizations are characterized by a number of key practices. Exhibit III-2 presents a summary of the key practices of the YLDI organizations at both the organizational and program level.

**Primary Approach #3: Broad Civic Activism**

Only one organization within YLDI falls under the rubric of what we’re describing as a “broad civic activism” approach. Through their participation in the YLDI learning group, Mi Casa, which serves diverse Latino youth in Denver, Colorado, focused on integrating civic activism principles and values into their youth development programming. Mi Casa is a strong service-oriented youth development organization that exposed their young people to political education about social movements and informed them about strategies for social change. However, as an agency, Mi Casa did not engage youth in targeted identity-support or community action, but rather provided training for youth and matched participants with community partners whose activism projects were already taking place in the community. We draw on Mi Casa throughout this report as an example of an adult-led organization, but given that they are the only organization that used this broad approach to civic activism, we do not feel we can generalize about the practices or efficacy of their particular approach.
### Exhibit III-2

#### Summary Table of Key Practices by Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity-Support Practices</th>
<th>Youth Organizing Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Practices</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Organizing Practices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of adult volunteers (role models and support)</td>
<td>Youth on staff and/or stipends for youth organizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority on safe space</td>
<td>Priority on grassroots empowerment and youth voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programmatic Practices</strong></td>
<td><strong>Programmatic Practices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebration of culture and identity through art, dance, spirituality, and other forms of expression.</td>
<td>Celebration of youth culture and voice through mediums like hip-hop, poetry slams, youth zine newsletters, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical education on history of ethnic, racial, or sexual identity group.</td>
<td>Political education on social movements, political processes, current events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive immersion workshops on issues of power and oppression</td>
<td>Campaign development involving research techniques such as community surveys, power analysis, community mapping, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support groups</td>
<td>Direct action such as letter writing campaigns, petition drives, public presentations, meetings with power brokers, protest, and boycott.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community education and advocacy on identity-specific issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to social change and organizing movements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

All of the YLDI organizations sought to support youth leadership, but they involved young people in organizational decision making to differing degrees. By providing decision-making roles for youth, YLDI organizations sought to make their organizations more responsive to their youth constituency while, at the same time, helping youth practice and develop their leadership skills in an applied manner. As has been documented in other settings, youth and adults within YLDI organizations indicated that the sharing of decision-making authority helped create an inclusive and more responsive organizational climate, increased adult commitment to youth leadership development, and created more youth interest and engagement in the organization (c.f., Zelden, et al, 2000; McLaughlin, 2000; Pittman, et. al, 2000; Hart, et. al, 1997) Flanagan
(2002) also notes that if opportunities for young people to practice their leadership skills (e.g. facilitating meetings, designing curricula, planning community events) are distributed evenly across socio-economic groups, then CBOs “may serve a compensatory function of democracy.” We certainly feel that this is the case because, as will be discussed in the youth outcomes analysis (Chapter IV), within this study young-involvement in decision-making was associated with increased knowledge of community and other types of civic skills. Experiences in organizations such as these can be quite powerful, with researchers like Youniss and Yates arguing that the long-term effects on civic engagement persist well into adulthood (Youniss and Yates, 1997).

Although all YLDI organizations valued youth leadership, they had very different models and assumptions about what youth leadership looks like. Looking across our case study sites, we recognized that YLDI organizations often distinguished between being a leader and doing what it takes to be leader. Van Linden and Fertman (1998) have described this distinction as the difference between transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational leadership focuses on “the process of being a leader and how individuals use their abilities to influence people” (p. 9) Transactional leadership, on the other hand, focuses on doing tasks to achieve an end goal (e.g. be in charge of meetings, make decisions, tell people what to do, etc.). Thus, our framework for assessing youth leadership had to take both of these dimensions into account. When assessing youth input into decision-making we are really talking about opportunities for transactional leadership within the organization. In many ways, these are easier to describe because they involve the visible demonstration of leadership and structural organizational roles for young people. We save an analysis of transformational leadership, including support for qualities such as strong personal and civic identity, for our discussion and presentations of youth outcomes in the next chapter.

The key principle underlying a youth leadership approach, is that adults should work “with” rather than “for” youth (Camino, 2000). This principle underlies the work of all YLDI groups, even as the history, mission, and target population of each organization led to the designation of different roles for youth. That is, regardless of the formal roles for young people relative to that of adults, the philosophy of each group emphasized a climate of “equality” and “respect.” These principles helped create the opportunity for ongoing youth input even in organizations that were effectively adult-led. With that said, there were dramatic differences between youth in the types of decision making opportunities that youth were exposed to. We drew on a continuum developed by the
Funders Collaborative for Youth Organizing (FCYO) to help us describe the types of decision-making models we observed in YLDI groups, eventually defining four different models. These models, each of which are described in more detail below, include (1) youth-led, (2) youth-led projects, (3) intergenerational, and (4) adult-led with youth input.

**Decision-Making Structure #1: Youth-led Organizations**

The youth become leaders by being leaders. For me it’s clear that because they’re acting as leaders here, it’s just a natural progression that they become leaders in their community. Instead of us training them as leaders for the future, they are leaders right now. – Staff (CAPAY)

Three YLDI organizations were youth-led, specifically, CAPAY, C-Beyond, and YUCA. We defined an organization as youth-led if youth had formal decision making authority in all or most aspects of the organization. Although young adult leaders run the day-in and day-out operation of the organizations, youth have final decision-making authority, which they exercise through steering committees, youth boards, and/or formal staff positions. Adults play an important and ongoing role in advising and supporting youth. For instance, CAPAY has a steering committee of 10-15 youth that are elected by the general membership once a year. The steering committee sets the vision for the organization, decides on the program focus, hires staff, participates in program evaluation, runs general meetings, and designates subcommittees for work on tasks such as fundraising and public relations. YUCA also has an all “youth board,” which is their main decision-making body. Another key feature of youth-led organizations is the presence of youth on staff. Both YUCA and C-Beyond hire youth to work part and full time within their organizations. During the course of this study, C-Beyond had two “senior staff members” who were under 18 years old. Youth within each of these organizations lead areas of programming, including activities like speaking in front of public officials, leading meetings, deciding on agendas and training curriculum, and so forth. The level of youth leadership within these organizations was high and was further demonstrated by the confidence and articulateness of youth leaders. As a youth from YUCA said, “We make all the decisions. It forces us to think and decide. Everything that happens is because of us. If it’s good, it’s because of us, if it’s bad, it’s because of us.”

**Decision-Making Structure #2: Youth-led Projects (within Adult-led Organizations)**

For us, it is important that we are a youth empowerment agency. If we are about youth development, the youth are incorporated from the beginning to the end. So they are a part of meetings with elected officials when
designing the park that we are proposing. We make sure our meetings start at 4PM so that youth are part of the meetings. – Staff (YMPJ)

We classified two of the YLDI civic activism projects, namely Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) and Young Women’s Project (YWP), as “youth-led” projects. Youth within youth-led projects have decision-making authority over discrete program areas and tasks within a larger adult-led organization. Adults serve as advisors to youth and occasionally seek input from them when making decisions in other areas of the organization. YMPJ and YWP fit this description because both are large organizations, where adult leaders have final say on most high-level organizational decisions, but youth lead the youth organizing efforts. Both YMPJ and YWP have former youth members on their boards and/or leadership structure, but they are outnumbered at least to 2:1 by adults. Both organizations also have youth on staff, and feel that job development is an important piece of their work. YWP teens lead workshops, carry out needs assessments on issue campaigns, recruit youth, develop community education materials, write draft policies, etc. Youth at YMPJ facilitate meetings and workshops as well as make campaign decisions. In all, youth within these organizations have a high level of internal responsibility, while still having a lot of ongoing adult guidance and mentorship. One youth at YWP describes, “The adult staff are there to guide us but we make all the decisions. Basically with all our work, they give us the [authority] to decide how we want to carry on with the project, what we think is best, and how we can achieve it.”

Decision-Making Structure #3: Intergenerational Models/Approaches

I can tell that AIWA is trying to have the goal to have equality between youth and adults. And I think they do a good job with that. It's like, we don't feel like we're younger or less, we feel the same…it's like we are a whole bunch of friends working together. – Youth (AIWA)

Three organizations within the YLDI learning group, namely Outright, 21st Century, and AIWA, set explicit priorities on creating structures for youth and adults to make joint decisions. Unlike youth-led organizations or youth-led projects, where youth had discrete areas of authority and responsibility, intergenerational organizations strived to build consensus among young people and adults on all or most decisions. Each of these organizations have a core leadership group of youth who are involved in providing feedback and input into organizational decision-making. For instance, 21st Century has a governance board made up entirely of young adults and youth participants, while Outright by-laws require that a quorum of youth participate in all aspects of organizational decision-making. Youth on the board at Outright also have veto power
over the decisions made by adults. Intergenerational projects were unique from the programs we have discussed so far, in that they had extensive adult volunteer (21st century & Outright) and organizing (AIWA) networks that also weighed in on organizational decisions, both at the board and programming level. The presence of non-staff adults on decision-making bodies within these organizations tended to lower the authority and “voice” of youth within these groups, when compared to youth within youth-led organizations and youth-led projects. While intergenerational organizations made explicit efforts to equalize power relations between youth and adults, the unequal level of expertise that adult volunteers brought to the table, coupled with their desire to serve as role models to youth, made this difficult. Youth within these settings often had more power in “theory” then they had in actuality, and the adults had to do a certain amount of self-work to raise their awareness of adultist behavior. However, some youth, especially those with higher skills, were able to take on and demonstrate responsibility within these settings.

**Decision-Making Structure #4: Adult-led: Youth Input**

What does it mean for young people to determine and guide a program and how can we build their capacity so that they feel they can say “this is what we want,” “this is how to do it.” It is not enough to tell them “you are equal partners.” They have to have the capacity to do it. Co-Executive Director (TOCA)

Finally, three of the organizations that participated in YLDI, namely Leadership Excellence, TOCA, and Mi Casa, can be described as “adult-led” organizations that provide informal opportunities for youth to provide input into organizational decisions. Within these settings, youth serve as advisors to adult leaders, but there are few formal mechanisms or roles for youth. As evidenced by the above quote, leaders of adult-led organizations often struggled with how best to involve youth in decision-making. Youth input is regularly solicited by adult leaders, but adults make the final decision on what course of action to take. Youth within these organizations do have occasional opportunities to take on programming roles, such as presentations and meeting facilitation, but these roles are more contained and more supported by adults then in settings with higher levels of youth involvement. Overall, while the value for youth involvement among adult leaders within these organizations was high, the context and/or structure of the organization often impedes sustained and well-supported decision making roles for youth. Exhibit III-3 provides a summary of the defining features of each youth decision-making structure.
Exhibit III-3
Summary of Youth Decision-Making Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Defining Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Led Organizations</td>
<td>Youth make organizational and programming decisions. Adults advise, support, and guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Led Projects within Adult Organizations</td>
<td>Adults make decisions about organizational decisions. Youth provide input. Youth make designated programmatic decisions. Adults advise, support, and guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational Organizations</td>
<td>Youth and Adults make organizational and programmatic decisions together. There is a goal of collaboration or consensus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult-led Organizations with Youth Input</td>
<td>Adults make organizational and programming decisions. Youth provide input.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Typology

In summary, we have developed a typology for understanding the relationship between (1) the approaches that characterize civic activism, and (2) the level of involvement youth have in organizational decision making. We will be using these categories throughout this report to guide our presentation of the quantitative and qualitative findings. Even at this early stage in the presentation, however, there are some key observations that can be gleaned from the typology. The first observation is that, within this collection of organizations, youth organizing groups were more likely to have high levels of youth participation in organizational leadership than were identity-support groups. Simply stated, it can be said that, while all groups valued youth leadership, identity-support groups tended to prioritize the development of transformational leadership skills, while youth organizing groups placed a higher priority on the development of hands-on transactional leadership skills. The impacts of these different approaches on youth outcomes will be assessed further in the next chapter. A second observation is that, although all groups held a progressive vision for social change, identity-support organizations tended to focus more on individual conscious raising and transformation as a vehicle for change, while youth organizing groups emphasized community transformation through mechanisms that increased community voice/participation and institutional/public accountability. This second observation represents an interesting balance that, we believe, characterizes a civic activism approach to youth development. That is, all organizations had to strike the balance between organizational goals focused on individual development and those focused on community...
change. We explore this briefly in the last section of this chapter before moving on to discuss YLDI youth outcomes in chapter IV.

**VISION FOR INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY CHANGE**

The intersection of youth development and civic activism is the ability of young people to question certain systems in their life and think about positive ways in how to approach those [challenges]. So civic activism and youth development are like the crossroads of development, when young people begin to realize the injustices and see positive and constructive ways of remedying them. – Staff (YMPJ)

This quote speaks to the relationship between youth development and civic activism, and emphasizes the common view among YLDI organizations that individual and community change goals are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Indeed, we want to emphasize that YLDI organizations did not see individual and community change goals as dichotomous or divergent. To draw such a dichotomy would be an antithetic to the underlying principle of YLDI. In contrast, YLDI organizations share a common aspiration that youth become critical thinkers and cultural consumers, who have the capacity and desire to make a difference in their communities. Each organization’s unique emphasis and approach is tailored to their target population, and represents a combined focus on individual and community change. It is the relative balance or emphasis that shifts from one organizational context to the next, and which we hope to capture in exploring the differences in their philosophies and approaches.

To capture the balance between individual and community change goals, we asked organizational leaders to map their approach on the graph represented in Exhibit III-4. At the Learning Group meeting of YLDI grantees, held in Spring 2002, a graph was drawn on the floor, and leaders were asked to (1) stand at their organizations’ location on the map and (2) explain the reasoning behind their self-placement. Although the learning group meeting where this activity occurred was held prior to the development of our typology, you can see that, on the whole, youth organizing groups emphasized community change goals, while identity support groups leaned towards a focus on individual development and transformation. The most interesting aspects of the graph is the concentration of identity-support organizations on the “hybrid” line, indicating that they see the underlying driving force behind their work to be both youth development and civic and social change. Although Mi Casa placed themselves closer to the individual development axis, they too emphasized the hybrid character of their work. A
staff member explained, “Mi Casa has always done community change, but community change focused on the individual rather than the system.”

**Exhibit III-4**

**Mapping Individual and Community Change Goals**

Meanwhile, youth organizing groups generally placed themselves closer to the community change axis. Although organizational leaders within many organizations emphasized the necessity of seeing these individual and community change goals as congruent and complementary, youth organizing groups often wanted to separate themselves from what they believed to be the *apolitical* orientation of the youth development field and approach. The reluctance of youth organizing groups to emphasize the youth development aspects of their approach belies the amount of time and resources they committed purely towards supporting the individual development of their core youth organizers. YUCA, for instance, was very reluctant to identify as a youth development organization and yet their interviews reveal that it is a high priority for the organization. Their former executive director explained, “It’s important to YUCA not to just view our youth as organizers but full people….What good is it if a youth can organize a rally or
speak at a press conference if they’re failing school?” Given this context, it is interesting that youth organizing groups continued to de-emphasize the youth development aspects of their work even after having participated in two years of discussions on the topic through their participation in YLDI. Their reluctance not only demonstrates the politically charged nature of “labels,” but also the need for the youth development field to embrace a more political approach to their work with all (and particularly marginalized) youth.

In summary, the work of youth organizing and identity support groups both coalesce around the promise of individual and community transformation. As is articulated so well in the following quote by the Executive Director of 21st Century, hope lies in the nexus between the two.

Many young black men reach a point of hopelessness where they don’t see they can make a positive change. No one will make the sacrifices needed to reach a goal if they can’t believe they can attain that goal, particularly for oppressed young people. So, when you can help them see their own power, it opens up a sense of possibilities in their own life. If they can have hope for what they do in the community, they can have hope for themselves. – Executive Director (21st Century)

Hence, as is illustrated through our typology, civic activism holds at its center a sense of hope that behaviors and attitudes—be they individual or collective—can be changed. Moreover, there is a larger hope that institutions, policies, and systems can be made more fair, open, and accommodating to diverse communities, constituencies, and needs. Although civic activism practices vary considerably based on the community context, target population, as well as the organizational history and leadership structure of the organization, the dual focus on individual and community change can be found within each of these organizations. With this in mind, we now turn to an analysis of youth outcomes in order to assess how effective civic activist organizations are at achieving these youth and community change aims.
IV. DEVELOPMENTAL YOUTH AND COMMUNITY LEVEL OUTCOMES

YLDI provided a unique opportunity to explore the relationship between identity, youth leadership, effective practices in civic activism and youth development, and positive youth outcomes. At the onset of this study, we developed a learning model (Exhibit IV-1), which has been modified throughout the study as we came to a greater understanding of the relationships between these core principles. The model guided our evaluation by providing a conceptual lens through which we examined program activities and their relationship to youth outcomes. We have added several key pieces to the model, since its original design, including a focus on community outcomes and a refinement of the key practices that constitute a civic activist approach to youth development. The revised model is included below, in order to provide a roadmap for our subsequent description of key practices and outcomes arising from this work.

Along the top of Exhibit IV-1 we have represented a mechanism that creates a deepened or enriched experience for youth involved in civic activism. As an individual moves along the continuum he or she moves from an inward focus on self-work to an outward focus on community-work. We visualize this process, or movement, as an iterative and ongoing praxis, occurring as youth engage in different and more applied forms of civic activism. The concept of praxis is based in the work of Paulo Freire, who argues that self discovery, “cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must also include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis.” (1993; p. 47) In this sense, praxis drives development by creating contexts for ongoing reflection and action.

Beyond serving as a form of ongoing praxis, civic activism’s focus on social justice issues provides a pivotal ideological frame of reference for youth who are searching for meaning and a place in their social world. Youth form healthy political or civic identities as they reach a deeper understanding of how their own values, belief systems, experiences, and expectations connect them to larger ideological and social communities. As Erik Erikson argues, “Adolescent development comprises a new set of identification processes, both with significant persons and with ideological forces, which give importance to individual life by relating it to a living community and an ongoing history.” (Erikson, 1965, p. 23) Thus, civic activism acts as a pivotal forum
Exhibit IV-I
Linking Youth Development to Civic Activism

Praxis
Self Work <--- Reflection --- Action --> Community Work

Youth Development Practices

Supports and Opportunities for Youth Development
- Relationship Building
- Safety (Physical and Emotional)
- Youth Participation
- Community Involvement
- Skill Building

Developmental Youth Outcomes
- Learning to Navigate
- Learning to be Connected
- Learning to be Productive

Early Adult Outcomes
- Healthy Family/Social Relationships
- Contributor to Community
- Economic Self Sufficiency

Civic Activism Practices

Supports and Opportunities for Civic Activism
- Identity Affirmation and Exploration
- Identification of Community and Civic Challenges
- Engagement in Group Processes, Consensus Building, and Collective Action
- Applied Youth Leadership

Empowerment Youth Outcomes
- Political Knowledge/Skills
- Increased Efficacy/Agency
- Strong Personal and Civic Identity
- Increased Democratic Values (i.e. critical consciousness of equity, fairness, value of diversity, and need for public accountability)

Intermediate Community Change Goals
- Youth involvement in community decision-making
- Youth issue on community agenda
- Changes in policy, rules, regulations

Long-Term Community Change Goals
- Changes in power structures and allocation of resources
- Improved community perception of youth, identity group (e.g. GLBT people), or issue (e.g. environmental preservation)
- Widely held and practiced values of peace and social justice
- Healthier families and communities
for youth to connect to social-historical challenges facing themselves and their communities and to see a role for themselves and others in co-constructing a new reality. Such connection forms the basis for identity and sociopolitical development.

Moving onward, our model lays out the practices of youth development and civic activism that are instrumental to moving youth towards positive developmental outcomes. These practices are based in our understanding of the innovative strategies that cross-cut the work of YLDI grantees, as well as a thorough literature review of civic activism and youth development. Although youth development and civic activism practices overlap, we believe generally that civic activism practices are distinct strategies or approaches for engaging young people that are based on a solid youth development foundation. Thus, effective civic activism cannot occur without fundamental youth development practices. With that said, civic activism often leads to an enriched youth development experience. For instance, a focus on identity is integral to positive relationship building and safety, as well as a sense of interest in organizational activities and content.

**Youth Development Practices**

Our evaluation assessed YLDI grantees based on their ability to reach established benchmarks or “thresholds” for each of the following core youth development practices.

- **Relationship Building.** Youth need the opportunity to form caring, supportive, sustained, and equitable relationships with adults and youth across their multiple worlds (community, family, and peer).

- **Safety (Physical and Emotional).** Youth need the opportunity to be free from physical and emotional harm.

- **Youth Participation.** Youth need the opportunity to be in decision making and/or leadership roles. They also need positive environments where they can experience a sense of belonging by joining others in developing and affirming shared goals and values.

- **Skill Building.** Youth need increased opportunities to develop diverse academic, social, and creative skills. Such opportunities should provide a measurable sense of growth and progress.

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1 Youth development practices were drawn from a model developed by James Connell and Michelle Gambone (1999).
• **Community Involvement.** Youth are integral to community health and benefit from the opportunity to engage actively and holistically in civic life.

**Civic Activism Practices**

Over the course of our evaluation, we used our findings on civic activism groups to help define the following set of core practices. The next step in this process would be to define a threshold or standard for assessing the quality or depth of each of these practices.

• **Identity Affirmation and Exploration.** Youth need to be affirmed in their identities so that they can develop a positive self concept and positive relationships with peers who are both similar and different from themselves. They also need opportunities to explore different types and manifestations of identities so that they can develop a broad and integrated sense of self.

• **Identification of Community and Civic Challenges.** Youth need the opportunity to engage in dialogue and action planning around the critical issues facing us as a society, facing their individual communities and neighborhoods, as well as the unique contextual challenges they face as they grow and seek self-actualization. This includes activities such as political education, popular education, historical analysis, community mapping, and power mapping.

• **Engagement in Group Processes, Consensus Building, and Collective Action.** Youth need opportunities to engage in group level processes—including inclusion in consensus building (democratic group decision-making processes), identification with group norms of values, learning to sacrifice self-interest to the interest of the group, engagement in active listening and conflict mediation, and collaborative and collective action.

• **Applied Youth Leadership.** Youth need opportunities to apply their leadership skills in real world settings around issues that they care about. This includes youth involvement in organizational decision-making, outreach and education to community members, direct engagement with power brokers in the community, advocacy, and so on.

**Youth Outcomes**

The long-term goal of YLDI is to support the development of positive early adult outcomes and individual assets, such as healthy relationships, community connections, and economic self-sufficiency. Factors outside of the organization (school, community, family, and peers) have such a profound influence on the development of these outcomes that it would be unfair to hold organizations accountable for their development. Instead, our model seeks to document developmental youth outcomes, linked to quality youth development supports and opportunities, as well as empowerment youth outcomes arising
directly from engagement in civic activism. We define developmental youth outcomes as (1) learning to navigate, (2) learning to be connected, and (3) learning to be productive. We define empowerment outcomes as (1) political knowledge and skills, (2) increased sense of efficacy and agency, (3) stronger sense of personal and civic identity, and (4) increased democratic values (i.e. empathy, appreciation for diversity.) After discussing our findings relative to key program practices, we will go into detail about our findings on each of these sets of youth outcomes.

**Community Outcomes**

We did not originally include community outcomes in our evaluation model because it was not within the scope of the project to measure them systematically. We realized over the course of this research, however, that community outcomes are pivotal to evaluating the overall impact of these interventions, particularly among youth organizing groups. Thus, we have used our data to propose a preliminary list of intermediate and long-term community outcomes. We suggest that, just as it would be unfair to hold organizations solely accountable for the accomplishment of early adult outcomes among the youth they serve, so to, would it be unfair to hold youth organizing groups accountable to long-term community change outcomes. Although the social change goals of these organizations are often quite grand, the complexity of influences that might impact the accomplishment of those goals are numerous and beyond the control of the organization. Holding groups accountable, however, to intermediate community change goals, may make sense given that it is such a large piece of their work.

**Analytical Categories**

As discussed in Chapter III, we came to understand the YLDI programs as having two inter-related, but independent, dimensions. These are defined by their approach to engaging youth (identity-support, youth organizing, broad civic activism) and the depth to which youth were involved in organizational decision-making. Therefore, in examining the relationship between practices and the experience of young people within the organization, we sought to explore the relative effects of these varied dimensions on their program functioning. Thus, we think it would be useful to revisit our classification of grantees (IV-2).
As we move ahead we will be discussing our findings based on the cuts through these varied dimensions. Looking at differences by approach, we will look at youth outcomes based on whether organizations are focused on “identity support” or “youth organizing.” Looking at differences by decision-making structure, we will be looking at youth outcomes based on whether the organizational decision-making structure is “youth-led,” “youth-led projects” (within adult organizations), “intergenerational,” or “adult-led.” The one organization that used a “broad civic activism” approach to engaging youth will be considered as an “adult-led” organization, but we will not analyze their approach. Please refer back to chapter III for more information on how these constructs are defined, as well as key practices that characterize each approach.

**FINDINGS: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

In this section, we highlight the developmental outcomes arising from the YLDI sites. We present findings on the quality of supports and opportunities (relationship building, safety, youth participation, skill building, and community involvement) for 1

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1. We do not have survey data for TOCA, thus, they are not included in our aggregate analysis of survey results. We have, however, included qualitative information on TOCA throughout this write-up.

2. Demographics of youth survey respondents within each of these groups are highlighted in Appendix D of this report.

3. Demographics of youth survey respondents within each of these groups are highlighted in Appendix E of this report.

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**Exhibit IV-2**  
**Grantee Classification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Making Structure</th>
<th>Primary Approach</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broad Civic Activism</td>
<td>Identity-Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Led</td>
<td>CAPAY</td>
<td>C-Beyond, YUCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Led Projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>YMPJ, YWP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-generational</td>
<td>Outright, 21st Century</td>
<td>AIWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult-led: Youth Input</td>
<td>Mi Casa</td>
<td>LE, TOCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
youth within these organizations. All of our survey data, along these different
dimensions, are included in Exhibit IV-3 and Exhibit IV-4. In the following presentation
of findings, we have highlighted what we believe are the most interesting findings about
these groups, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, and we touched only
lightly on those areas where civic activism groups appear to be similar to other youth
development organizations.

**Supportive Relationships**

They [adults] know our personalities, our likes and dislikes. They
know us inside and out and that comes from good communication
skills and spending quality time with them. They give us guidance
with examples from their own lives. They tell us to follow our
hearts. – Youth (21st Century)

Relationship building, as is illustrated in this quote, consists of many distinct
dimensions, including *adult knowledge of youth*, *practical support*, *emotional support*,
and *guidance*. It also includes an element of *peer-to-peer* relationships, as young people
need opportunities to draw on and support one another. We sought to capture these
different dimensions through quantitative and qualitative measures. Our data concur in
illustrating that civic activism groups are very effective at supporting relationship
building. In our youth survey, 69% of youth within civic activism groups reported that
they *get consistent opportunities* (i.e. optimal) to form supportive relationships with
adults and peers, while only 5% of youth indicated that they *consistently do not get such
opportunities* (i.e. insufficient or at risk). These results are nearly *double* that of other
youth development organizations who have taken the survey. They are particularly
strong considering that 21% of youth who took the survey had been at the organization
for less than 1 month. Significantly, there were only small differences between identity
support and youth organizing groups in terms of their ability to support quality
relationships between youth and adults, despite the fact that youth within identity groups
had, on average, been involved in the organization for less time. Our interviews
confirmed that relationships between adults and youth were the “glue” that kept youth
coming to the organizations over time, but that the context and driving force behind
relationships differed depending on their approach.

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4 “Other youth organizations” refers to 5 youth organizations, discussed in the survey methods
section, that have taken the youth supports and opportunities survey and that serve primarily adolescents.
### Exhibit IV-3
Survey Results by Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Identity Support (145)</th>
<th>Youth Organizing (65)</th>
<th>Broad Civic Activism (52)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Optimal</td>
<td>Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Building</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Support</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Caring &amp; Support</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults' Knowledge of Youth</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Knowledge of Youth</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Safety</td>
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<td>48%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Safety</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Leadership</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill Building</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth &amp; Progress</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to Give Back</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Community</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civic Activism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Action</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy/Agency</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Problem Solving</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coping</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coping</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Exhibit IV-4
Survey Results by Decision Making Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youth Led (54)</th>
<th>Youth Led Projects (21)</th>
<th>Intergenerational (60)</th>
<th>Adult Led, Youth input (154)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Optimal</td>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Optimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Building</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Support</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Caring &amp; Support</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults' Knowledge of Youth</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Knowledge of Youth</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Safety</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Safety</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Participation</strong></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Leadership</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill Building</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth &amp; Progress</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Involvement</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to Give Back</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Community</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civic Activism</strong></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Action</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy/Agency</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Problem Solving</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity Development</strong></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping</strong></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Coping</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Coping</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within identity-support groups, youth emphasized the value of finding a peer community and healthy adult role-models, but the nature of these relationships varied considerably. In the case of GLBTQ youth, for instance, contact with the organization might mean their first opportunity to meet another queer person. In one youth’s words, “Before I came [to this organization] I had never met another gay person. I was doing it all on my own. I kid you not, we had one book in our public library about being gay, and I stole it.” Thus, the need for peer-to-peer relationships was particularly salient for this youth, as was the need to see and form relationships with healthy GLBTQ adults. The African American identity-support organizations in our study, on the other hand, prioritized adult guidance and direction, particularly in skills to deal with racism, to cope with the stresses of everyday life, and set goals for the future. The director of 21st Century stressed, “This is not an organization where adults have no influence,” and, “It’s intentional for us to hire adults who young people can look up to and respect.” The theme of respect was also heard in youth interviews, where youth talked about staff as family. In the words of one African American youth, “[Staff] are the perfect examples of what I want to be in my life…. [and] now they’re passing it on down to us.”

Youth within organizing groups also emphasized that relationships with peers and adults were based in a shared affinity for and dedication to the same issues, similar backgrounds or experiences, and sense of equality and respect. Relationships also stemmed from the hours they spend together, as one youth organizer said, “We have to be close because we work together all the time.” At the same time, however, leaders of organizing groups did not view youth simply as “workers” or even colleagues, but instead made explicit efforts to support youth so that they could succeed in school, deal with family issues, cope with social stresses, and so on. The following quote is illustrative:

> [This organization] doesn’t just care about your performance in the program but they care about how you’re doing in the rest of your life, in school, in your family. [This has] become my second family.  
> – Youth (YUCA)

The most common mechanism these groups used to build relationships were “one-on-ones,” where youth and staff would “check-in” weekly to discuss different aspects of the youths’ personal lives and to make sure they were getting the support they needed. This structure was energy intensive, but worked within organizing groups because of their intensive focus on a small number of youth.

When we looked at the influence of youth involvement in decision-making on relationship building, we found, surprisingly, that intergenerational groups were slightly,
and consistently, lower than other groups on this dimension. Exhibit IV-5 illustrates that, while youth led, youth-led projects, and adult-led organizations had similar results (70-76% optimal; 2-3% at risk), intergenerational groups had a lower number of youth in (70-76% optimal; 2-3% at risk), intergenerational groups had a lower number of youth in the optimal category (60%) and a higher number of youth in the insufficient or at risk category (60% optimal; 15% at risk). Our qualitative data suggests that the uncertainty in youth’s role in the power-sharing model used by these organizations may contribute to a decreased perception of adult caring. Although, in theory, youth shared power and decision making equally with adults, youth complained that adults would often take charge and/or rescue them when decisions became difficult. As one youth stated, “My experience was pretty negative….Adults would be patronizing, they would be like, ‘how much do you really know about staff salaries?’” A youth in another group said, "Being that [this] is a youth based group, they still see me as a kid at 19…you can’t really shake being the young one." Interestingly, adult-led and youth-led projects (within adult organizations) had the highest results in the area of adult caring, emotional support, and guidance, thus indicating that the perception of adult support and guidance was not linked to power sharing with young people, per se, as much as it was to clarity and consistency as to young peoples’ role.

Safety

This is like a safe space. Sometimes you feel more safe here than you do out on the street, or for some people, they are more safe here than they are at home. Like if you live somewhere where people are always arguing and fighting. When you come to work [at this organization], they don’t allow aggressive behavior, so you have to talk it out. –Youth (YWP)

As the quote above suggests, many youth we interviewed were vulnerable because of their unstable family lives or community context and, thus, they deeply valued the physical and emotional safety they found within civic activism organizations. We looked at these dimensions of safety, separately, and then combined into one measure of “safety.” We found that a little over one-third of youth in civic activism groups are consistently experiencing a sense of safety within their organizations (35% optimal), with almost none indicating that they consistently do not feel safe within the organization (1% insufficient). These percentages are comparable, but not appreciably higher, than other youth development organizations that have administered the survey. However, the very low insufficient number is remarkable given that young people within these organizations often feel so unsafe in other settings, including schools. One immigrant youth at AIWA,
for instance, described that at school she was scared because, “people open your backpack and steal stuff and sometimes people fight….School makes me feel unsafe, but I need to go get my diploma for the future.” Thus, given the context where these groups operate, and the youth they serve, achieving a general sense of safety is itself an accomplishment.

When looking at differences between organizations, we see that safety results were higher among identity-support organizations (38% optimal compared to 31% for youth organizing groups). This is in keeping with our qualitative data, as we found that identity-support organizations were focused on creating physically and emotionally safe spaces, especially for youth who faced discrimination or potential violence in the broader community. When the results are broken down by sub-dimension, as is illustrated in Exhibit IV-6, we see that the lower results for youth organizing groups were driven more by physical, rather than emotional, safety—although both dimensions were lower.

Overall, Physical safety results were lower because of low results among four of the youth organizing groups in particular (optimal safety rates of 21%, 25%, 29%, 36%--compared to overall YLDI average of 44%), all of whom are located in urban or urbanized areas. The overall results were artificially buoyed by one organization located in a suburban community that had not engaged youth in direct action in the preceding year and a half (68% optimal). When we first saw these results, we thought perhaps these organizing groups were located in high crime areas and this, in turn, impacted youths’ perception of safety. After investigation, however, we ruled this out as a factor, since our data indicates that youths’ sense of safety within the organization was not correlated to the actual rate of violent or property crime in their neighborhoods. In particular, we realized that several identity-support organizations located in very high crime neighborhoods had very high physical safety results, and that crime rates for some of the organizing groups with low physical safety were not as high as we might have at first thought.
Exhibit IV-5
Supportive Relationships across Decision-Making Structure

Exhibit IV-6
Optimal Results for Emotional & Physical Safety by Approach
Looking more closely at our qualitative data, we suggest that the lower results among organizing groups may relate to the community outreach aspect of organizing, where youth might canvass neighborhoods to collect information from community members, raise awareness about their issues, conduct door knocking in public housing complexes, and negotiate access to spaces like garment factories. The three groups with the lowest physical safety results were the three groups where young people had been the most active in the community during the preceding year. While staff from these organizations provide training and guidance to conduct these activities, and typically accompany youth on such efforts, the lower survey results may reflect a heightened sense of vulnerability among youth who engage in such work. Our qualitative evidence is not definitive on this point, but youth at several groups commented that they were “scared” or “afraid” when first doing door knocking in their neighborhoods or participating in rallies. They did not, however, recount any stories where youth within the organization encountered or were faced with real physical danger. Given that no youth within organizing groups indicated that they felt physically unsafe, it is hard to know to what degree some fear is a natural, and somewhat healthy, outcropping of doing community outreach. This concept of healthy uneasiness, is captured in the following youth quote: “I don’t think it’s about being comfortable all the time. It’s about learning different circumstances that make you uncomfortable where you have to stand up for what you say, even if it’s not the majority opinion. It’s about getting over the discomfort you feel.”

Skill Building

The intensity of what I’m learning here is incredible. What I am learning here is so different from what I’m learning at school. At school you learn the subjects and yeah, yeah, you go home and do your homework. It doesn’t require as much emotional attachment as the work I’m doing here. –Youth (CAPAY)

Building off definitions developed by Gambone and Connell, we defined skill building as having three components, namely a sense of interest, a sense of challenge, and a sense of growth and progress within the organization. The skill building results for civic activism groups were similar to other youth development organizations that have taken the survey. Overall, 35% of youth are receiving optimal experiences across all three dimensions of skill building, that is they are consistently interested, challenged, and are experiencing a sense of growth and progress within the organization. Meanwhile, nearly as many report that they are consistently not experiencing one or more of these dimensions (32%).
When looking at 2 sub-dimensions (“interest” and “challenge”) of the data (Exhibit IV-7), we see consistent differences between groups based on their primary approach or strategy. As is illustrated in Exhibit IV-7, a higher percentage of youth within identity-focused groups report consistently being “interested” (50% optimal compared to 40%) and “challenged” (52% optimal compared to 38%) by the work of the organization. Youth, however, report experiences of growth and progress at a similar rate (51% optimal compared to 50%). The positive results of identity-focused organizations reflect their focus on issues directly pertaining to the lives of youth members. As with the youth whose quote began this section, youth within identity groups reported a high degree of “interest” in program activities, based in the opportunity to learn about their own history and to reflect on the role of identity in their lives. Youth within identity groups are “challenged” to examine themselves for internalized oppression and prejudice, as well as to reflect on their families, schools, and communities.

Exhibit IV-7
Optimal Results for Skill Building Dimensions by Approach

The lower results for organizing groups, however, are somewhat surprising given the passion with which youth within organizing groups described their work. For instance, one young woman at an organizing group described her first exposure to the group in the following way: “It hits you like bricks the first time you’re here. It is like when you can’t say something clearly and then someone puts it in the perfect words. It
was like wow!” On further reflection, however, we suggest that the results are in keeping with the difficult, often tedious and demanding nature of organizing work. Remember that most youth within organizing groups are paid employees, with 54% of survey respondents at these groups saying that they are at the organization “everyday” and 85% saying they spend two or more hours at the organization on an average weekday. Youth organizing, in this respect, is more “work” than “play.” As one youth organizer at YUCA said, “We have to do a lot of work. We’re not here to chill out. If it’s a busy week and people are messing around, then people get uptight.” Similarly, a staff at CAPAY said, “sometimes youth come back [from volunteering at organizing groups] and complain that all they did was walk door to door and pass out flyers…. having them see the value of menial jobs helps them connect critically what they are doing and how it affects the community.” Thus, our survey results reflect that, while “events” and “actions” that characterize youth organizing can be exciting, the necessary but sometimes “menial” tasks that lead up to such events is not always perceived by young people as interesting or challenging. Thus, it is important to stress once again that youth within these groups are experiencing a relatively high degree of growth and progress (51% optimal, 0% at risk).

Finally, we collected extensive qualitative data on the types of skills that young people were gaining within these organizations. Youth said they were learning skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, meeting facilitation, time management, working as part of a team, cultural skills (i.e. intricate basket weaving or talking with elders), conflict resolution and communication skills, as well as skills connected directly to organizing. A number of youth also remarked that they learned how to be “calm,” so they can handle difficult situations at school and at home, demonstrating improved coping skills. Our qualitative data suggest that youth organizing groups, in particular, were able to scaffold skill building in such a way that youth were able to develop an increasing sense of competence and mastery. The following quote by a 16-year old at C-Beyond illustrates the process through which youth are prepared to take on a role such as facilitating a membership meeting. She describes:

We do a lot of things that build up to facilitating membership meetings. For example, we do a public speaking training where we ask people to speak in front of their peers. Then we ask people to speak in different kinds of settings, until they feel like they can excel at those things. Then we tell them how to facilitate a meeting. We let them watch us once and talk them through how to develop an agenda. We tell them what it means to speak in front of an audience, they’re not just listening to you, you’re listening to them also…. Then [after they facilitate] we sit down and ask,
Youth Participation/Leadership

Within the context of this study, youth participation was seen as opportunities for decision making, youth leadership, and a sense of belonging. Overall, we found that 14% of youth within civic activist groups were getting consistent opportunities for leadership, while 26% were getting few, if any, opportunities. While this result may not at first seem high, this optimal response rate is over three times higher than other youth development organizations that have taken the survey (4% optimal). Further, looking at Exhibit IV-8, we can see that our survey results closely map to the decision making structure of the organization, with youth-led organizations having the highest levels of youth leadership and youth involvement in decision-making and adult-led organizations having the least. Exhibit IV-8 does not include the sense of belonging dimension, which did not vary as significantly with decision-making structure, even though youth-led groups were, on average, higher in this regard as well (52% compared to 37-42% for other structures). Thus, as we anticipated, the dimension of youth participation is correlated with the role of youth within the organization, while dimensions of youth leadership and belonging are less consistent.

Further, when we compare groups based on their primary strategy, we see that, overall, youth organizing groups were considerably more successful at involving youth in decision making and leadership than were identity-support groups. Exhibit IV-9 illustrates that the percentage of young people who report consistent opportunities for decision making is three times higher in youth organizing groups than in identity-based groups (37% compared to 12%), and the percentage of young people who report optimal opportunities for leadership is over eight times higher in youth organizing groups (26% compared to 3%). Young people at both types of organizations, however, report a high level of belonging (48% compared to 43%). As illustrated by the
Exhibit IV-8
Dimensions of Youth Participation by Decision-Making Structure

Exhibit IV-9
Dimensions of Youth Participation by Approach
following quotes, from youth at each of our youth-led organizing groups, these findings—on the strength of youth organizing at building leadership—are consistent with our qualitative data.

[Our organization] truly is youth led and run, down to every decision and every strategy. We all have different roles within organization (as staff, core members or volunteers) and work together towards our mission and truly being at the frontlines of creating change in our communities.—Youth (YUCA)

I felt that I was important and I was needed here. I wasn’t just another body coming to the rally. I was a big important part of it. That’s the way you feel at [this organization]. You feel like you’re an important part of everything. –Youth (C-Beyond)

The differences we see here reflect significant differences in how youth organizing groups and identity-support groups are structured. First, youth organizing groups in our sample were more likely to be youth led or to be youth-led projects within adult organizations than were identity-based groups (only one of which was youth-led). The tendency for higher levels of youth involvement in decision-making within the youth organizing groups is not a coincidence, but rather an outcropping of the philosophical value for grassroots leadership that characterizes most organizing efforts. In the case of youth organizing, there is a sense that young people are the only ones that know their experience, and, therefore, they are the only ones that can mobilize their peers to take action on issues that are relevant to youth. Second, youth organizing staff intentionally focus on working with a small, core set of youth to train them to lead their larger membership. This intensive focus on a smaller cohort creates more opportunities for leadership within the organization and more time for adults to work one-on-one with youth leaders so that they can succeed in those roles. This second point is important, as youth within adult-led or intergenerational groups sometimes felt that they did not have the skills to take on leadership positions that were offered to them. As one program director said, “The degree to which we’re ready for young people to take active leadership is not linked with their confidence or readiness.” (TOCA) Because of their smaller size, youth organizing groups were often in the position to build youth confidence and readiness in an individualized way, whereas identity-support organizations often were not.

**Community Involvement/Civic Activism**

Community involvement and civic activism are not the same, but given their interrelatedness, we believe it makes sense to integrate the data from each into one section.
Community involvement is defined as young peoples' *knowledge of community*, as well as *opportunities to give back*. Generally, civic activism can be thought of as a more focused category than community involvement, as it is more explicit about *exposure to* and *action on* political and policy issues. In particular, as part of civic activism we measured young peoples’ exposure to civic action and community problem solving, as well as their sense of efficacy and agency.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the “civic” focus of YLDI, 41% of YLDI youth participants report receiving consistent opportunities for community involvement. This is over twice that of other adolescent-serving youth development organizations that have administered the survey (15-20% optimal). Nine percent of civic activist youth fell in the “at risk” group for community involvement, indicating that most young people are getting some level of exposure to community issues. As we anticipated, civic activism proved to be a narrower category with one third (33%) of young people reporting optimal experiences and one third (33%) reporting little or no opportunities to engage in civic activism.

Youth organizing groups excelled in the arena of community involvement, with 57% of youth reporting consistent opportunities for community involvement and a mere 2% reporting that they do not get such opportunities (compared 34% optimal and 7% insufficient for identity-support groups). As is illustrated in Exhibit IV-10, over 70% of youth within organizing groups report optimal knowledge of community. This is consistent with our qualitative results, as youth organizing groups provided more structured opportunities for youth to engage with community. Interestingly, community involvement results were also tied to the decision-making structure of the organization. Exhibit IV-11 illustrates that the optimal rates for community involvement decrease as youth involvement in decision-making decreases, and this is particularly true when it comes to *knowledge of community*.

The effectiveness of youth organizing, as a community engagement strategy, is rooted in the motivation for and achievement of tangible social change, and the feeling that young people need to be listened to by those in power. As will be discussed further in the community outcomes section of this chapter, community victories were the fuel that ignited young peoples’ sense of purpose and their belief that they could make a difference. The following quotes are illustrative of the sense of enthusiasm and competence that young people within these groups radiated.
**Exhibit IV-10**

Dimensions of Community Involvement by Approach

![Graph showing the comparison of Identity Support and Youth Organizing in terms of optimal community knowledge and chance to give back.]

**Exhibit IV-11**

Dimensions of Community Involvement by Decision-Making Structure

![Graph showing the comparison of Youth Led, Youth Led Projects, Intergenerational, and Adult Led in terms of optimal community knowledge and chance to give back.]

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Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development

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We got 75 young people at city hall and we said, ‘we’re here to tell you that we need a youth center.’ I saw how much a difference that made. [City council members] were actually listening to us. If we were five people, [city council members] would be like, ‘oh, whatever.’ But if you bring a lot of people, and we were mature, educated people talking from our heart, then [city council members] were like, ‘we have a community here that we need to listen to.’ – Youth (C-Beyond)

We have a big voice. There aren’t a lot of other youth who are as involved as we are….But, we’re at the point now where we are taken seriously. We earned their respect by the actions we take. When we were opposing the cement plant, the owner challenged us at a city council meeting. He told us to be more “productive.” So, we went out and got 1,000 signatures opposing his plant and that shut him up and impressed the city council people. – Youth (YUCA)

**FINDINGS: CIVIC ACTIVISM SUPPORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

One of the core purposes of our evaluation is to articulate civic activism practices and outcomes. Thus, when we started this research endeavor there were few resources to guide our definition of civic activism constructs or our selection of civic activism measures. As is illustrated in our revised framework (Figure IV-1), we’ve come a long way towards that goal over the last two years. Yet, still, some of the practices we describe are more articulated than others. We hope that the core practices that we defined here can be further clarified in the future. Below we introduce the core supports and opportunities for civic activism that emerged from our set of case study sites, along with variations in the success of sites.

**Identity Affirmation and Exploration**

We believe that before you go out into the community and make change, you have to really understand where you’re coming from and understand yourself. This is about identity development, the history of your people, where your people stand in the bigger picture. – Program Director (CAPAY)

As is indicated by the above quote, identity is seen by many of these groups as a crucial link between individual and collective experience. Thus, we examined identity development and support, like that described by the program director above, as a core and innovative part of a civic activist approach to youth development. Identity has two dimensions, one being identity **affirmation** and the other being identity **exploration**. Identity **affirmation** is associated with a positive self concept and an acceptance and
affirmation from one’s peers, while identity exploration is associated with a process where-in youth learn more about their identity in an effort to find alternative modes of self expression. Overall, 42% of youth who took the survey are receiving optimal identity support and only 6% are receiving little or no identity support at their organization. Comparing the results for identity-support organizations to those of the youth organizing groups (Exhibit IV-12), illustrates that organizations that focus explicitly on supporting identity are more effective at supporting identity affirmation and exploration than those that do not. Overall, 55% of youth surveyed within identity-support organizations say that they are receiving consistent support for their identity, compared to 21% for youth within organizing groups.6

Our qualitative results reveal that identity-support organizations were particularly strong in the arena of identity affirmation. Youth within identity-support groups described that before joining these groups they had felt bad about themselves, had been ignorant about their history and/or, or been involved in self-destructive behaviors. For instance, one youth described, “When I first realized I was queer I felt really powerless and really scared of myself. And that was really scary, to be scared of who you are is totally diminishing.” Other youth said that they “didn’t know there were so many different kinds of Asians,” “didn’t know about self-hatred,” or didn’t “understand what really happened in the civil rights movement: schools didn’t really give you more than the basics.” The need for identity-affirmation, therefore, was strong. The quote by the following American Indian youth is illustrative:

Before [getting involved in this group], I was kind of in that rebellious stage where I was really trying to find an identity. But, after working with [this group] and becoming closer to my mom and my family, I am really proud of who I am….It has helped me to stand out, to be proud of who I am. – Youth (TOCA)

The lower results for youth organizing groups were in keeping with our qualitative findings. We found that, although youth organizing groups did often draw on aspects of identity to mobilize youth, this focus was not structured into the activities of the organization. However, we did hear youth within organizing groups say that political

6 Per their request, we modified the survey questions on identity for two organizing groups to encompass “multiple identities.” Unfortunately, this modification made comparison with other groups impossible. Thus, we removed those organizing groups from our aggregated results for identity, reducing the total N to 34 for this dimension.
education had heightened their awareness of prejudice and discrimination—an outcropping of identity-exploration. These themes are illustrated in the following quotes:

[This organization] can educate your life. It opened my eyes so much. Before, I was never able to understand why people were treating me the way they were. I could never understand why people made fun of me because I was Asian, or why people could be totally sexist toward me. Understanding why and where it is coming from…was really empowering because now I know… and now I can do something about it… And that makes me feel really strong. Because if you can’t do that you’re just going to get pushed around. – Youth (C-Beyond)

I’ve gone to the different environmental sites and as a young black man I’ve noticed the implications and stereotypes that come along with that. The organization has allowed me to be able to see some of these barriers. Like racism, the reality is that I am a young black man and I probably don’t look different from the drug dealer on the corner, you know? But this organization has given me opportunities to show my potential. – Youth (YMPJ)

### Exhibit IV-12
Dimensions of Identity Development by Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Support</th>
<th>Youth Organizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimal Identity Affirmation</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimal Identity Exploration</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Identification of Community and Civic Challenges**

YUCA teaches us the truth about what’s really going on in the community. Like the toxic sites in EPA. I never knew about the
environmental problems. We’ve learned about how other low income communities share a lot issues. – Youth (YUCA)

As is indicated by the preceding quote, practices that support the identification of community and civic challenges raise youth awareness, both of their local community and of more systemic influences. YLDI organizations took different, but related, strategies to building a sense of community and civic challenge in youth. Our survey results for community problem solving indicate that roughly one third (32%) of YLDI youth are getting consistent opportunities to problem solve around community issues, while 10% were getting few, if any, such opportunities. When we break down the data based on their primary approach, we see that youth organizing groups are, on average, only slightly more successful at supporting community problem solving (37% optimal compared to 33%) than are identity-support groups. Moreover, there is considerable variation within groups, indicating no discernable relationship between the approach of the group and their success at engaging youth in community problem solving. When looking at the breakdown by decision-making structure (Exhibit IV-13), however, we see that community problem solving is higher in those organizations with higher level of youth involvement in decision-making. This relationship, however, was not as strong or consistent as it was for measures of community involvement.

The variations across groups reflects the degree to which YLDI groups invested in formal or informal popular education, where they sought to stimulate youth to think about the challenges they and others in their community face. The fundamental assumption of popular education is that community, and in this case young people, are a source of knowledge (Hamilton and Cunningham, 1989; pg. 443) and that truth is discovered through the collective production of knowledge. For identity-support groups, community problem solving often lay in opportunities to talk about racism, xenophobia, or homophobia, as well as strategies to deal with those influences. Youth indicated that just talking about such factors helped them come to terms with their influence on their lives. This is captured in the following quote by a youth from CAPAY:

CAPAY doesn’t always help us solve the problems that we see, it just gives us space to talk about the problems. You feel better that other people are there with you to talk about the problems. CAPAY provides me a place to vent, but it’s not just a place for
venting; we do constructive venting so that in the future, we will know how to deal with a racist situation. – Youth (CAPAY)

Within organizing groups, identification of community and civic challenges often centered on issues facing individual communities and neighborhoods, and it was a systematic step in identifying areas for action. Identification of community and civic challenges builds off discussions among youth of the challenges they face, but also includes systematic political education. Political education consisted of a focus on local issues, but also included a broader of systems of power and privilege, that in turn influence international politics. Moreover, youth were asked to draw connections between their own experience and those that were physically and culturally distant from them. The following quotes are illustrative:

I learned that we’re not the only place that’s having problems; Palestine, Egypt, everywhere around the world there are issues that everyone is fighting for. – Youth (YMPJ)

A lot of how I think about issues I learned at YUCA. I learned how to analyze. I’m very aware of issues and can connect the impact of those issues on others and me. I know why it’s important to understand issues, learn the language, be involved and understand what is being said and what it means. – Youth (YUCA)
We do political and popular education. We talk about how political issues affect who you are now and how political issues shape how you think about things… It’s not you. It’s not your community. It’s not your state. It’s your government. Then you come to understand how it all trickled down to you. That’s how we educate about political stuff. – Youth (C-Beyond)

Engagement in Group Processes, Consensus Building, and Collective Action

One of the unexpected findings of YLDI, was the high emphasis placed on group processes, consensus building and collective action among YLDI groups. Coming from a traditional youth development framework, our survey questions and interview protocols often emphasized individual forms of growth, achievement, and leadership. We slowly began to realize, as the study progressed, that YLDI organizations conceived of leadership and achievement in a much broader way, emphasizing the achievement that comes from participating as part of a group. Youth and adult leaders within these identity-support and youth organizing organizations emphasized that leadership and achievement is embodied in the ability to listen, empathize, and cooperate. Thus, real achievement in this sense was about learning how to participate in group processes, build consensus, and subsume personal interests and ideas to those of the collective. The following quotes are illustrative:

Leadership has to take place in relation to other people; you can’t individually be a leader. Who are you leading? What are you leading? For young people to take on leadership roles it’s still in relation to other members of the community. – Staff (TOCA)

What I have learned about leadership is its not totally about standing in front of people, taking charge and telling people what to do. It’s more about your personal leadership, like how you feel about yourself and how comfortable you are with yourself and sharing yourself with other people. Its kind of like the interaction between people is a form of leadership. – Youth (CAPAY)

A good leader is someone who speaks for the people and not just for themselves. For me that’s what it means to be a good leader. You need to know that you are a part of something without taking it over. – Youth (C-Beyond)

Being a leader means knowing how to be part of a team. We all depend on each other. We respect what our peers can do. We work as a team. – Youth (YUCA)
An activist is someone who fights for the rights of people. They gather a group of people to fight for a cause that is unjust. Activism is not about the individual—it's about the whole team. You can't make changes on your own, you need a group of people to work with you. It’s like basketball—Michael Jordan is nothing without this team. – Youth (YMPJ)

We believe that these results indicate that civic activism emphasizes a dimension of leadership, that is yet to be explored within the youth development literature. In the course of the study, for instance, we were pushed to ask ourselves whether our notions of leadership were entrenched in white middle class assumptions about the importance of individual achievement and recognition. Sites that served American Indian and African American youth were particularly focused on teaching young people that leadership is about being responsive to others, including looking to and relying on adults for guidance. Further, almost all organizations stressed collective leadership and collective action, our data suggests that one of the defining features of civic activism may well be its focus on such group processes. This finding provides rich opportunities for further research.

**Applied Youth Leadership**

When we began the YLDI study, we conceived of applied youth leadership as any opportunity for youth to assert their knowledge and understanding in “real world settings.” In theory, this would include decision-making roles within the organization. Dimensions of decision making, however, are captured with our existing measure of youth leadership. Thus, we have come to define applied youth leadership more narrowly, as the direct engagement of youth in the political and/or social sphere (i.e. civic action). In this way youth leadership is visible to those who are outside the organization, as well as those within it. When looking at our results we see some definitive patterns for youth leadership, that parallel our survey results for the dimensions of youth leadership and community involvement. Perhaps not surprisingly, youth organizing groups are more successful at applied youth leadership than are identity-support groups (Exhibit IV-14). The difference between the optimal results for youth organizing groups and identity support groups is relatively small (12% difference), but when looked at in combination with the insufficient results it is clear that youth organizing groups are more successful, on the whole, at civic action than are

**Exhibit IV-14**
those that focus on identity support. Also, as we might expect given our results for youth leadership and community involvement, youth involvement in decision making was positively correlated with civic action (Exhibit IV-15).

7 In our model “applied youth leadership” and “civic action” are one and the same.
YOUTH OUTCOMES

In keeping with the youth development framework developed by Connell and Gambone (2001), we assessed short term youth outcomes with the assumption that those outcomes would eventually lead to desirable early adult and adult outcomes. This is in keeping with our framework, as we did not want to hold organizations accountable for factors that are outside of their control. Young people have many influences on their lives and given that we could not assess the relative influence of all those factors within the scope of this study, we collected information only on youth outcomes that link directly to the types of supports and opportunities that youth are receiving in these settings. Further, the information we have on these outcomes is largely descriptive. Thus, here we attempt to fill out and articulate the types of outcomes that arise from this work, rather than assess the effectiveness of specific strategies or approaches for achieving these outcomes. In keeping with this approach, we do not attempt to measure early adult outcomes, which include healthy relationships, contributions to community, and economic self-sufficiency, but rather hold these as the individual-level end goal of youth development and civic activism interventions.

Below we describe briefly the types of developmental youth outcomes (i.e. learning to navigate, learning to be connected, and learning to be productive) that youth described as arising from their exposure to youth development supports and opportunities. We subsequently articulate empowerment outcomes (i.e. increased political knowledge and skills, increased efficacy and agency, strong personal and civic identity, and increased democratic values) that encompass the outcomes that program leaders and youth articulated as arising specifically from civic activism.

Developmental Youth Outcomes

Learning to Navigate. Our model assumes that navigational skills are essential for young people, particularly those from outside the mainstream, because they allow youth to move in and out of varied contexts (including those of family, peer, school, and community) with a sense of comfort and coherence. Further, navigational skills allow youth to access knowledge, support, and resources within institutions, their community and their families. This included supporting youth to ask for help from adults when they need it. The following quote by a TOCA youth describes the types of navigational skills acquired through these programs.

They pushed me so far that I am willing now to go and ask for help, where I used to think that people would just come to me and help
me out. After working with TOCA, I am willing to go out there and ask for it. That’s one thing we learned when working with the elderly is that you can’t have somebody else go and ask them yourself. So you can make that connection. Now I can go out and ask for help. – Youth (TOCA)

In addition to developing the skills to ask for help from people, YLDI groups often explicitly taught youth how to navigate community structures and institutions to get what they need for themselves and their families. For instance, one youth at LE described how she had to navigate the Oakland School system to get free childcare for her baby so that she could attend her high school classes. She wrote the school district three times, and called the district repeatedly, until they finally set up a meeting with her. She said, “I told them that I’m going to try my hardest to get this daycare open, and if I don’t get this daycare open, I will find people who will help me and assist me.” She explained to them that she couldn’t afford the $135 in childcare fees it would take for her to pay for childcare on her own. When she didn’t get an immediate response, she “called everybody I knew that had a kid and asked them if they needed some free daycare. We all got together and made the superintendent listen to us when he came to the school.” She persisted in the face of difficulties and eventually had the childcare program reinstated. She ended up graduating from high school to attend San Jose State University.

**Learning to be Connected.** Connective skills include communication skills and conflict resolution skills. Perhaps it is not surprising, given the success of these organizations at building relationships, that connectivity proved to be one of the most commonly cited outcomes arising from the work of YLDI groups. There were several different dimensions to the types of connective outcomes that youth described, including an increased ability to deal with conflict constructively, increased tolerance and appreciation for diversity, and increased connections with adults and family members. Each of these are described in detail, with examples, below.

First, youth described an increased conflict resolution skills. YLDI organizations often made an explicit effort to teach youth how to confront unjust situations in nonviolent and constructive ways. A staff member at YMPJ described, “For youth, they went from angry, violence, putting down the police and hatred to the injustices of the police, to this other space of challenging the police in a productive way…they can see that non-violence can be extraordinarily powerful.” Further, youth were able to assert themselves in conversations with friends, family, community members, or strangers
without channeling their emotions in unhealthy directions. The following quotes are illustrative:

After standing up to someone about racism… I felt good standing up to him. I learned that you have to confront part of the problem before anything could be done about it. Most people if you confront them, they back off or walk away. Most people know that what they are doing is wrong but if you don’t confront them they’ll just keep on doing it. – Youth (CAPAY)

I confront people now. I used to just let things go, but now I confront people and say, ‘no, that’s wrong. You know why that’s wrong? Because of this, this and this.’ I took on a parent role among my friends. I think they’ve heard it. – Youth (C-Beyond)

Second, youth described an enhanced ability to connect with peers across difference. This outcome emerged mostly from the multi-racial youth organizing groups, but CAPAY youth and Outright youth also stressed how important it was to gain a better understanding of the diversity within their particular identity group. In the case of NYAC, the focus of the initiative was to help the GLBTQ youth movement be more inclusive of non-whites. The ability to connect across difference was based both in an increased awareness of shared oppression and increased opportunities to interact with people of diverse backgrounds. Overall, it represented itself as an increased openness to others regardless of their backgrounds.

Before I came here all of my friends were white. I grew up in Savanna in a white neighborhood…. I was just really closed then. I didn’t really know anything. Ever since I’ve been working here, I felt slowly that I’m opening up and learning different things. – Youth (NYAC)

We have a thing where straight people were coming to drop-ins, and people were getting upset. Finally, I was like ‘don’t they have a right to be here too?’ Just little things like that, common respect for everyone. – Youth (Outright).

I used to be disrespectful of other people’s cultures and believed in some stereotypes. I used to think that all Mexicans didn’t speak

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8 In some cases, this was more an outcome of YLDI networking than the organizations’ efforts, as some youth in homogenous organizations rarely had the opportunity to meet youth that were different from them. This particular aspect of our data will be discussed further in initiative level outcomes.
English. Now, I think about how I act and how other people act. – Youth (YUCA)

I used to be really scared of gay people and other kind of people out there. But after I had a training at AIWA I learned that gay people, they are like human too, you know. They face a lot of problems too. Where I grew up people don’t really accept it, but a lot of gay people, like Asian gay people, they might end up committing suicide, or hurting themselves, you know? So now when I see them I don’t get scared. – Youth (AIWA)

Lastly, youth, particularly those in intergenerational contexts, talked about an increased ability to connect with adults within their families and communities. This was based in an increased interest in their own history, as well as the high priority placed on intergenerational contact within these groups. The following quotes by TOCA and LE young people captures this outcome best.

After I started getting involved with TOCA, I started talking more with the elders in my family. After that, I started learning some of my family’s history and what had happened before, and just different things about my own family…Yeah, I would go places and I would come back and I would visit my grandfather, and he would even ask questions like what we did, things like that, and then he would go on to tell stories. Before, I had never really gotten to really sit down and talk with my grandfather. And he’s getting up in his years. It got me closer to him. Now, I’m far away, I call him, probably like two times a week just to see how he is and how he’s doing. It has really helped me to connect with my family. – Youth (TOCA)

When I came back [from Camp Akili], my mom said she saw so much change in me. She said, ‘I can see it on you, you don’t even go to talk it.’ I mean it came out in so many different positive ways. Like, I’d say ‘Mom, let me help.’ My was like, ‘You want to help!?!’ She was thanking [LE leaders] so much for getting me to that level. And that was just the beginning. – Youth (LE)

Learning to be Productive. Productivity includes being able to see a project through fruition, set and meet goals, as well as balance multiple activities and roles. It also includes increased participation in schools, community-based organizations, churches, and other settings that help youth advance their skills and move toward healthy early adult outcomes. Productivity often was related to the structure the organization provided for them, particularly in after school hours. Youth talked about how it kept them from watching TV in all their after-school time or from just “hanging out” with
friends. Further, youth quotes emphasized how the organization helped them learn the skills to stay on task, and helped them be more efficient with their time. The following is illustrative of how youth saw the organization as supporting increased productivity.

YUCA provides a lot of structure. It takes a lot of time but we’re committed to it so it makes us manage our time better so we can get our homework done too. – Youth (YUCA).

21st Century makes me organized. Without it, I wouldn’t be doing anything. It gives me something to look forward to every day. – Youth (21st Century).

If I don’t join AIWA, I would not have anything to do. Everyday I would go to school, and after school everyday I would just like hang out in Chinatown. And walk around and sometimes play around at Lincoln and watch people play basketball. It’s like a waste of time. – Youth (AIWA)

Moreover, youth described productivity in terms of an increased sense of competence and mastery in non-organizational settings. Youth linked this to an increased ability to manage time, an increased confidence, and increased motivation to “do something with their lives.” The following quotes are illustrative.

I started a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) during my sophomore year with the help of that teacher who had the Outright poster in his room. I wouldn’t have started a GSA if I hadn’t had the backup support from Outright…. I wouldn’t have the confidence to do that if I hadn’t had Outright’s support. – Youth (Outright)

If I hadn’t been in LE, I would have never graduated from high school. I wouldn’t have the job that I have right now which is making me able to run a program that I feel very passionately about. I don’t think I would be the person I am now. I would probably have some kids or something like that. – Youth (LE)

I was never into school. When I started high school that’s when I started dropping out. I wasn’t a good student. I was hanging out with my friends. C-Beyond helped me to see the value of school. They said, ‘don’t you like doing what you’re doing now? Well, you need to go to school to do that.’ So because of that I tried to go to school more often. I still don’t like school but I figure if I have to then that’s what I’ll do. – Youth (C-Beyond)
Empowerment Youth Outcomes

Our interviews with youth at civic activism groups indicated that exposure to civic activism led to many different types of outcomes, which we’ve categorized within the following overarching empowerment outcomes. These outcomes are emerging and hopefully can be further tested and refined in future research.

Increased Political Knowledge and Skills. This set of outcomes consists of knowledge of democratic processes, including how institutions, systems, and ideology shape lives, as well as mechanisms for how citizens or groups of citizens can transform social structures. Political skills include critical thinking skills and the ability to persuade others. Youth talked about their own personal growth within YLDI groups at all these different levels, in a way that also highlighted increased motivation to engage in political contexts. Note that this outcome emerged much more strongly from those groups that engaged youth directly in youth organizing. The following quotes are illustrative.

My experiences have made me realize how important it is to know about your politicians and what you’re doing when you vote for that politician, and that’s really through educating, the power you have to be able to vote and participate in the elections.” – Youth, (NYAC)

After joining AIWA, I realized that a lot of things going on really relate to me, like the garment workers, or the war, or the super-jails. It taught me that you should be more active. You need to step up to do something—to change something. – Youth (AIWA)

A lot of how I think about issues I learned at YUCA. I learned to analyze. I’m very aware of issues and can connect the impact of those issues on others and me. I know why it’s important to understand issues, learn the language, be involved, and understand what is being said and what it means. – Youth (YUCA)

We’ve learned about the man. Whatever the problem is you need to find out who ‘the man’ is. You find out who has the power to actually make the change…. For instance, about school things you might go to the school district for some things and the governor for others. He’s the man and he’s the one that can get us what we want when it comes to lack of facilities, buildings and rooms to have classes. – Youth (C-Beyond)

Increased Efficacy and Agency. The first aspect of efficacy and agency that youth discussed was an increased confidence in their abilities and an increased sense of voice. Across the organizations, youth often talked about how they had been shy or inhibited
prior to joining the organizations and how this changed as a result of their participation. This aspect of efficacy and agency is described in detail below.

I was isolated and withdrawn. But now I speak my mind. I’m a more open person. Now I’m a people person. – Youth (21st Century)

Before I joined C-Beyond, I was really quiet, I was really shy. I didn’t know how to express myself well, I wouldn’t talk in front of crowds. I stuttered…After C-Beyond, I learned how to look at myself more, got more courage, learned how to speak better, learned how to approach people. – Youth (C-Beyond)

I say how I feel. This job gives me the courage to speak out. Doing workshops and making presentations. We stand up for things that kids usually don’t stand up for. Now I see things more in a political way. I pay more attention. – Youth (YUCA)

As evidenced by the following quotes, the second core aspect of efficacy and agency is a sense that youth are capable of effecting change in their communities.

I know have the opportunity to make a change. I know that I’m making history because I’m going to make this community a better place to live. – Youth (YMPJ)

I think the word empowered is the single best word. Not only just who I am, but it’s helped me understand other people and where they come from, different people’s experiences. It’s showed me that [youth] can make a difference, that in the community where youth voice isn’t really thought much about, this is a place where we can be heard. – Youth (NYAC)

**Strong Personal and Civic Identity.** Within YLDI groups, youth talked about changes in personal and civic identity in terms grounded in an understanding of how ones’ experience intersects with others, a sense of personal transformation and change, and a sense of membership in community, including connection and commitment to others. The following quotes, almost all of which emphasize a transformation from one state of being to the next, are worth repeating in full to capture the breadth of young peoples experience.

Being in 21st Century taught me that I was either part of the problem or the solution. It placed a sense of responsibility on me not to be a teen mother or take drugs. Not only that but to teach other people not to do that. It encouraged me to develop a vision. If you
have community vision you usually have vision for yourself. As a leader, you realize that even if things don’t happen the way you’d like, you know that you can change that and people develop that sense of power in their own personal lives. – Youth (21st Century)

[B]efore TOCA, I was kind of in that rebellious stage where I was really trying to find an identity. But, after working with TOCA and after becoming closer with my mom and my family, I am really proud of who I am. I’m proud of the work I do. Basketry was a woman’s art, was only done by women years ago, but I am proud to say that I am a basketweaver. It has helped me to stand out, to be proud of who I am. – Male Youth (TOCA)

I know that I have made a difference because through C-Beyond I learned that I could be a poet. I always knew that I could write poetry, but speaking in front of a crowd is a whole different thing. After being with C-Beyond for awhile, I found my courage to be able to actually say one of my poems in front of a crowd. And it impacted people. I made people cry, I made people think differently.” – Youth (C-Beyond)

Before… I was apathetic to the community. But now if something is going on that affects people in the community I care. I have a responsibility to the community, to do something for it. Now I feel like its everyone’s responsibility to do something in the community, if not, nothing will ever change. – Youth (CAPAY).

It changed me in ’98 as far as my outlook on life, wanting to change myself, wanting to focus….wanting to be around more positive people. I was thinking, how can I change? How can I make myself a little better?… When I came back [from Camp Akili] my mom said she saw so much change in me. She said, ‘I can see it on you, you don’t even got to talk it.’ It came out in so many different positive ways. Like [I’d say] ‘mom, let me help.’ My mom was like, ‘you wanna help!?!’ She was thanking [LE leaders] so much for getting me to that level. And that was just the beginning. – Youth (LE)

**Increased Democratic Values.** Finally, YLDI groups helped create in youth a stronger investment in democratic values, such as equity and fairness. Further, youth communicated a desire to personally do what they can to share their new knowledge with others so that they can do their part to contribute to social justice and social change.

I care about racism, sexism. I want to work on these issues at CAPAY because I want to make an impact on society. These issues are important to me because even though they may not relate to me
directly, I feel the pain of people. When I came to the states, I felt that people around me were saying ‘you can’t do this or that because you’re Asian.’ – Youth (CAPAY)

Now I can just talk with anybody, let them know what LE has told me… about the African American people as a whole… just trying to let them know what’s going on around them because most of us are walking around looking in the sky and not know what’s going on. That’s what I got out of this program, that we can’t walk around blind, we need to get more young people conscious.” – Youth (LE)

I learned a lot about the community and things I had not really thought about before…. you know, I had experienced [discrimination and prejudice] and I had thought about it but I never really knew why these things were happening. C-Beyond really opened my eyes and they were doing something positive about it. They said, ‘we hear you and now that we’re educated about it, lets do something about it. Oppression can go away.’ –Youth (C-Beyond)

**COMMUNITY OUTCOMES**

We were not able, within the scope of this evaluation, to assess community outcomes in any systematic way. Beyond not having the resources to measure community impacts, the field of organizing and civic activism lacks clear established and tested benchmarks that we could use to assess community change. The complexity of political and social factors that influence shifts in community attitudes or policy make community outcomes particularly difficult to measure. For instance, community change, like that spurred by the Montgomery Bus Boycott, can be seemingly catalytic, arising from a single event. Yet, in reality, that single event was supported by years of ceaseless advocacy on the part of Blacks and Black churches throughout the south. Thus, community change is difficult to measure precisely because the effects of movement-building are often invisible for a long time, with many battles seemingly ‘lost’ before any are ‘won.’ Despite the difficulty of measuring change “within the hearts and minds” of community members, we became aware, throughout this evaluation that the impacts of civic activism, particularly youth organizing, cannot be fully assessed until the field has developed indicators for measuring the types of incremental community change these groups worked toward on a day to day basis. In this section, we have taken the first step in this direction by summarizing intermediate and long term outcomes articulated by program leaders and youth during this evaluation.
We found, through discussions with program leaders and youth, that they strove to mark and celebrate community victories, of whatever size, in order to sustain the spirit and momentum of youth workers. With this said, the community goals or “wins” that organizing groups used to measure their own progress were much more incremental than these, partially because youth often did not stay with the organization long enough to see a project through to completion. Youth need incremental goals and “wins” to know that what they are doing is working. Incremental community change goals include press coverage of their issues, increased community participation in rallies or events, and the number of meetings they held with people in power. The following quote captures the importance of these goals for maintaining young peoples’ sense of hope and efficacy.

“We try not to use the word ‘win’ too much because it can set yourself up for failure and a lot of people get discouraged when they fail. We prefer to use the language of, ‘how can we meet our goals? What can we change to make things work better next time? How can we improve our work?’ We set small goals for our campaigns and celebrate that as a win.” –Staff (YMPJ)

**Intermediate Community Change Goals**

Here we articulate emerging intermediate community change goals that are one starting point for assessing the progress of these organizations. Although we could not assess long-term community change within the scope of a two year evaluation, it’s important to recognize that intermediate community change goals are stepping stones towards a broader vision of community transformation. As articulated in our evaluation model, this long term vision is one that emphasizes (1) reallocation of power and resources, from those with the most to those with the least, (2) improved and more embracing attitudes of youth, marginalized social groups, and issues such as environmental preservation, (3) more widely practiced views of peace and social justice, and (4) healthier families and communities. The core intermediate community change goals, with relevant qualitative context, are articulated below.

**Youth involvement in Community Decision Making.** One of the primary steps towards creating more embracing attitudes of youth, as well as those of marginalized social groups, is to support grassroots involvement in decision making. Changed attitudes about youth and their abilities is, in itself, an important end goal of this work. As one of the YUCA program directors said, it’s not just the end goal, “the process is important. It needs to be grassroots, homegrown organizing, not advocacy.” A YMPJ organizing staff member echoed this sentiment when she said, “To be successful is also
to…. Understand that we really took our time to make sure young people feel like they own this work. The process alone is part of being successful, not just the outcome.” A key part of that is youth input and leadership, but it also includes the engagement and participation of other community members as well. Thus, key community outcomes include the number of youth on city governance bodies, the number of youth that participate in the creation of a draft policy or community proposal, the number of youth who show up for a rally to communicate their perspective on a particular issues, and youth participation in community surveys and campaign identification. The following quote by CAPAY is representative:

“I see success at the community level, where youth see other youth involved, articulating their issues, and caring about the issues….When youth see other youth holding signs, door knocking, that’s because of our community influence and community work. We impact how adults view youth in terms of leadership, encouraging youth to be a part of their organizing work.” – Staff (CAPAY)

**Youth issues on Community Agenda.** Here we define “community agenda” quite broadly, including recognition of the organizations’ work or issues by community representatives, such as, a place to speak on the city council meeting agenda, coverage of an issue by a local TV station or newspaper, and meetings with local businesses or school representatives. Assessing and keeping track of how often the work of the organization is “noticed” by the community is key to maintaining momentum for the work. Examples of these kind of victories documented during our evaluation include:

- Meetings with officials from the school board and boarding homes (YWP)
- Presentations at City Council and Meetings with city officials (C-Beyond, YUCA, YMPJ)
- Government data being released to from agencies that had previously refused to release it (YUCA)
- Building broad coalition of community members and agencies to oppose actions by a local business or industry. (YMPJ, YUCA, C-Beyond, CAPAY)
- Agencies coming to the organization to increase their level of knowledge about a particular issue or group (LE, Outright, C-Beyond)

**Changes in Policies, Rules, and Regulations.** During the course of the learning group on civic activism, organizing groups achieved some relatively large-scale
community “wins,” some of which involved the “official” reallocation of public resources and the changing of policy. Even such wins, however, are intermediate, since it takes ongoing pressure and oversight to insure that institutions implement policies or allocate funds in the arenas that most need it. For instance, YMPJ made headway on environmental justice issues (described below), only to have their timetable delayed by the high presence of environmental pollutants in land they had acquired for a boat launch and by budget delays and restrictions within the New York City Parks Department. Thus, even very clear victories are often more a beginning of real community change, rather than the end. Below is a list of the kinds of changes that YLDI groups created while involved in the YLDI learning group on civic activism.

- YUCA’s success in closing down a cement plant in their community,
- C-Beyond’s defeat of a city council measure to create a daytime curfew for teens and creation of a recreational skate park for teens,
- YWP’s successful effort to have a sexual discrimination policy created for their school district, and group home regulations adopted and ensuring that they are implemented
- YMPJ’s successful effort to secure funds for cleanup of the Bronx river and the creation of more parkland. YMPJ secured $500,000 from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association for the Parks Department to clean up the Bronx River and renovate the existing Starlight Park; $3 million of congressional appropriations to development of the Bronx greenway (for more green spaces) and restoring existing parks; $8.5 million to purchase property along the river for the community to use for recreational purposes.

**SUMMARY**

In summary, our findings on the quality of supports and opportunities young people are getting within YLDI organizations is clear. Within our case study group, civic activism is making a difference for young people. Although many groups in our case study did not identify as youth development organizations, young people within these groups were consistently getting the types of supports and opportunities they need to grow and develop. Further, preliminary evidence suggests that they are successful at a rate comparable to or higher then that of other adolescent-serving youth development organizations who serve young people of the same age group. When looked at in aggregate, YLDI organizations were particularly strong in the arena of supportive relationships, youth involvement, and community involvement. When the data is broken down by civic activism approach, it becomes evident that identity-support is particularly effective at supporting physical and emotional safety, identity affirmation, and a sense of
being interested and challenged. Youth organizing, on the other hand, emerged as particularly effective at supporting youth leadership and community involvement. These findings are impressive, especially when examined in light of the numerous challenges facing YLDI organizations. In the next chapter we analyze key organizational challenges facing YLDI groups, and present strategies the Innovation Center developed and incorporated into the initiative design in order to address those challenges.
V. ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES AND INITIATIVE DESIGN

In selecting the participants of the YLDI collaborative, The Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center searched for organizations that were willing to participate with “open minds.” These organizations needed to be intentional about participating in a learning community to build their organizational capacity to effectively transform individuals and their communities. This chapter reports on challenges and outcomes related to the design of YLDI collaborative, progress made towards increasing YLDI grantees’ organizational capacity to utilize civic activism as a component of their youth development work, and knowledge and practices surfaced through participation in the YLDI learning community.

To guide our discussion of organizational and collaborative level outcomes we developed a framework, which links the organizational needs of the YLDI groups to the YLDI support strategies that lead to desired collaborative and individual organizational outcomes. (See Exhibit V-1.) This chapter focuses on the Key Organizational Needs and YLDI Supports identified in Exhibit V-1 in order to lay out the major YLDI strategies designed to help YLDI organizations address key challenges and attain the expertise and skills needed to build their organizational capacity. We subsequently present our discussion of Collaborative and Organizational Outcomes in Chapter VI.

KEY ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS

We present in Exhibit V-1, the key organizational needs of civic activist groups as two categories of challenges that organizations commonly face. The first set of challenges pertains to those that organizations encounter as nonprofits working with youth. These challenges relate to issues such as uneven staff knowledge of human and resource management theories, critical staffing issues such as key staff turnover, and resource constraints arising from a competitive and unsteady funding base. In fact, it is well documented that within the youth development field, youth workers operate in highly uncertain and fluctuating organizational and program contexts. While we know much about the structural features needed for positive youth development (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2002), a number of common challenges face youth workers as they strive to provide developmental support for low-income children.
Topping the myriad of challenges are critical staffing issues such as recruitment, professional training, compensation, in-service training, and turnover (DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, 1995). Recruitment is a recognized barrier due to the lack of an “organized career development system for informing potential employees about career opportunities within the youth development profession” (National Collaboration for Youth, 1994). Professional training is scarce because of the absence of established professional criteria or legally mandated standards for youth workers or frontline staff. Compensation, according to a 2002 human services workforce study, placed youth workers at an estimated average salary of $21,628, not much different from the $20,000 level in 1995 (Nittoli, 2002). Staff training, particularly in grassroots organizations, is virtually nonexistent with few resources to support staff development. Finally, the turnover rate among frontline staff is high (up to 40% each year) due to stresses associated with high demand/low wage work (Halpern, 1999).
In addition to nonprofit management challenges, YLDI organizations faced a second and unique set of challenges associated with activism/organizing work. Just as activist groups address some of society’s most intractable problems in isolation and in the face of community apathy or opposition, they suffer from high turnover rates of their youth constituency base. Local politicians often disregard youth activist groups, because they assume that high youth turnover rates will ensure “institutional memory loss” between each generation of activists and youth (ARC, 2003). When key staff or youth leaders leave the organization, the progress they have achieved—including their development as leaders, their knowledge of the local political system, their relationships and networks, as well as their stories of success and failure—are often lost. As young adult activists try to build organizations to legitimize their efforts, they face a steep learning curve. The lack of knowledge of effective techniques for organizing, including among other things, knowledge of how to navigate the system and work the local media channels, result in a weakened campaign and contribute to stress on youth organizers, burnout of leaders, and dissipation of the groups. Finally, garnering financial support for their activism work is even more challenging in an increasingly conservative political climate. In building their organizations, these groups must also weigh the need for survival against pursuing funding sources that are not closely aligned with their grassroots, social justice mission.

At the advent of YLDI, the initiative designers identified several critical issues that needed to be addressed in order for civic activist organizations to have longevity in effectively achieving youth leadership development and civic participation of marginalized young people. These critical issues, which encompass some of the challenges identified above, include:

- Young adult youth workers often lead civic activism efforts with limited exposure to human growth and development training.

- Civic activism is often initiated as a spontaneous response to a community injustice or problem. As a consequence, civic activist projects often lack a theory of change, which has hindered gaining support and recognition as a viable youth development strategy.

- Most civic activism takes place within the structural context of non-profit organizations. Young adult youth workers often lack the skills and information to effectively manage people and resources.

From our analysis of the actual challenges encountered by the YLDI organizations over the course of the 3-year initiative, the major challenges mostly pertained to
managing a youth nonprofit organization or maintaining a civic activism focus.
Interestingly, participation in this initiative generated some positive challenges specific to organizations’ attempts to meet the goals of YLDI. Exhibit V-2 below summarizes the context and organizational challenges that YLDI groups faced.

Most of these challenges, while seemingly overwhelming, should be seen within the context of their pervasiveness, even before these organizations’ participated in YLDI. Further, as evident from the encouraging youth and community outcomes presented in Chapter IV, staff of these organizations were able to continue to deliver quality programming despite the ongoing challenges they faced. The pressing issue for the field, however, is how long staff’s determination and energy can be sustained under such inclement working conditions? Next, we will elaborate on some of these major challenges to better understand these groups’ readiness and ability to fully benefit from their participation in YLDI.

Exhibit V-2.
Summary of YLDI Organizational Challenges

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<th>Challenges as a Activist Organization</th>
<th>Challenges as a YLDI Organizational Participant</th>
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<td>1. Moving from a service to activism orientation</td>
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<td>2. Leadership and staff turnover</td>
<td>2. Targeting and building a youth membership base</td>
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<td>3. Staff Recruitment and Retention</td>
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Challenges as a Nonprofit

As described in Chapters II and III, the YLDI organizations vary considerably in terms of their organizational history, age, size, budget, nature of their youth target population, surrounding communities, and leadership experience and commitment. For instance, at one end of the continuum, we find fairly well established organizations. 21st Century, AIWA, and Mi Casa have been in existence from 17 to 26 years, and both Mi Casa and YMPJ have sizeable annual budgets of just under $1 million. However, most of the organizations within YLDI are smaller, emerging organizations with budgets between
$60,000 to $350,000 and ages from 5 to 10 years old.¹ Three of the organizations, all youth-led, have not established themselves as 501(c) 3 organizations, thus, their boards and oversight structures are less formal and they are less likely to be held legally accountable to the organizations’ management and program activities.

Limited Staff Availability and Burnout

Despite the variation in their age and size, all of these organizations experienced some similar difficulties. Across the board, all of the organizations have had to address the barriers to participation faced by their targeted youth population. (See Chapter II for an in-depth discussion of participant characteristics and the risk factors that they face.) In the course of addressing youth’s many personal and contextual challenges, these organizations were also hard hit by staff turnover and key leadership transitions. The precursors to sometimes sudden and frequent turnovers were staff’s struggle to balance their work and personal lives. Many devoted staff spent most of their time at the organization, organizing and attending activities and events, taking care of administrative and fundraising functions, or helping youth through crises. Because the organizations are small, staff are expected to wear many hats and are “overstretched” with all they have to do. For example, the director of organizing at YMPJ not only had to lead organizing projects, but also helped with fundraising and grant writing. The following quotes are illustrative of the frequent references to limited staff capacity, cited by eight of the organizations, to meet the overwhelming needs of their organizations:

A lot of people that have been very active here for a long time are feeling really tired, and we have to either quit or be even more tired. How do we set it up so people can do a little bit and not get sucked in and chewed up and then have to leave? It happens in every organization, if you take on this then you’re in charge and you have to do all of it. So people hesitate to get involved. —Board member (Outright)

In the recent past, I’ve felt like, when people were leaving, I don’t want to do this either! Let’s just close [the organization] down! I’m the only one that said that and, you know, maybe others feel more stable than I do. Sometimes I feel like we’re at the end of the line,

¹ A number of the organizations are older than 10 years old (e.g., LE is 13 years old and YWP is 12 years old, but these have operated as informal volunteer organizations for a time before becoming 501(c) 3 organizations.
and there isn’t much else looking out for C-Beyond. –Executive Director (C-Beyond)

Leadership and Staff Turnover

During the three years of the Ford initiative, nine of the 12 YLDI organizations experienced 20 key staff and leadership transitions. The effects on the organizations have been highly disruptive. In addition to substantial talent drain and institutional memory loss of carefully crafted organizational processes, procedures, and practices, remaining staff have had to scramble to implement ongoing organizational development work and maintain youth programs. As one indicator of a decline in program quality during these precarious periods of organizational rebuilding, some youth we interviewed complained about the frequency of staff turnover. As youth develop close relationships with staff, they are disappointed when staff leave and do not stay in touch. Clearly, high staff turnover can have implications for these organizations’ ability to create stable, supportive relationships between adults and youth. (See Exhibit V-3 for a sampling of organizations that have undergone the greatest number of transitions within YLDI’s 3-year time period.)

Staff Recruitment and Retention

Related to the issue of leadership transition and staff turnover, staff recruitment and retention have proven to be daunting issues for these organizations. In searching for key leadership replacements, they found that their salaries were not competitive with private industry or that very few applicants met their expectations for qualified candidates with adequate experience in relevant areas. For example, the former executive director of LE admitted that he underestimated the complexity and difficulty of the leadership transition process. The main challenges at the organizational level have centered on the need to re-examine decision-making, hiring, and management processes, and the redefining of roles. In looking for a new executive director, the procedural challenge has been to find a person who possessed all of the requisite characteristics: (1) African American, (2) familiarity with the community, (3) passion and understanding for the work of Leadership Excellence, and (4) technical expertise in the areas of fundraising, organizational management, and board development. A total of nine YLDI organizations have or are currently going through a leadership transition process. The leaders of other organizations expressed similar, uncompromisingly high expectations and have experienced considerable stress when they encounter difficulty in the recruitment and hiring process:
Exhibit V-3. 
Chronicles of YLDI Leadership Transitions from 2001-2002

C-Beyond: For a variety of reasons, in the summer of 2002, C-Beyond lost three of their senior staff, including their executive director, their organizing director, and their Pittsburg Chapter Coordinator. During this time they also lost two youth organizers. The executive director was reportedly burnt out, having been the longest existing member of C-Beyond.

YMPJ: Staff turnover was a challenge for YMPJ—most staff left to pursue other opportunities. Since 2001, four of the five positions are replacements for those who have left the organization, the fifth position, the Development Director is a newly created position. The remaining four positions are the Wellness Director (who has a counseling background), Co-Education Director, Community Organizer, and Education Coordinator.

Outright: In the period of six months in 2002, Outright underwent a total of 5 new hires and witnessed the departure of 7 key staff members, a few of whom were recent hires (Youth Services Coordinator and Acting Executive Director, Development and Finance Coordinator, Support and Advocacy Coordinator, an administrative staff, Organizational Coordinator, Communications Coordinator, Education and Activism Coordinator).

Mi Casa: Staffing for Mi Casa’s Youth Leadership Development Institute has been a challenge. First, the Project Specialist has left the organization. Then another key staff to Mi Casa’s YLDI Project, the Youth Assistant, also left. This occurred during a time when this organization was searching for a new executive director to replace the former Executive Director who had passed away.

I think that’s going to be an issue for us – getting someone with the skill to do fund development, to do financial organization, to teach and mediate around the money stuff. There are people who have those skills, they’re making 6 figures already, thank you very much. [They’re] not coming here. – Board member, Outright

Inside the organization, we’ve been disappointed with our ability to find, attract, keep key senior level staff who are comfortable with our model, can manage programs and train, and are accountable for rigorous outcomes. We’ve also had a hard time recruiting board members who believe in the organization as much as the staff does. I have a brilliant, committed, overachieving junior staff with no internal organizational mentors. This breaks my heart. I am learning to find the right people, to invest in building better networks, to ask for help, to cut losses on the mismatched [hires] early on…Right now, because of our staff recruitment challenges, we are spread too thin. To respond to this, we have cut back on program reach. – Executive Director (YWP)

As evident in the second quote, the costs to their organization to be engaged in a protracted search process are high.
Subsequent to staff hirings, many of the YLDI organizations have had to find adequate senior staff time to orient new staff and help them become accustomed to organizational culture, process, procedures, and systems. Particularly for young adult leaders who have had no previous management experience, this orientation process puts an extra layer of responsibility on them:

We hire a lot of young people, who are 18-20, and they’re adult staff but you know, it’s borderline. I still have to mentor them and support them a lot. It’s not just the amount of work. It’s the responsibility. It’s like being the adult, you know? You’re like the only parent in the room and it’s tiring. – Executive Director (C-Beyond)

The press of regular programming work and the lack of written materials on rules, procedures, policies, and practices have further encumbered organizational leaders with staff orientation and training activities. As organizations grow and expand, the leaders have come to appreciate the need to write down what they intuitively know “as the right thing to do” and to systematize processes and procedures, particularly as they transition from a volunteer organization to one with full-time professional staff. In fact, five organizations within YLDI identified the need to build accountability and better coordination across program areas as major challenges. The quote below is illustrative of the challenges faced during these key organizational transition periods:

During our first two years, one of the most pressing challenges was building accountability within the organization. The organization transitioned from a volunteer organization to one with four full-time staff. This has meant that we have had to develop personnel policies, payroll processing, and employee evaluation protocols. – Executive Director (LE)

**Fundraising and Sustainability**

Finally, while fundraising and organizational sustainability issues were not apparent at the beginning of YLDI, these issues became of primary importance by the end of the initiative. When YLDI began in 1999, many of the organizations had benefited from the increased wealth of foundations from the stock market boom. With the infusion of the multi-year YLDI grant, diversification of funding and sustainability issues slipped to the back of many of the leaders’ minds. However, just as foundation giving began to plummet in 2001, the YLDI grants drew to a close. Further, in the

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2 Along with a decline in stock value foundation assets began to decline in 2001—the first time a decrease has been report since 1981. This trend is expected to continue, as a recent foundation survey anticipates that more than 2/5 of foundations expect their giving to decline in 2003. (Thayer, C. 5/23/03, “Rough Waters Ahead for Foundations.” OnPhilanthropy, A Global Resource for Nonprofit Professionals.)
aftermath of September 11th, there was a national shift in policy and political priorities as a result of this historic event, that affected the fundraising efforts of some organizations.³

More than half of the organizations suddenly found themselves in a state of financial crisis to maintain their pre-YLDI level of funding. One example is CAPAY. While this organization had an annual budget of $127,000 at the beginning of their participation in this initiative, after the YLDI grant ended, its budget reached a low of $32,500. According to the Program Coordinator, “This year, we felt the sharp pain of recession and shifts in funding and priorities. Diversification of funding sources [became] vital.” This left the organization with only one staff member to sustain CAPAY’s regular programming and to implement the ideas that germinated from YLDI. With the sluggish economy, the financial picture continues to be bleak for many of these organizations. This has made it difficult to determine YLDI’s full effect on their organizational capacity. We will discuss this issue further in the sustainability section of Chapter VI.

In reviewing the nonprofit management challenges that have arisen, two prominent themes surfaced. First, the nonprofit-management challenges faced by these organizations are significant, unrelenting, and strikingly similar across different organizations. Despite the additional support and resources from YLDI, these challenges persisted and impeded the organizations’ ability to fully focus on executing quality youth programming. Secondly, and perhaps not surprisingly, youth-led organizations or youth-led projects appeared to struggle more with issues of staff recruitment and retention, and fundraising and sustainability. While staff at youth-led organizations are wholeheartedly committed to involving youth, they also recognize that there are limitations to youth capacity (particularly for fundraising), and that competing time commitments (i.e. school, work, family) limits their ability to devote time to administrative and management duties. Further, youth are often interested more in aspects of programming than they are in administrative roles. According to the program coordinator of CAPAY, a strong youth-led organization, “We learned that youth’s capacity is limited in certain areas and limitless in others, sometimes you don’t know what they don’t know. They don’t have fundraising experience but we should rely on our adult advisors for that role.” In addition

³ Organizations, like YWP (located in Washington D.C.), found themselves confronted with funding problems because of the economic downturn and shifts in public funding priorities as cities struggled to respond to increased security concerns precipitated by the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center.
to the challenges that YLDI organizations face as nonprofits, they also identified a few challenges specific to their civic activism work. We turn to these next.

**Challenges as a Civic Activist Organization**

In addition to the nonprofit challenges, groups that have a social justice or activism focus face a number of recurring impediments to civic activism work, namely community apathy and opposition, the need to justify targeting specific populations, and a continual push to increase their youth membership to increase their power base.

**Unsupportive Community Climate**

First, an important tenet of organizing is to mobilize local, grassroots community membership to advocate for their own needs. However, some youth organizing and identity support groups such as C-Beyond and 21st Century encountered community apathy about the issues they are seeking to galvanize community members around and political involvement in general. According to a youth organizer, “The unique thing about C-Beyond is that we’re all the way out in the suburbs. We’re trying to do outreach but a lot of people are set on, ‘I have my money. I have my house.’ It’s really hard because a lot of people in the suburbs don’t care about things unless it affects them. If it doesn’t affect them they don’t care.” In the case of 21st Century, described in Exhibit V-4, galvanizing hesitant members of their own community meant revisiting and sharing their past collective struggles.

Furthermore, youth organizing groups sometimes have to overcome community opposition. There are some inherent difficulties in mobilizing a community that is unaccustomed to political action. Youth organizers have to develop a compelling case to community members on why they need to care about the issues that the youth have chosen to act upon. For example, YMPJ staff note that it is sometimes difficult to get people to mobilize around their campaign issues. They offered several reasons why this is the case. First, residents of the Bronx are unaccustomed to participating in organizing efforts and unfamiliar with the process of organizing. Since staff recognize
Exhibit V-4.
The Challenge of Re-Engaging Community Members

21st Century Leadership Movement fills a unique social justice niche in Selma, Alabama where they have been involved in local issues for many years, including the recent campaign to elect Selma’s first Black mayor. Still, despite the city’s illustrious history, the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement has not led to a sense of empowerment in the black community. The community struggles with racism and segregation where overt hostility and intimidation by whites makes some black activists fearful of engaging in even peaceful political organizing activities such as voter registration. Moreover, 21st Century’s executive director describes a sense of disconnection among southern blacks to their collective past:

The civil rights movement isn’t taught to people. So, it’s not seen as a source of pride. Lots of kids said that they didn’t know anyone in the civil rights movement. Even when they live in the same house with people who participated in the civil rights movement they may not even know it. People only know that Dr. King was a ‘good man.’

The Executive Director notes that many adults are reluctant to share their experiences during the civil rights struggles with their children because “they don’t want to share the pain they went through.” Thus, although 21st Century has a dual focus on community and individual change, they often found themselves focusing more on doing the identity-support needed to help move youth and community members to a place where they could take action.

that not everyone has the same level of experience with organizing, they try to raise awareness of pressing campaign issues through a variety of mediums (e.g. they do street theatre and dance performances, conduct political education sessions, engage youth in community service, finally, though direct action). Second, environmental justice issues are less compelling than the policing campaign because people cannot directly relate to environmental issues. For many people living in the Bronx, environmental concerns are not key priorities because of the lack of awareness of the impact of environmental issues in their personal lives, or because they are more concerned with the daily functions of life, such as jobs, family, etc. Third, it is difficult to mobilize first generation immigrants in the Bronx because they “don’t want to rock the boat” or are afraid for their immigration status.

Targeting and Building a Youth Membership

A second major challenge unique to civic activism groups is building an identifiable youth membership base. This challenge has a number of different dimensions. For identity support groups, leaders often have to justify their specific target population to the funding community:
The model minority myth prevents us from getting a lot of funding. Funders don’t see the need for this kind of organization. Our biggest challenge is to get our message across without sounding desperate and without compromising our work. – Program Coordinator (CAPAY)

Like CAPAY, LE staff have to continually explain to potential funders, why it is important for young people who have experienced discrimination, to have their own space to explore and be affirmed in their identity before “mixing” or interacting with youth of other backgrounds.

For youth organizing groups, mobilizing a broad membership base is a continual struggle. In addition to addressing young people’s multiple needs, staff must work to sustain their interest in the long run. According to the Executive Director of YUCA, "Recruiting high-school-aged youth and minimizing turnover are ongoing challenges…. ‘Long-term’ is two to three years when you’re working with high-school-aged youth," he said. "There is a constant process of training." Lastly, as discussed in Chapter II on issues of recruitment and retention, both youth organizing and identity support organizations have to compete for youth’s limited time (e.g., school, jobs). Finding and retaining youth who are interested in long-term leadership roles within youth-led or intergenerational decision-making structures can be particularly challenging without resources set aside for compensating them for their time.

While these challenges are not surprising, they get at the heart of the difficulty of civic activism work. Maintaining stability, focus, and the energy for continual leadership renewal are constant challenges. These issues add an extra layer of stress on organizational leaders. One executive director candidly confesses, “The biggest thing is being a young organization. [As an organization], we’re not stable….it feels like if something happened to me, then [the organization] would go away. It doesn’t feel like there’s a foundation.”

**Challenges as a YLDI Participant**

Besides the challenges associated to their nonprofit status and civic activism work, a number of the YLDI project leaders have identified challenges that stemmed directly from their involvement in YLDI. These challenges were mostly positive, in that the Innovation Center staff pushed organizational leaders to extend their work in new directions. Implementing shifts in organizational practices and philosophy precipitated by participation in YLDI, however, clearly created a new and unique set of challenges that organizations would not have faced had they been content with the status quo.
As elaborated in Chapter II and III, each of the YLDI organizations was selected for their diversity, innovativeness, and strong track record in working with youth and social and community change. They were chosen based upon their diverse organizational characteristics, history of youth involvement, focus on social justice and activism, adult-youth decision-making structure, and different goals for their YLDI capacity building work—all of which brought unique and powerful insights and perspectives to the YLDI learning-group goals of organizational learning and field advancement.

**Moving from a Service to Activism Orientation**

In an attempt to align themselves with the goals of YLDI, a few of the organizations tried to introduce a greater focus on youth leadership or social activism in their organizations. This effort, however, sometimes led to unanticipated results. Due to their existing organizational culture, mission, and community context, the introduction of these elements excited some resistance from existing staff, particularly those who did not participate directly in YLDI. For instance, four of the organizations faced varying degrees of challenges in moving from a youth service to a more activist orientation.

Consider the case of Mi Casa, an organization that broadly focuses on youth development and provides health, life skills, dropout prevention, career education, and recreation services through a case management model. The addition of a civic activism to Mi Casa’s existing youth leadership program created an unexpected challenge for the staff who tried to expand the focus of the youth programs to include youth organizing and youth activism, where previously the focus was on youth development, health education, and academic enrichment. For this organization, which is filling an important service niche for a high need population, moving into doing organizing led them away from their mission. The in-depth profile in Exhibit V-5 describes their YLDI journey in more detail. In particular, we note a tension between this organization’s willingness to take a risk by adding new social justice elements to their work, and their subsequent realization of the importance of staying true to their organization mission.
Exhibit V-5.
Integrating Civic Activism in a Traditional Youth Development Model

Offering civic activism programming within a traditionally service oriented organization has been a challenge at Mi Casa. According to the Program Manager of YLDI, Mi Casa’s board of directors and executive director explained the need for the program to fit within the mission of the agency and to stick to less controversial issues when working with youth. They worried that becoming involved in community politics and social justice work was not aligned with the agency’s reputation as a Latino service provider. The executive director also explained that involvement in partisan political issues might affect the legality of the organization’s non-profit status. Through a series of retreats with staff, meetings with the Executive Director and Board of Directors, and discussions within the YLDI support network and the Innovation Center staff, Mi Casa staff realized the organization would do best to build upon its strengths (i.e. strong youth development strategies) by helping youth gain the confidence and tools needed to become more active in their community.

Aside from discomfort with youth civic activism, the organization is not set up promote such activities. The service model at Mi Casa focuses on providing information about topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, or childcare. The organization networks extensively with other youth service providers, but has not historically aligned itself with activism groups. Employees in the organization work much like case managers, identifying the issues to be addressed for each youth, and connecting them with the appropriate services. Effectively promoting youth civic activism would require a sizeable shift in the organization’s culture. As the Youth Development Director stated:

Mi Casa operates as a business. Youth and adults come in and we offer them services, whether it’s through FENIX or Mi Carrera. We have always been hesitant to associate with organizations in the [activism] field. Those groups have always been just too in your face for us. We deal with a lot of immigrants who don’t really want to question authority. They are more focused on getting the things they need to survive. We can’t push these people to be political if they aren’t ready.

Moving the organization closer to the community proved too drastic a shift for the organization. Instead, Mi Casa’s Board and Executive Director met with several of the YLDI core youth and staff and the group agreed that Mi Casa’s role would be one of supporting young people in gaining the skills and awareness needed to be engaged in community change, however, as a service organization, Mi Casa would not be leading social change efforts.

Through YLDI, the leaders of Mi Casa learned the importance of using strategies that fit the organization. Staff recognized that Mi Casa has always “done social change, but as a service agency, the change has been done at the individual level.” Therefore, leaders had to figure a way to build their own culture around civic activism so that everyone (youth, adults, participants, and staff) felt safe and comfortable with the terminology and the direction of their project.

As a result of this reflection, Mi Casa re-focused its Youth Leadership Development Institute project on the goals of increasing awareness and building the leadership skills of youth across all of their youth programs.
Promoting a Stronger Youth Leadership Focus

Interestingly, for eight of the organizations, participating in YLDI raised the issue of what constitutes meaningful “youth leadership.” Already selected for their strong background in developing youth leaders, these organizations began asking within the course of their YLDI participation whether they have incorporated a strong enough youth leadership focus in their organizational decision making structure and programming. This reflection process meant different kinds of questions for those with different decision-making structures (e.g., adult-led, intergenerational, youth-led organization, etc.). Adult-led organizations struggled with how to involve youth in leadership and how to increase adult capacities and skills to support youth to take on leadership roles. Organizations like Mi Casa and TOCA, therefore, asked questions of the learning group and themselves, such as, “How can we re-orient youth from service recipients to youth as leaders?” For intergenerational organizations, that already had formal structures in place for youth involvement in decision-making, issues of power sharing and role clarification emerged as most pressing. Organizations, such as Outright, raised questions such as, “How do we slow down our process to ensure authentic youth leadership? How do we deal with adultism and power disparities between youth and adults?” Despite their strength at supporting youth involvement in decision making, youth-led organizations and youth-led projects, such as CAPAY and YMPJ, also used YLDI as an opportunity to reflect on how they could increase youth leadership within their organizations. In particular, they labored to discern the line between what is the purview of youth and the purview of adults. For instance, CAPAY staff asked, “What are the limitations of a youth-run, youth-ed organizational model? How should we hold youth leaders accountable to their commitments to the organization? When is the right time for adults to intercede?” Thus, YLDI raised difficult questions about youth leadership among most YLDI organizations, but these questions differed depending on their starting place for engaging youth in such roles.

Creating Appropriate Accountability Structures

Another challenge, for at least five of the YLDI organizations, was their ability to create new accountability structures that could flexibly accommodate their program expansion or organizational shifts. For example, along with Outright’s restructuring effort from a hierarchical to a consensus model, some questions arose about accountability: who makes sure rules are enforced? Who evaluates whether staff are doing what they said they were doing to do in a timely manner? Similarly, at 21st Century, as the Techno House structure grew and its programs evolved, new
accountability and oversight requirements began to create discord among volunteers unaccustomed to accountability measures. Staff described that volunteers are driven by their passion for the issues, not the need for establishing accountability structures and systems. This tension not only affected volunteers but the organization’s paid staff who were responsible for charting 21st Century’s course. Similarly, the leaders of Leadership Excellence indicated how important accountability structures became once they began to transition from a volunteer organization to professional, full time staff.

Finally, as discussed in the nonprofit management challenge section, issues of fundraising and sustainability became more prevalent as the sizeable multiyear YLDI grant finished. While larger organizations were better equipped to weather the sunset of the grant, organizations with smaller budgets, such as 21st Century, CAPAY, C-Beyond, Leadership Excellence, Outright, and YUCA, commented on being particularly hard hit in the post-YLDI period. Although some of the challenges arising from participation in YLDI are not surprising, others raise implications for the initiative design and execution. We will explore these further in Chapter VI.

Coming into this initiative, the Innovation Center and The Ford Foundation acknowledged the uniqueness of each organization. YLDI designers deftly anticipated most of the challenges that the participating organizations would face and devised a range of strategies to support each organization’s developmental needs. In fact, they implicitly anticipated the organizational challenges associated with YLDI participation because they expected organizations to “take a leap” to strengthen and extend their models and incorporate new ideas into their existing work. We describe some of these key initiative strategies next before discussing the major organizational and collaborative outcomes.

YLDI DESIGN AND STRATEGIES

While YLDI did not intend to address all of the pressing issues faced by civic activist organizations, there were a number of key strategies that the Innovation Center, as the primary intermediary, pursued to increase the capacity of the participating organizations and to meet larger collaborative goals. Initiative-level strategies included:

1. Fostering the development and documentation of promising practices by convening a national network of young adult youth workers;

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4 For further information on the design and strategies of the Youth Leadership Development Initiative, see Mohamed & Wheeler (2001). Broadening the Bounds of Youth Development: Youth as Engaged Citizens.
2. Providing support and training opportunities for adult allies/facilitators of civic activism and leadership development; and
3. Strengthening the youth development profession by conducting research, documentation, and dissemination on strategies for achieving youth development outcomes through civic activism.

In addition to these initiative-wide strategies, the Ford Foundation and Innovation Center promoted values and approaches to organizational learning and development based upon the latest knowledge of effective nonprofit management (c.f., Gilly, 1997; McNamara, 1999). Their assumption is that organizations cannot reach a more formal, sustainable, and mature level of organizational functioning until (1) staff strengthen their knowledge of nonprofit management theories (human resource, management) and youth development theories; and (2) staff institute stronger organizational systems to weather inevitable leadership and staff transitions (e.g., hiring processes, board development, financial system). In effect, the Innovation Center has adopted an organizational life-cycle perspective and devised ways to help the YLDI organizations advance from “entrepreneurial,” founder-driven organizations to those that are more mature, with more formal systems, and a greater division of labor (Daft, 1992; Quinn & Cameron, 1983). Exhibit V-6 below illustrates organizational life cycles and their corresponding features. With the exception of a few organizations, most YLDI participants began YLDI in the “birth” or “youth” stage of organizational development.

Hence, The Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center provided support for technical assistance services to civic activist organizations through locally based capacity-building intermediaries and awarded multi-year capacity building grants that allowed each YLDI organization to pursue site specific goals. For instance, a number of the groups used their funds to engage in strategic planning, board development, fundraising, staffing training, expanded programming, curriculum development, systematizing their processes and procedures, and evaluating their work for program improvement. Our review of participants’ reflections of the initiative design features and implementation yield some important insights and lessons learned from (1) challenges that the Innovation Center encountered and (2) design features that made this initiative effective. These two topics will be discussed next.
Exhibit V-6.
Organizational Life Cycles and Corresponding Typical Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Birth</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Midlife</th>
<th>Maturity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Very large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Division of Labor</strong></td>
<td>Overlapping tasks</td>
<td>Some departments</td>
<td>Many departments</td>
<td>Extensive, with small jobs and many descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centralization</strong></td>
<td>One-person rule</td>
<td>Two leaders rule</td>
<td>Two department heads</td>
<td>Top-management heavy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formalization</strong></td>
<td>No written rules</td>
<td>Few rules</td>
<td>Policy and procedures manuals</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Intensity</strong></td>
<td>Secretary, no professional staff</td>
<td>Increasing clerical and maintenance</td>
<td>Increasing professional and staff support</td>
<td>Large-- multiple departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Systems</strong></td>
<td>Nonexistent</td>
<td>Crude budget and information system</td>
<td>Control systems in place; budget, performance, reports, etc.</td>
<td>Extensive -- planning, financial, and personnel added</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initiative-Level Challenges

From the perspective of the Innovation Center staff, there were a number of initiative-level characteristics that affected their ability to implement the initiative. Key challenges are described below:

- **High variation across sites.** By design, the organizations looked very different. This also meant that they were at very different places for learning. They had different organizational sizes, dealt with different issues, and had very different needs. This made it difficult to provide the right level of TA to each site. The Innovation Center staff stated, “There are varying degrees of sophistication in the learning group around youth development theory. Some of the groups are resistant to activities or language that they perceive as “introductory.”

- **Appropriate level of Technical Assistance by the Innovation Center.** The Innovation Center staff acknowledged, “Because of the structure of YLDI, we didn’t impose ourselves as TA providers or experts, it was

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5 Organizations, as with most systems, go through life cycles. Features of new organizations are usually markedly different from older (usually larger) organizations. This table was summarized Richard L. Daft's (1992), which, in turn, based information from Robert E. Quinn and Kim Cameron (1983).

6 From the Innovation Center - 1st year report to Ford Foundation.
more of a partnership.” The Innovation Center staff had to delicately negotiate their role with each organization, and tensions existed between being directive and creating an atmosphere of guidance. Perhaps in their acknowledgment that organizational learning occurs best when knowledge is “socially constructed,” the Innovation Center erred on the side of helping organizations to take the lead in determining what they needed. If organizations were not articulate about what exactly they needed in terms of TA they sometimes did not get the type of support they needed. The Innovation Center staff commented, “Sites got what they wanted, the question is whether it was what they needed.” On the other hand, what groups asked for might have reflected what they were “ready” to take on. We will discuss this issue more in the organizational outcomes discussion.

- **Staff turnover.** This challenge has already been discussed extensively under the nonprofit challenges section, however, leadership turnover also had major repercussions on YLDI implementation. The Innovation Center staff observed,

  The biggest challenge hands down… Moving them through the capacity building process is all about [continually doing] relationship building. Turnover created chaos in the organization…. which really [negatively] impacted the work that we did.

Leadership and staff turnover created a continual need for the Innovation Center to maintain some sort of consistency from one leader to another coming onto YLDI. The Innovation Center had to rebuild the common knowledge and relationships with each organization, reintroducing new staff members to the mission YLDI, and ensuring that leaders recommit to their organization’s reason for joining YLDI. Further, inexperienced organizations and/or leaders created the need to provide basic level guidance to work with a major national foundation: “They were used to working with smaller, local foundations. They needed to get their reports right, forms, set up an accounting system, dress appropriately.” (The Innovation Center staff)

- **Slow start-up at the beginning.** According to the Innovation Center, “Start up for many of the sites was slow and several groups were asked to submit revised work plans and budgets. In some cases, this was closely related to staff recruitment and hiring challenges.” The first year of the initiative marked a slow launching phase because of the staffing challenges discussed above. More importantly, Ford and the Innovation Center had to renegotiate some workplans in the beginning and allowed organizations to refocus the objectives of their YLDI grant as needs arose and the funding environment changed:

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7 The Innovation Center year 1 report
The process of renegotiating workplans was an important outcome in the life of this initiative. Despite the multitude of organizational and initiative-level challenges that the Innovation Center encountered, YLDI is a product of some of the most innovative thinking in collaboration design and this initiative achieved notable outcomes by meeting the participating organizations’ and the initiative goals. We will highlight lessons learned in Chapter VI, after first describing the design features that made this initiative powerful for the participants.

Effective Design Features

As described in Chapter I, The Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center engaged in a thoughtful and deliberate process to design the initiative. This process involved the design team meeting twice in 1998. The design team of 30 members included community practitioners, TA providers, funders (Pew, Ford), youth workers, and youth. As part of the initiative design process, they also conducted phone interviews with 20-30 youth serving organizations to see what it would take to build capacity. The amount of time devoted to gathering input and the level of time and resources that were invested in this initiative indicate that this was a serious effort to advance the youth development and civic activism field. Based on the data we gathered at the end of the initiative, YLDI was unique and effective for the following reasons.

- **Role of intermediary as the “glue.”** Participants agreed that the use of an intermediary (The Innovation Center) was a big plus because they served as the “glue” “to foster learning.” This was particularly important given the size of the grants and small size of the organizations. The Innovation Center played the role of grant manager, so that grantees did not have to focus on this aspect of their relationship with a major foundation. Additionally, when the Ford Foundation program officer completed her tenure at the foundation in 2001, ending her participation in the second year of the initiative, the Innovation Center staff continued to provide seamless leadership and guidance to the YLDI organizations and the initiative evaluator.

- **Ensuring shared values across groups.** Despite the notable differences across many of the organizations, the Innovation Center found common values and purpose that tied the programs together, particularly their belief that vulnerable and marginalized youth are assets to their communities with an untapped capacity for leadership. According to the YLDI/the Innovation Center Project Coordinator, “Programs were different but their hearts were all coming from the same place.”

- **The importance of how learning was structured.** Repeatedly, participants commented on how well the learning group structure of the initiative worked. Particularly the creation of a “learning group” where
all groups were seen as bringing expertise to the table. The Innovation Center’s management of the three learning group meetings reflected a collaborative paradigm of organizational learning, where knowledge is continually constructed and reconstructed in groups (Gilly, 1997). Participants’ comments reflect the peer aspect of learning:

They created opportunities for us to learn from one another, and for us to be able to create space to teach one another. Wendy [Wheeler, the Innovation Center president] never came to us and said, ‘This is how you do it.’ I think we somewhat may have wanted that, but she never did. They always allowed that space and that openness for us to share amongst each other, and use it as a learning opportunity. – Interim Executive Director, Leadership Excellence

The concept of learning groups is really critical…. the [learning] being across communities instead of top down. – Co-Director, TOCA

- **Offering parallel topics at learning group meetings.** The Innovation Center embraced, rather than diminished, the YLDI organization’s different organizational needs for learning. That is, they assumed that organizations would want different types of capacity building experiences and, therefore, they created a flexible concurrent workshop structure in order to accommodate as many needs as possible. In the project manager’s words: “Folks were in different places. It was such a diverse group. It would be a mistake to think that we could bring people together around one topic that would meet everyone’s needs.” Thus, the Innovation Center would bring 4-5 groups together for a smaller training/meeting on a particular topic rather than bringing them all at the same time.

- **Structuring YLDI participation for organizational change and continuity.** In anticipation of the inevitable staff turnover and possible resistance from existing staff in organizations who did not participate in YLDI learning group meetings, the Innovation Center strongly encouraged that each organization send two high level representatives to the YLDI learning meetings—one executive director and one program staff. This paired structure worked well. By asking that executive directors attend the Learning Group meetings, they were better able to secure buy-in from top-level leaders. This provided access to the board and the organizations’ senior level staff. The involvement of more than one individual also ensured that if one person left the organization, at least another person could provide continuity in providing leadership at input through their YLDI participation.

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8 This proved to be difficult as at least half of the organizations sent new representatives to the Year 3 Learning Group meeting.
• **Emphasis on capacity building of organizations.** Organizational development scholars observe that start-up organizations typically have founders or leaders who do whatever is necessary to just keep the organization in operation. These leaders tend to make “highly reactive, seat-of-the pants decisions” (McNamara, 1999). Moreover, the press of youth and funder demands often makes it difficult for leaders to take the time to slow down and do organizational planning. According to the Innovation Center’s President, YLDI’s intent was to “pay them to pause.” Although, even with the initiative, it was not always easy for leaders to carve out time for reflection, they did recognize and appreciate the rarity of such an opportunity:

I think most funders fund projects. I don’t think they fund processes. There’s no down time to sit and chill, and really get to the bones of what is power around here. I think that’s one of the flaws in funding – it’s so project oriented. It’s not balanced. Any learning, we know, it’s so basic, you have an experience, you get taught something, and then you reflect on it. Then you have the opportunity to apply it. That’s the circle. – Staff (Outright)

It’s helpful when funders encourage you to reflect, changing your mission to meet the demands of funders isn’t good…. Funding must fit the organization’s mission. — Co-Director (TOCA)

[YLDI] has been crucial for us as an organization. We realized it’s important to take stock and take a step back to examine your own organization—to reflect on your direction and to see how the organization is functioning. — Executive Director (YUCA)

• **Flexible funding.** YLDI organizations also appreciated the fact that the mini-grants made available to them had some degree of flexibility built in. According to one Outright leader,

It was just so beautiful how the site exchange form was really simple. The money was really easy. It was like here it is, figure it all out. I just thought, oh my goodness, they trust us to take the money, use it wisely, get what we need out of the trip. That’s one of the most unobtrusive experiences I’ve had around money, with a top-down [arrangement]. – Staff (Outright)

This allowed YLDI groups to access the funds needed to pursue follow-up activities to the learning group meetings, which reinforced their learning. More importantly, it conveyed the message that the Innovation Center trusted them to make informed decisions about strategies to support their learning.
Lastly, because the initiative goals were clearly defined around organizational capacity building, The Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center built in some flexibility for YLDI organizations to have the latitude to shift from program related goals to organizational development goals. This was crucial given some of the challenges that they encountered and it also is an indicator that they were coming to see their work in more strategic and sustainable terms.

**Shift in Organizational Priorities**

From our analysis of the goals articulated in YLDI organizations’ proposals and final reports, a pattern emerged. Four of the YLDI organizations initially listed their objectives for participation in the collaborative as program-level objectives, three organizations had a mixture of program and organizational-level objectives, and four organizations had objectives focused mainly on the organization as a whole. See Exhibit IV-7 and IV-8. In the *proposal stage*, common grant objectives, in the frequency in which they arose, included (1) holding leadership or organizing trainings, (2) skill building, (3) documentation, and (4) evaluation. Over the three-year grant, each organization’s focus for YLDI clearly shifted to respond to organizational and environmental challenges. We see a reprioritization of the each organization’s YLDI work. The most common objectives that groups reported their progress against on the *final reports* included (1) evaluating the impact of program work, (2) documentation (generally in the form of curricula and training manuals), and (3) implementing/maintaining organizational systems and structures (such as accounting procedures, strategic plans, and youth development models). *In general, organizations were more likely to shift their objectives from the program level to the organizational level throughout the course of the grant.* YLDI organizations *decreased* their attention to increasing program related trainings (organizing, skill building, youth leadership), and *increased* attention to organizational systems and structures, evaluation, and a diversified funding base.

At the organizational level, the YLDI funded organizations showed an increase in their focus on improving systems and structures within the organization, increasing funding, designing and conducting evaluations, and improving facilities and equipment. These changes relate to concerns over sustainability due to the economic downturn and increased knowledge about evaluation and organizational development as a result of learning through YLDI. The program director of AIWA noted, “Because of evaluation, we have been able to get funding from the Collaborative Fund. And I think that it will
continue to be useful to share with funders…that we have these results to share.” As they grappled with decreasing budgets and the need to “do more with less,” organizational leaders saw an increased need to build systems and structures for ongoing program assessment and development.

As time progressed, there were many lessons learned; one major lesson was the fact that 21st Century Youth Leadership had not only embarked upon institutionalizing the seven Techno Houses, but that this process had greatly affected the organization in general. This impact created a much larger challenge, which has propelled us into a process of…assessment and strategic planning. – Executive Director, 21st Century

As we will discuss in the next chapter, this shift in organizational focus and priorities not only reflect YLDI leaders’ increased capacity to recognize their needs, it also reflects their increasing knowledge of how to develop appropriate strategies to be more proactive in their organizational planning and decision making.

Exhibit V-7.
Changes in Program Level Goals
(1999-2002)
Exhibit V-8.
Changes in Organizational Level Goals
(1999-2002)
SUMMARY

In summary, the YLDI organization faced ongoing challenges that were varied and destabilizing to their high quality youth programming. Limited staff capacity, staff burnout, leadership and staff turnover, staff recruitment and retention, and fundraising issues topped the list of challenges that these groups encountered as nonprofit organizations. As civic activist organizations, they had to address issues of unsupportive communities and to justify their target population and/or build their youth membership base. In addition to the challenges associated to their nonprofit status and civic activism work, a number of the YLDI project leaders grappled with challenges that arose from their involvement in this initiative. These challenges were mostly positive, in that they reflected the desire of organizational leaders to incorporate promising elements of civic activism and youth leadership programming.

The supports offered through the YLDI initiative reflected the Innovation Center and The Ford Foundation’s anticipation of the multitude of organizational needs that these mostly young and innovative organizations brought to the YLDI learning group. Our review of participants’ reflections of the initiative design features and implementation yield some important insights from challenges that the Innovation Center encountered and design features that made this initiative effective. While the diversity of the group has proven to be an important contribution to learning, it also created challenges in developing technical assistance and training that is tailored to each organization’s needs. Leadership turnover added to the work of continually rebuilding the learning community’s collectively constructed knowledge and commitment to individual and joint work. Despite these daunting challenges, The Innovation Center moved with agility to support the participating organizations to tackle these challenges head on and to engage in meaningful exchanges and organizational learning. To the participants, this initiative was particularly effective because of the role of the intermediary as the “glue” through high turnovers, flexible funding, promotion of common values of youth leadership across diverse organizations, focus on organizational development, and attention to peer-to-peer learning opportunities. In Chapter VI, we discuss the collaborative and organizational outcomes that emerged from the civic activist organizations’ participation in this initiative.
VI. COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

YLDI organizations exist primarily to effectively engage youth in civic activism. However, as described in Chapters II and V, a host of challenges emanate from the community context and other sources to strain YLDI groups’ organizational capacity. While the civic activist mission and strategies drive YLDI members’ purpose and direction, effective organizational functioning—strategic relationships, resource development, internal operations, and management—is necessary to achieve these groups’ end goals of involving youth in the transformation of themselves and their communities.

In this chapter, we discuss collaborative and organizational level outcomes to understand the extent and degree to which YLDI participation has led to short- and long-term, capacity-building outcomes for YLDI participants. In particular, the five questions below help us to assess the extent and nature of the impact of YLDI on the participating organizations. We derived these questions from Connolly and York’s (2002) Continuum of Capacity-building Evaluation:

1. **Learning or knowledge acquisition**: What did the participants learn as a result of the capacity-building activities, and how did they do so?

2. **Shift in attitudes**: How have the attitudes and beliefs of leaders and staff members changed regarding the problem or issue being addressed by YLDI?

3. **Behavioral changes**: To what extent did the participating YLDI organizations apply insights from the learning group meetings, training or consultation sessions? What have they done differently?

4. **Organizational management and governance changes**: How did overall organizational management capacities (i.e., governance, leadership, management, fundraising, human resource development, financial management, communication, community outreach, etc.) improve as a result of the capacity-building?

5. **Programmatic changes**: In what ways was program capacity increased?

These questions guided our assessment of the data, which included interviews and formal reports submitted by the Innovation Center and YLDI organizations to the Ford Foundation.

From our analysis, we found a relationship between initiative-wide strategies (e.g., learning group meetings, cross-site exchanges) and specific knowledge gains and
attitudinal changes among participants. We discuss these in the context of collaborative outcomes, which are the focus of our discussion in the first half of this chapter. Second, we found that organizational-specific strategies (e.g., technical assistance, major grant activities, etc.) led not only to knowledge and attitudinal changes, but also to some specific behavioral changes at the organizational level. This will be the focus of the next chapter. Exhibit VI-1 below identifies YLDI strategies and their relationship to different collaborative and organizational outcomes.

**Exhibit VI-1**
Understanding YLDI’s Impact

**YLDI STRATEGIES**

INITIATIVE-WIDE STRATEGIES
- Learning Group Meetings
- Cross-Site Exchanges
- YLDI Listserv & Newsletter

ORGANIZATION-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES
- Major Grants
- IC Technical Assistance
- Mini-TA Grants

**COLLABORATIVE & ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES**

COLLABORATIVE OUTCOMES
- Increased Networking
- New Experiences for Youth
- Validation of Work
- Expanded Network of Resources
- Group Problem Solving of Shared Challenges
- Increased Knowledge of Models and Theories of Youth Development
- Increased Knowledge of Models and Methods of Civic Activism

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES
- Expanded Programming
- Integration of Civic Activism into Programming
- Integration of Youth into Formal Structures
- Enhanced Organizational Systems, Processes & Procedures
- Improved Organizational Planning & Decision Making
- Increased Practice of Strategic Planning, Evaluation, and Documentation

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

- Learning or knowledge acquisition?
- Shifts in attitude?
- Behavioral changes?
- Organizational management and governance changes?
- Programmatic changes?

**COLLABORATIVE LEVEL STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES**

As described in the initiative design section of Chapter V, the Innovation Center played an important leadership role throughout this collaborative. As the central intermediary for YLDI, the Innovation Center’s major roles and responsibilities included managing, coordinating, designing, organizing, facilitating, convening, and consulting with all of the YLDI members. YLDI learning partners commented on the depth and genuine respect in their relationship with the Innovation Center. In the words of TOCA’s co-director, working with the Innovation Center was “one of the best things, it feels like a partnership not a power dynamic…both groups had things to teach and learn.” Similarly, CAPAY staff spoke very highly of the Innovation Center and viewed them as...
valuable “allies” and as a “sounding board and long distance supporter” of their work. However, because the Innovation Center’s role permeated every aspect of this initiative, grantees were more readily able to speak about the activities in which they participated. This is reflected in YLDI organizations’ feedback and comments throughout this chapter. Exhibit VI-2 below helps us to examine the degree of emphasis that was placed on a particular capacity building strategy or intervention that the Innovation Center administered. It illustrates, for instance, that the learning group meetings were by far the single biggest capacity building investment, followed by the Innovation Center site visits and cross-site exchanges. The listserv was, on the other hand, a relatively small investment. Thus, this diagram helps us to assess what strategies were most effective given their cost relative to the overall budget.

Exhibit VI-2
YLDI Activities and Percentage of Budget
In order to understand the connection between collaborative outcomes and the initiative activities, we will describe in more detail, the format, implementation, and participation of groups in activities that involved multiple organizations at a time and had cross-cutting effects on outcomes. These activities included (1) learning group meetings, (2) cross-site exchanges, and (3) the YLDI newsletter and listserv.\(^1\) We describe all of these strategies first before discussing their resulting collaborative outcomes.

**Initiative-level Strategy #1: Learning Group Meetings**

As a primary strategy for group learning and building each YLDI organizations’ knowledge and skills, the three annual Learning Group meetings provided executive directors and other key leaders of each YLDI organization, Ford Foundation and Innovation Center staff with the space to come together and share information and updates on their programs, strategies, and their common commitment to youth civic activism work. The meetings were often designed and implemented collaboratively, with substantial input from a volunteer meeting planning team of YLDI organization partners working with the Innovation Center staff. These meetings, with about 30+ in attendance, usually took place over several days at remote and inspiring retreat settings, such as the Highlander Research and Education Center. The learning group meetings were also located close to the site of one of the YLDI organizations (New York and Arizona) so that YLDI members could visit each other’s programs. The format and content of the meetings entailed a combination of energizing relationship building exercises, one-on-one meetings with the Innovation Center and Ford staff, consultant-led skill building sessions, and many peer-to-peer TA exchanges sessions.

In addition, in Year 3 of the initiative, young people from each of the twelve YLDI organizations convened for “Essential Knowledge,” the first YLDI youth gathering. A staff person from C-Beyond coordinated this event and had conversations and e-mails with youth and adults to identify common meeting goals, draft an agenda and recruit facilitators. The overarching purpose for this gathering was to promote networking and

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\(^1\) We will describe the site specific activities, (1) the Innovation Center site visits, (2) the Innovation Center local TA, and (3) mini-grants for local TA in Chapter VII on organizational outcomes.
peer learning among youth participants. On average, four young people and one staff person from each organization attended.2

Of the seven major initiative activities, the learning group meeting and youth gathering expenses comprised the largest piece (48%) of the YLDI initiative activity budget expenditure. A total of approximately $278,000, which excluded the Innovation Center staff labor expenses, was spent on this activity over the 3 years. Expenses included attendee travel, consultant fees, and conference logistical expenses.

**Initiative-level Strategy #2: Cross-Site Exchanges**

Site exchanges also played an integral role in the collaborative nature of YLDI, fostering interpersonal relationships between youth in different organizations and allowing youth and adult leaders to learn about different life perspectives, ways to approach youth work, and organizational structures and climates. All but one organization went on site visits to other YLDI organizations, with the average number of two visits per organization and as many as 4-5 representatives per organization.3 Overall, 25 site visits occurred over the three-year grant period. (See Exhibit VI-2 below for a mapping of the cross-site exchanges.) Three of the groups served as learning “hubs” for site visits, hosting three or more visits over the grant period. YUCA hosted three organizations in California, YMPJ hosted four organizations in New York, and 21st Century hosted five organizations in Alabama. Only one partner (Mi Casa) did not host a visit from other YLDI organizations, but did host an international meeting. Of all of the initiative activities, the total expenditure for cross-site exchanges was the third largest (11%) in the YLDI initiative activity budget. A total of approximately $67,200 was spent on this activity (at about $2,000 per exchange) primarily on attendees’ travel expenses.

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3 21st Century used the YLDI funds allocated for cross-site exchanges to attend the World Conference Against Racism in South Africa, instead of visiting another YLDI organization.
Initiative-level Strategy #3: YLDI Communication Mechanisms

To facilitate ongoing communication among group members in between meetings and visits, YLDI set up two mechanisms—a newsletter and a listserv. The YLDI newsletter, *Macroscope*, contained in-depth articles about selected YLDI organizations, a note from the Innovation Center President, information about the YLDI evaluation, YLDI timeline, upcoming conferences, etc. There were only two issues of this printed newsletter, and for the remainder of the initiative, the Innovation Center communicated primarily through the YLDI listserv. In order to maximize the utility of the listserv, the Innovation Center staff created *YLDI News*, a regular e-mail posting to circulate information and encourage the sharing of ideas. *YLDI News* was posted to members of the YLDI learning group approximately once every two weeks and continued after the official end date of the YLDI grants. It typically included information about YLDI activities, job vacancies, grant opportunities, electronic or print resources, and upcoming
events or conferences related to youth development and civic activism. Although
member-generated postings to the YLDI listserv were not frequent, feedback from the
learning group indicated that many people read YLDI News and found it to be a relevant
and useful resource. In one instance, the listserv served as an important channel for
TOCA leaders to inform the YLDI groups of the tragic passing of a youth. The ability to
share the news brought together members across the nation to grieve collectively with the
TOCA community for their profound loss.

Based on leaders’ reflections on these YLDI activities, we queried the data to
determine what participants learned as a result of the collaborative wide activities, and
the extent to which leaders and staff members’ knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs changed
about their own and others’ work in youth development, civic activism, youth leadership,
and youth-adult partnerships. Although overlaps exist between the collaborative and
organizational level outcomes, we were able to discern some knowledge gains and
attitudinal shifts that directly resulted from organizations’ participation in initiative-wide
strategies. Notable collaborative outcomes, discussed next, include (1) increased
networking and relationship building, (2) new experiences and learning for youth and
adult leaders, (3) sense of validation of groups’ own models of programming, (4)
expanded network of resources, (5) group problem solving of shared challenges, (6)
increased knowledge of youth development theories and models, and (7) increased
knowledge of civic activism models and best practices.

COLLABORATIVE OUTCOMES

**Increased Networking and Relationship Building**

A significant outcome for me is the ability to do some traveling, to
connect with people that do similar work, and to connect with them, not
just on a programmatic level, but at that deeper kind of spiritual level. –
Executive Director (LE)

All YLDI learning partners cited repeatedly that one of the most fundamental
outcomes of YLDI participation was their increased sense of connection to other groups
that espoused similar philosophies, values, and commitments to young people and social
justice. The learning group meetings and site exchanges provided key contexts for
networking to occur. For example, 21st Century’s adult leaders considered the learning
group meetings worthwhile and a primary opportunity to network with other
organizations. “Seeing the parallels of work across organizations was interesting,” says
21st Century staff, “and it was comforting to share and hear about other people’s issues
and programs.” For Outright, the learning group meetings provided opportunities to build lasting relationships for both adults and youth. The most prominent relationship for them was with YMPJ. After the YLDI grant had come to an end, this relationship continued with YMPJ bringing a large group of youth (of all ages) for an Outright/YMPJ camping trip. The opportunity for gay youth from Maine to go camping with youth of color from the South Bronx is an uncommon occurrence! Further, many of the YMPJ youth had never been camping or been so far from their urban homes. There was general agreement that some real personal connections were made.

**New Experiences for Youth and Adult Leaders**

Participation in site exchanges provided a space for youth and leaders of diverse backgrounds and experiences to connect and learn from one another. In addition to building lasting relationships with other youth and program staff, youth and adults alike opened themselves to learning vastly differing worldviews and perspectives. By visiting programs serving LGBTQ youth, young people from 21st Century, YMPJ, LE, YUCA, AIWA, who had little awareness about homophobia, began to broaden their perspectives. In one instance, after a successful site exchange, AIWA decided to integrate training on awareness about homophobia into their programming. Leadership Excellence had the “unique opportunity to become more informed about youth empowerment as it relates to sexual identity.”

Youth and adults from Leadership Excellence and TOCA met and explored the parallels between the experiences of African-American and Native American peoples, and YMPJ and TOCA exchanged lessons about culture, tradition, and spirituality. Staff and youth from 21st Century attended a conference in South Africa, where youth connected with youth from other countries and identified common or parallel experiences with racism and oppression. In addition, YMPJ hosted a group of Palestinian youth, where they related their experiences with police brutality. In many instances, leaders noted how readily the youth from different programs connected, and the importance of the experience on a level of individual growth. Youth and leaders from across the YLDI sites were able to view and experience the lives and work of others through a common lens of youth work and collective action. Exhibit VI-3 encapsulates some of the stories and feedback from these organizations that participated.
Exhibit VI-4.
Stories of Site Exchanges and the Youth Gathering

21st Century: The Executive Director said that other gatherings were beneficial, noting that youth who participated in the YLDI gathering in Washington D.C. had a “good experience.” Site exchanges were also deemed to be a success. 21st Century’s site visit to YUCA and Leadership Excellence was “very worthwhile.” Further, largely as a result of NYAC’s visit to 21st Century, the Executive Director explained that, because “many of our youth are homophobic,” this exchange helped broaden the perspective of 21st Century youth. “We’re working on ways to incorporate ways for 21C to address homophobia. In one case, a youth came back to his techno house and helped change the tone of awareness,” the techno house coordinator explained.

Outright: The Outright young people were very honest about their inexperience in racially diverse and poor communities. Reactions from youth to the YLDI site exchanges indicated that these were transformative experiences: “When you live in Portland you don’t get much exposure to different races…. I was totally exposed to all these new people and it really opened my eyes. I heard terms I’ve never heard before.” Another youth leader echoed these sentiments:

“[The Bronx was] amazing!...Everybody there was so cool, and so welcoming. I was a little nervous about going to a inner-city youth organization with six white kids from Maine, especially six gay white kids….We stayed in the lower East Side of Manhattan…that was another weird thing, staying in Manhattan and then everyday going into the South Bronx….I think it was a learning experience that was more personal, and the emotions that I got from going on that trip definitely changed some of my ideas, which I think helps in a way towards Outright….Just realizing that there are people out there, that as much as we think they want our help, they don’t.”

Mi Casa: The Program Manager for the Youth Leadership Development Institute accompanied youth participants on a site visit to the Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice. Perhaps most importantly, youth connected with peers from another region of the country. According to this staff member, many had never been on a plane or out of the state of Colorado.

Along with the relationship building and exposure to new experiences and each other’s work, leaders experienced, some for the first time, validation of their work.

Increased Validation

“Our model isn’t the only one that works. It was just amazing to see how different the other organizations were, and it really helped us think about our work….With the initiative, we’re able to see that there are these other
organizations doing similar work, who recognize and bring legitimacy to our work.” -- Project Coordinator (CAPAY)

Perhaps indicative of organizations that are pioneers in their work, many of the YLDI organizations expressed a sense of isolation and lack of knowledge of others who might be doing similar cutting edge work, as well as the need to constantly explain what they do. The fact that a major international foundation had selected them to be a part of this learning collaborative instilled a sense of legitimacy. This was deepened when they were connected with others who were taking similar risks and using somewhat parallel approaches—whether they be targeting specific populations to provide identity-support or pursuing youth-led decision making structures. Such connections brought a measure of comfort and a common sense of destiny to these organizations. These connections also helped them to move away from labels such as “experimental” to labels such as “promising” and “innovative.” Below are some illustrative and poignant revelations by leaders:

For so long we have known that we needed to work with all black youth, but we have not been confident that the community was going to be supportive of that work. There was always a lot of questions about ‘why do you only work with African American youth,’ and being a part of this initiative really validated for all of us that it’s important to do either gender specific, or sexually orientation specific, or racial cultural specific work. The whole experience has been validating and has allowed us to now just promote this model, and to be confident that what we’re doing is the right work. — Interim Executive Director (LE)

What I believe has had the most impact on Outright from the grant, is that it just really validated that we’re a youth-adult collaborative. It’s brought that piece of our mission statement more to the forefront. — Staff (Outright)

These statements attest to the incredible sense of validation that participants felt, knowing that others are committed to trying civic activism, adult-youth partnership, or population specific models. From this basis of mutual recognition and respect, these organizations were able to take their relationships with each other to the next level by becoming resources to each other and expanding their network of intellectual, social capital, and informal resources.

**Expanded Network of Resources**

YLDI has really helped us to build networks that we have used a lot … relationships with other people that are doing the same type of work, not only me but everyone on staff. We are all in touch with different
organizations from YLDI...I think YUCA has been helpful in learning about youth/adult partnerships, we’ve learned from Youth Ministries in terms of organizing, and AIWA in terms of how they work within a curriculum. – Executive Director (YWP)

The opportunity to discuss experiences and challenges and share different expertise made the Innovation Center and other organizations trusted resources to each other. At the center of this network of resources is the Innovation Center. As described earlier, the YLDI listserv became a dispatch point for information on funding opportunities, job announcements, youth scholarship, conference or professional development training announcements. The Innovation Center also played a pivotal role in “plugging” YLDI groups into high growth or maximum exposure opportunities such as, presentations at national conferences, membership in other associations, affinity groups, and collaborations. For example, in August 2000, the Innovation Center convened a group of approximately 30 organizational partners as part of an international community youth development conference, Millennium Connection, hosted by the Institute for Cultural Affairs. Mi Casa and Leadership Excellence participated. In another example, as part of a national Education and Humanities Committee that looked at youth as agents of social change in a historical context, YUCA leaders participated in presentations. Additionally, C-Beyond delegates represented the Innovation Center in a policy exchange with Senator Patty Murray. The Innovation Center also played a role in recommending and referring YLDI organizations for national recognition of their work. Leaders of YMPJ, 21st Century, and TOCA won the prestigious Ford Foundation Leadership for a Changing World Award (2001 and 2002 national finalists).

Beyond the benefits from a close partnership with the Innovation Center, outcomes cited from learning group meetings included exchanges of strategies for retaining youth, fundraising, and programming. Organizations benefited from the diverse array of expertise at the meeting, especially between groups that focus on identity support and those that are focused on youth organizing. For example, through the learning meetings and site exchanges, TOCA staff and youth met other YLDI grantees and program participants, and expanded their knowledge of what exists in the youth development field. In addition, TOCA leaders related that they benefited from seeing other communities and others’ acknowledgement of common challenges, the partnership and learning fostered through the common theme of identity issues, and the partnership with the Innovation Center. Further descriptions of how various organizations benefited from being in relationships with each other are described in Exhibit VI-4.
Exhibit VI-5.
Connections Among YLDI Organizations

YUCA: As a YLDI grantee, YUCA was able to both share its work with and tap the knowledge and expertise of other grantees. YUCA staff reported a sense of “reassurance” knowing that other organizations are “out there doing this work.” During site visits to fellow grantees (Youth Ministries and 21st Century Youth Movement), YUCA staff “bounced ideas off of them and they gave us advice. It was motivating to talk to each other.” YUCA staff credited their “strategically aggressive” approach to a meeting with local school administrators to their consultation with these groups. YUCA’s project director added that site visits with other organizations doing youth organizing, which allowed for in-depth consultation, were preferable to convening large conferences where organizational staff are taken out of their community contexts.

CAPAY: CAPAY has taken advantage of the knowledge and resources that other organizations can offer, by calling on them with questions and asking for advice on funding opportunities or programming issues. The Program Coordinator keeps in contact with LE, AIWA, and YWP to share resources and ideas for programming, e.g. approaches to organizing (AIWA), addressing gender issues (YWP), and integrating other social movements into their Asian American Studies class (LE). She also looked to LE to figure out how to form cross race/ethnic coalitions. According to the CAPAY Program Coordinator, “The people connections were invaluable, knowing that if we do want to do more political education, we can talk to YMPJ. It also helped in doing foundation research, like if LE got funds from a certain foundation, I would call LE up.”

C-Beyond: The site exchanges were highlighted as being powerful sources of growth for individual young people. Most of all, the visits reinvigorated their passion for the work, reminding them that they are not alone. They visited YMPJ in the Bronx this last year and 21st Century in the preceding year. In their words, site exchanges “afford us an opportunity to see what’s going on in other organizations.”

As much as groups became rich informational resources to each other, questions arose as to how they used the newly acquired information within their specific program setting. For example, although C-Beyond staff garnered strategies from their exchange with 21st Century that they wanted to apply to their constituency, they found that it was not possible because the techniques were specific to the culture and the population that 21st Century works with. We will discuss the translation of new knowledge to changed...
practices in the Chapter VII on organizational outcomes. In addition to becoming information resources for each other, groups also engaged in joint problem solving of their many shared challenges.

**Guidance and Problem Solving in a Safe Environment**

Many leaders attributed the success of the learning group meetings to the “non-hierarchical” atmosphere and structure created by the Innovation Center. “[The Innovation Center] created the opportunity for us to learn from one another, and for us to be able to create space to teach one another.” The interim executive director of Leadership Excellence noted the freedom she felt to learn and make mistakes in front of the funder without worries about inhibiting funder-grantee power dynamics:

> When we’ve gone to the learning group meetings it hasn’t been this kind of top-down hierarchy….They’ve connected with us as real people, the hierarchy is definitely not there, and that has allowed us to be open to making mistakes. With a lot of funders you have to hide stuff, but I’ve never felt like that with them, for the good or the bad. -- Interim Executive Director (LE)

Particularly for this leader, participation in this initiative has helped her organization to gain a better understanding of how to interact with funders: “I remember coming into the initiative being hesitant, just because I’m hesitant about funders, and for the most part because I didn’t know a lot about the funding community.” Similarly, TOCA leaders shared that when they got the call from the Innovation Center/Ford Foundation to notify them that they were one of the YLDI grantee finalists, TOCA staff told the foundation, “Let us think about it.” TOCA took three days to get back to the foundation, spending that time speaking to the Tohono O’odham community members, considering whether they wanted to take funds from a major foundation, and how they could approach participation in this initiative so as to not let it negatively impact their organizational identity and mission. However, with the Innovation Center’s proactive role in mediating the relationship and power dynamics between The Ford Foundation and the YLDI participants, the hesitancy of being candid about challenges in front of the funder was dispelled. Additionally, organizations like TOCA were mindful to not take on any grant objectives that they did not feel fit their larger mission (e.g., cultural preservation, community-building).

Hence, the learning group meetings provided safe opportunities for the leaders to seek advice from the Innovation Center, consultants, and each other on ways to trouble shoot and build their organizational and programming capacity. The Mi Casa leaders, for
example, saw the sessions as opportunities for guidance as the organization shifted to a new approach in youth programming. For organizations like Outright and YUCA, the learning group meetings were opportunities to develop and deepen their evaluation systems, and to receive feedback on their survey results.

Most notably, AIWA leaders shared that they appreciated the learning group meetings because—although they saw the groups as very different from each other—they were able to have rich dialogues on challenges that were common across most groups. In particular, they appreciated a session at one of the learning group meetings that addressed challenges related to retaining youth and the tension that emerges with creating new programming for more advanced youth. Because AIWA staff were formally trained in organizing, rather than youth development, they recalled,

The gatherings have been really, really helpful...certainly you work with young people in campaigns, but we weren’t thinking about youth development or youth organizing specifically. So being a part of this group with other organizations like YUCA—and even CAPAY, who is more of a service organization—was really helpful.

Not surprisingly, themes of youth development and civic activism theories, models, and practices surfaced, as they were the Innovation Center’s central targets of areas of sharing and learning.

**Increased Knowledge of Youth Development Models and Practices**

The Ford initiative intentionally brought together a group of organizations diverse in populations served and approaches to youth work. As discussed in Chapter III, the focus of the YLDI organizations ranged from a strict conception of youth development to community-based organizing. The learning groups and site exchanges fostered much cross-collaboration among these groups, allowing them to learn the common language and framework for talking about the youth development and civic activism work they were already doing on an intuitive level, and also to take their programming in a new, perhaps experimental, direction. Through YLDI, the organizations were able to conceive of themselves more broadly and explore the nexus of youth development and civic activism.

Exposure to new theories and models greatly benefited the YLDI groups. AIWA, YUCA, and C-Beyond provide some notable examples. AIWA’s staff for instance, said
that through YLDI, they gained a greater understanding of youth development and how to incorporate youth development principles into their programming and evaluation:

One thing that we've gotten a lot of exposure to is the youth development field. Because I don't think that we really thought about youth development in the work that we were doing, even though that's the thing that whole initiative was trying to show. That you could do youth development and do youth civic activism, and these strategies for change...so that became a new theory for us to think about how that integrated into our work. – Staff (AIWA)

Specifically, AIWA leaders have been able to integrate some of this thinking into their training program. Staff reflected that launching the academic year training program allowed them to consider how to integrate youth development principles: “It's still very organizing oriented, but it is youth development in that it is like an after school program...partly because of our capacity through YLDI and partly because we've been able to meet with other organizations that have done effective work and learn from them, this program really emerged out of YLDI.” Similarly, Outright built youth development principles into advisor and staff trainings. The ability to work with and collaborate with young people became a necessary prerequisite for working at Outright.

In the same vein, C-Beyond staff have learned to “talk the talk” of youth development, and realize that youth development is the central piece of their work. YLDI helped them claim this piece of their work and make it more overt. According to the acting C-Beyond Executive Director,

I think people do want us to win some campaigns but it’s also a matter of picking small campaigns that we can pull off while focusing on developing the young people. We could win something but if we haven’t developed young peoples’ skills then I’m not sure that we’ve won that much. You know? It’s both. It’s about winning positive [community] change but also about getting young people at the point where they ‘get it.’
– Executive Director (C-Beyond)

For Outright, participation in some “eye-opening” cross-site exchanges has awakened them to the potential of youth leadership. Outright staff and youth, who visited YUCA and YMPJ, came back with a renewed interest in having formal roles for youth on staff. They were also just amazed by the power and presence of these young people. A youth participant and co-chair of their board of trustees spoke of YUCA, below:
They were really more dedicated than any other youth my age. They were really energized, fierce, and determined to get their point across. I was like wow!… We were just going to see what they did. We had a tour of the toxic waste dump that they are trying to get rid of in their town. They were really accepting and it was really cool to see people who are devoted to something else. I’m not as devoted to queer issues as much as they are devoted to their issues. It was really an inspiration to see people who are so devoted to their issues.

Finally, YUCA, through learning the tenets of youth development, came to realize why civic activism is crucial to youth development. The new executive director of YUCA emphasized that it is important for prospective funders/intermediaries to understand that, for civic activism-oriented organizations like YUCA, “youth development is key but it’s not the main goal and never will be.” He added, “We develop leaders but there needs to be a purpose. With youth development groups that focus on leadership, I wonder what they will do with that? At YUCA, its about social change.” This statement reinforces the discussion in Chapter III on visions for individual and community change. That is, as leaders increase their formal understanding of youth development theories, they are affirmed in their beliefs that youth leadership development needs to be applied within real world settings, including youth’s other contexts such as family and school, to be effective.

**Increased Knowledge of Models of Civic Activism**

While formal learning about youth development occurred among youth organizing groups, those that come from a youth development or identity development orientation said that they gained considerable knowledge and wisdom on models, theories, and practices of social justice, youth-led leadership, and organizing methodologies. For example, the Executive Director of YWP found that learning about how other organizations address issues such as power, adult-youth partnerships, and organizing through the networking activities was helpful:

 Its been a really big help to have models of other organizations doing social justice work … also just finding out how they deal with adult – youth partnerships, how they deal with power, how they deal with community institutions. –Executive Director (YWP)

Similarly, the CAPAY staff said that they absorbed much from the learning group meetings and site exchanges, taking away valuable information about programming and fundraising opportunities. Many of CAPAY’s changes in programming (political education, peer support, community organizing) are a direct influence of organizations in
YLDI (e.g. LE, YWP, YUCA). In addition, CAPAY leaders said that they have truly acquired new ideas for youth activism. Since CAPAY has been so education focused in its approach to youth activism, it has since learned through YLDI that activism needs to incorporate both community organizing and education simultaneously in order to affect real social change. As such, CAPAY is now beginning to engage youth in community organizing and is making sure youth get the training and exposure they need to readily organize in their communities. The Program Coordinator explains:

I learned that there are other ways of doing this kind of work. Because I’m so education minded, I was thinking in an education minded way; like, teach first then act. It was really eye opening [to see other models] because I’ve never done any organizing work before I came to CAPAY. I learned a lot.

For NYAC, a national organization with local youth organizing membership, YLDI had the effect of broadening staff members’ understanding of civic activism. Their participation broadened NYAC’s vision of what it means to engage in civic activism. Staff went from understanding civic activism as traditional organizing activities to conceiving civic action more broadly to include consciousness raising/education activities as well.

REFLECTIONS ON COLLABORATIVE OUTCOMES

These many outcomes illustrate that YLDI organizations clearly benefited from deliberate and well-resourced opportunities to interact with like-minded and innovative program and organizational leaders. The rich peer-to-peer learning opportunities and the Innovation Center’s professional supports validated the work of YLDI groups and created multiple outlets for informal resource seeking and organizational problem solving. In addition, groups that came from different orientations (e.g., youth development, identity support, youth organizing) and different decision making structures (e.g., youth-led, intergenerational, adult-led, etc.) had the opportunity to become exposed to new ideas, theories, models, and practices.

The YLDI collaborative, however, was not set up for the purpose of informational exchange alone. In the words of the Innovation Center’s President, “YLDI is beyond information exchange. The focus is on skill development, behavioral change, and attitudinal change. Learning is at a deeper level than information. The time spent in relationships with each other over three years helps really with that behavioral change.” We ponder then, not only on questions of knowledge acquisition and attitudinal shifts,
but also on behavioral shifts. That is, how did the participating YLDI organizations apply insights from the learning group meetings and cross-site exchanges? What have they done differently?

Opinions varied, for example, about the effectiveness of cross-site exchanges for exchanging concrete programmatic strategies and ideas, one organization saw cross-site exchanges as the “most powerful sources of growth for young people,” but noted that they did not provide practical advice regarding programming. Other organizations did receive practical information about how to build youth projects, successful strategies for using intergenerational campaigns, incorporating youth in fundraising efforts, creating professional development structures for youth, recruiting youth, and tangible lessons about staff transition. Another organization came back from a cross-site exchange with a clearer understanding of the realities of community organizing.

What then, happened to these new understandings of youth development, civic activism and organizational development? How did they affect the YLDI organizations’ mission, leadership, structures, systems, and programs? We explore the answers to these questions next, as we report on the organization-specific strategies that each organization benefited from and the resulting organizational outcomes.
From the array of cross-group learning opportunities, the intent of the initiative was to ensure that cognitive gains, on behalf of program leaders, translated to organizational change and enhanced programming capacity. In Chapter V, we described the plethora of challenges that confronted these organizations before and throughout the initiative. Their struggles emphasize the vulnerability of these organizations and their pressing need to pay attention to building organizational systems, infrastructure, human resource management, and leadership succession plans.

In this chapter, we elaborate on the format, execution, and subsequent engagement of the YLDI groups in the TA and support activities that were customized to their particular organizational and programming needs. These key strategies included (1) activities associated with expenditure of their three-year grant from the Ford Foundation, (2) usage of available TA, including the mini-grants TA grants and SPR’s evaluation technical assistance, and (3) the Innovation Center’s technical assistance through annual site visits and ongoing contact. These are each described in full, before we examine their influence on each organization.

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL**

**Organizational-Level Strategy #1: Major YLDI Grants**

With the intent of strengthening their organizational well-being and long-term sustainability, The Ford Foundation awarded grants to 12 organizations that ranged from $165,000 to $240,000 per organization over a period of three years. These 12 grants comprised a $2,535,000 investment on the part of the foundation. YLDI groups used their major grant for a variety of purposes. As described in Chapter V, half of the YLDI organizations focused primarily on program development objectives. Another quarter of the organizations had a mixture of program and organizational-level objectives, and a one-fourth of the organizations focused mainly on organization of development objectives. Exhibit VII-1 below summarizes information from budget reports regarding

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1 21st Century, Mi Casa, TOCA, and YMPJ, AIWA, Outright

2 CAPAY, YUCA, and YWP

3 C-Beyond, LE, NYAC
how these organizations used their grant awards. This chart helps us to understand the degree to which grantees applied their funds to organizational development or program and general operations purposes. The later, as will be discussed in the last section of this chapter on sustainability issues, may be less likely to be continued in the long run without an influx of new resources.

**Exhibit VII-1**

**Use of Major Grant Funds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Use of Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21st Century</td>
<td>Programming (expansion of techno houses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi Casa</td>
<td>Staffing (56%) Capacity building (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOCA</td>
<td>Staffing (paid 100% youth outreach and interns, 25% for directors, 50% elder outreach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMPJ</td>
<td>Staffing, hired four full-time staff stipend to youth organizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIWA</td>
<td>Staffing (72%) Training (11%) Documentation (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outright</td>
<td>Staffing (~74%) New space New org structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPAY</td>
<td>Staffing (66%) Program delivery (to operate and sustain org)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWP</td>
<td>Staffing, including teen staff (90%) Consultants (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YUCA</td>
<td>Staffing (from 44-64% to 72.8% in Yr. 3) Consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYAC</td>
<td>Staffing Project grants ($5k/org) Evaluation consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-Beyond</td>
<td>Staffing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td>Curriculum development Formal assessment of impact Staffing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizational-Level Strategy #2: TA Mini-grants and SPR Evaluation TA

In addition to the major grants that each organization received, three additional sources of TA were available to help the groups meet their grant objectives. These included, TA mini-grants, SPR evaluation TA, and the Innovation Center’s TA.

**TA mini-grants**

Eight organizations took advantage of the $24,000 fund (which comprised 4% of YLDI activities budget) for mini-grants to support further technical assistance and learning needs. They used their TA mini-grants to hire consultants to aid in the development of specific systems and capacity building efforts. Leadership Excellence, for instance, sent staff to participate in skill building workshops in areas like using Excel software and understanding benefits packages, while NYAC used a mini grant to send five staff to a seminar on accounting and budgeting.

C-Beyond used all of its TA funds to hire a strategic planning consultant to facilitate the development of their vision and strategic planning process. Mi Casa used their TA funds to go in depth into a data-driven evaluation process and the development of a measurement instrument that could be used across the organization’s entire youth development program. YWP worked intensively to expand and deepen its evaluation systems in a way that was comprehensible to staff. Other organizations, such as AIWA, Outright, and YMPJ received consultant TA in the development of their curricula and manuals.

**SPR Evaluation Technical Assistance**

In addition to being initiative evaluator, SPR played an active role in providing evaluation related technical assistance, including strategic planning facilitation and assistance to develop program logic models. Capitalizing on our in-depth knowledge of each organization as the initiative evaluator, the goal of SPR’s technical assistance (20-40 hours of time were made available to each organization) was to enhance the groups’ understanding of the linkages between youth development, civic activism, their program activities and youth and community outcomes. Much of the assistance on creating theories of change was designed to help organizations link program strategies to the broader YLDI initiative, as well as increase organizations’ understanding of the evaluation process and their own self-assessment capacity. The first of the TA activities was a 4-hour group evaluation workshop at the Year 2 learning group meeting in
Arizona. Exhibit VII-2 summarizes the major SPR evaluation activities and specific outcomes that resulted.

**Exhibit VII-2.**

**Summary of SPR Evaluation Technical Assistance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>TA Activities</th>
<th>Products/Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAPAY</strong></td>
<td>Designed and conducted two-day strategic planning meeting for CAPAY staff and youth.&lt;br&gt;Conducted evaluation training with youth participants.&lt;br&gt;Prepared letter of support for CAPAY to accompany grant applications.&lt;br&gt;Reviewed self-evaluation component of grant proposals.&lt;br&gt;Reviewed YLDI youth survey results</td>
<td>CAPAY strategic planning training materials (outline of training, ice-breakers, worksheets, strategic planning table&lt;br&gt;CAPAY Theory of Change&lt;br&gt;CAPAY evaluation training presentation materials&lt;br&gt;Survey summary memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C-Beyond</strong></td>
<td>Conducted training on evaluation for C-Beyond.&lt;br&gt;Reviewed YLDI youth survey results</td>
<td>C-Beyond evaluation presentation&lt;br&gt;Survey summary memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Excellence</strong></td>
<td>Developed a logic model.&lt;br&gt;Developed key dimensions which reflect LE’s goals for youth outcomes. This also became the basis for LE comprehensive assessment plan.&lt;br&gt;Based on the assessment plan, developed an LE participant intake form.&lt;br&gt;Created additional survey questions to the YLDI survey to measure critical consciousness, personal transformation, etc.)&lt;br&gt;Created youth interview questions to assess youth’s spiritual development.&lt;br&gt;Reviewed YLDI youth survey results</td>
<td>LE Logic Model&lt;br&gt;Definition of Key Dimensions &amp; LE Assessment Plan&lt;br&gt;Intake Form&lt;br&gt;Survey Questions&lt;br&gt;Youth Interview Questions&lt;br&gt;Survey summary memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mi Casa</strong></td>
<td>Reviewed YLDI youth survey results with staff &amp; came up with explanations of outcomes.&lt;br&gt;Developed a comprehensive organizational improvement plan based on survey results.</td>
<td>Evaluation Plan&lt;br&gt;Survey summary memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outright</strong></td>
<td>Reviewed and provided feedback on “Big and Much Needed” Outright survey.&lt;br&gt;Tailored survey questions to fit Outright and helped them develop an HIV survey.&lt;br&gt;Reviewed YLDI youth survey results&lt;br&gt;Reviewed organizational structure and developed “learning organization” style evaluation process.</td>
<td>Tracking form for addressing Outright suggested modification of YLDI survey&lt;br&gt;HIV memo—assistance with questions&lt;br&gt;Diagram of learning organization process&lt;br&gt;Memo highlighting feedback on supervisory structure from site visit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Organizational-Level Strategy #3: The Innovation Center’s Technical Assistance Role

As described earlier, the Innovation Center played many different roles throughout this initiative, wearing the hats of initiative grant administrator, monitor, documenter, and supporter to grantees. One of the most important roles of the Innovation Center was technical assistance provider. The Innovation Center provided grantees with advice on how to address their most fundamental needs and challenges as they arose. We describe here the Innovation Center’s TA role; however, we broaden this description to include grantees’ assessment of the Innovation Center’s expectations and their relationship to the Innovation Center to understand the effect of this relationship on their work.

Including the Innovation Center staff’s labor costs and travel, the Innovation Center’s TA activities were the biggest expenditure among all of the YLDI initiative activities, and this constituted one of the most important strategies within the initiative.\(^4\) Through site visits, learning group meetings, and formal and informal conversations between the Innovation Center staff and leaders, the Innovation Center assisted organizations directly in their capacity building efforts or connected them with local TA providers to guide their development. The YLDI organizations requested technical assistance.

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\(^4\) Exhibit VI-2 of YLDI Activities and Percentage of Budget shows only the Innovation Center’s travel costs for site visits and TA (which total 15% of the activities budget).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>TA Activities</th>
<th>Products/Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YMPJ</strong></td>
<td>Worked with YMPJ to develop assessment plan.</td>
<td>YMPJ Evaluation Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewed YLDI youth survey results</td>
<td>YMPJ Logic Model Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>YMPJ ideas for self-assessment/key questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YWP</strong></td>
<td>Developed a logic model and refinements of outcome indicators</td>
<td>YWP Evaluation plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewed YLDI youth survey results</td>
<td>YWP Logic Model and Listing of Indicators—includes sample logic model diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YUCA</strong></td>
<td>Reviewed YLDI youth survey results</td>
<td>Logic Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewed and critiqued current assessment tools developed by former evaluation department.</td>
<td>Survey summary memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other YLDI sites</strong></td>
<td>Developed TA strategies for working across sites.</td>
<td>Standardized Evaluation Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewed YLDI youth survey results with staff &amp; came up with explanations of outcomes.</td>
<td>Survey summary memo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
assistance and training around four key elements of organizational development: systems and staff capacity building, vision development, and strategic planning, evaluation, and documentation.

The YLDI organizations were able to cull from the Innovation Center advice, direction, and concrete recommendations about next steps in the development of their organizational capacity. For example, YUCA utilized the Innovation Center in developing its staffing structure and conceptualizing its organizational development plans. The Innovation Center also assisted YWP to conceive of how to explain human resource policies to YWP staff. In terms of technical assistance, Outright has used the organizational development framework and perspective of the Innovation Center to help them frame their work. One Outright staff member described: “The visit from the Innovation Center created a space for us to create an imprint of where our organization is and how we function. Where are we? Who are we? It gave us an opportunity to talk about ourselves to ourselves in a [new] way.”

For the Innovation Center staff, it has been a challenge to serve both as the initiative administrator and TA provider. In this dual role, the Innovation Center has had to figure out how “directive” to be when, at the same time, trying to create the space for organizations to make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes. Both the President and the Project Director acknowledged this tension:

There are tensions in the balance between being directive (sharing strong opinions and expertise) and creating an atmosphere of sharing guidance and partnership. [Could we have] identified problems earlier? There is a hesitancy to push people early in the process. – Project Director (Innovation Center)

Although not all of the participants viewed the Innovation Center as a technical assistance provider (e.g., C-Beyond staff), most of the grantees appreciated the expert guidance and information that the Innovation Center imparted, particularly those who were open to major and ongoing suggestions. YLDI leaders were candid in offering insights into their relationship with the Innovation Center:

Carla [The Innovation Center Project Director] understands what we’re doing and being able to talk to her and knowing that she understands has been great….Carla was incredibly supportive of helping us understand what the initiative was about. We had multiple conversations with her on what the Innovation Center expected from us and what the Innovation Center’s role was. We also had amazing conversations with her to understand civic activism and its theory of change. They helped us
understand youth development. If you sat me down a year ago, I wouldn’t have been able to articulate it in this way. – Program Coordinator (CAPAY)

I don’t think that any of our relationships [with funders or donors] are as intimate or interactive as our relationship with the Innovation Center, specifically with Carla. We have, relatively, a lot of communication with them…Outright [staff and youth] don’t tense up when the Innovation Center shows up. It’s been really nice that when they come to visit they want to talk to people other than me. That they get, you know, that it’s not all about me. And I think that one reason Wendy [the Innovation Center President] likes us, is that when she comes, 15 people show up. They say, ‘Oh, Ford’s coming? I want to be there.’ – Youth Services Coordinator (Outright)

For some, the Innovation Center provided a “layer of accountability” that kept them focused on organizational development issues despite the program-related responsibilities that overwhelmed their schedules on a daily basis.

What outcomes resulted from these organization-specific and the broader initiative strategies? Building off their new relationships, knowledge gains, and increased motivation to try out new program ideas, the YLDI organizations took advantage of the mini-TA grants, SPR’s evaluation TA, and the Innovation Center’s TA, to strive for the following organizational outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview of Organizational Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Articulation of a theory of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Expanded programming capacity, coordination, and improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Integration of civic activism into programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Integration of youth leadership into formal structure and programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Improved planning and decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Increased value and practice of evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Enhanced organizational systems, processes, and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Increased value and practice of documentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the remainder of this section, we will now examine each of these outcomes in depth to assess the extent of cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes that resulted at the organizational level.
ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES

Articulation of a Program Theory of Change

Civic activism is often initiated as a spontaneous response to a community injustice or problem. As a consequence, civic activist projects often lack a theory of change. This has hindered civic activism from gaining widespread support and recognition as a viable strategy for youth development. – Wendy Wheeler, Innovation Center and Inca Mohamed, The Ford Foundation

A theory of change or logic model articulates the vision, program concepts, and dreams of an organization. It lets a variety of internal and external stakeholders try an idea on for size and to understand, theoretically, how the program functions. The purpose of a theory of change, then, is to provide key audiences with a road map to describe the interconnection between a program’s mission and assumptions, program strategies, and desired outcomes (W.K. Kellogg, 2000).

For some YLDI organizations, increased knowledge of youth development and civic activism models and practices enabled them to solidify the connections between their organizational goals, strategies, and outcomes. The following describes three of the organizations that made substantial progress in creating a theory of change that reflect their special mission around youth leadership, identity support, and civic activism.

• New ways of framing their work. According to the YWP Executive Director, “We had information on theory, outcomes, goals, inputs, objectives – but we were not communicating it in a clear, streamlined way (logic models, theory of change) so that staff members and other stakeholders could easily understand it.” YWP staff learned new ways of framing their work within the youth development constructs, and through the development of logic models, the organization has come to understand how the outcomes they achieve map to youth development outcomes. Although the Executive Director admitted that their work is still in progress, the logic models that they developed have already guided their thinking in a variety of ways: “We know enough now to know (1) what we don’t know; (2) how to get there; and (3) how to figure out whether we want to do long term evaluation.”

• The genesis for Leadership Excellence’s Social Justice Model of Youth Development. Through conversations with SPR and their participation in YLDI, the former ED of Leadership Excellence developed a logic model (see Exhibit VII-3) based on LE’s key assumptions about programming. Defining a theory of change was an important step in their strategic planning process. Further, it helped set the stage for former executive director’s publication of a social justice model of youth development that
highlights the importance of identity support in helping urban black youth heal from the oppressions that they face in their daily lives.

- **A theory of change as a communication tool.** For CAPAY, the development of its theory of change was an iterative process that involved many conversations with the Innovation Center, others in the YLDI learning collaborative, SPR, youth development experts, their staff, advisors, and youth leaders. Once they finalized their theory of change, the Program Coordinator planned to use it as a tool to “remind youth how their work fits in with the big picture of the organization.” Additionally, staff started to think about how their assessment results can be used in reports to funders and in proposals. This is a big accomplishment since staff were not sure what to do with their assessment data and even the importance of documentation prior to participating in YLDI.

Once a theory of change was created, some groups were better able to determine ways to expand and improve their programs.

**Programming Capacity and Improvement Outcomes**

Some organizations had clear goals to expand their programming capabilities (e.g., through increased scale and reach) with their major grants. While others, who did not originally have a program expansion or improvement focus, incorporated new programming elements, or in one case, restructured its programming to integrate its youth development and youth organizing components. The following are descriptions of three sub-sets of outcomes—(1) program expansion, (2) incorporation of new programming ideas, and (3) program restructuring—that resulted from YLDI grant support and participation in the YLDI learning and TA activities.
### Exhibit VII-3.
Leadership Excellence’s Theory of Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Assumptions</th>
<th>Youth Development Practices</th>
<th>Organizational Practices</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth rarely are prepared to exercise power in daily life, communities, and organizations.</td>
<td>Identify, promote, and train youth to assume power positions.</td>
<td>Identify, document, and implement “power paths” for youth within organizations.</td>
<td>Positive impact on individual, organization, community. Generation of skilled, conscious and competent young leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth exist in a social and cultural context which can promote or inhibit healthy development.</td>
<td>Focus on developing a critical consciousness among youth in order to promote civic engagement and healing.</td>
<td>Organization provides multiple opportunities for the development of self, social, and global awareness. Cultivate, maintain, and sustain strong grassroots community ties.</td>
<td>Individual and community healing. Healthy communities and supportive institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth have complex identities that rarely get explored in youth development organizations.</td>
<td>Use identity as a starting point for the development of critical consciousness.</td>
<td>Articulate the role of identity (race, class, gender) in organizational practices.</td>
<td>Youth grow in safe “culturally appropriate” places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality people, not programs, facilitate effective youth development practices.</td>
<td>“Adult development” is parallel to the development of young people. Dismantle adultism through culturally appropriate practices.</td>
<td>Identify and implement an adult development plan for staff.</td>
<td>Healthier adult and youth partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth development practices are often filtered and/or facilitated through adult culture.</td>
<td>Meet youth where they are, not where you want them to be. Embrace youth culture as a vehicle for “authentic engagement.”</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for adults to learn from youth.</td>
<td>Deeper and more meaningful relationships and interactions between youth and adults. Power sharing between youth and adults.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Program Outcome #1: Expanded Programming

Using their YLDI grant funds, YUCA, 21st Century, and AIWA have substantially expanded the scope and reach of their programs:

- **YUCA:** In the case of YUCA, YLDI funds helped expand its youth leadership internship program. YUCA staff reported that the grant helped support the hiring of additional staff and providing for the technical assistance needed to help establish YUCA’s Los Angeles office.

- **21st Century.** 21st Century's involvement in YLDI greatly enhanced the capacity of the ten (seven established in 2001 and three established in 2002) local chapters that developed “Techno Houses.” Establishing physical space for 21st Century's dedicated use profoundly improved the ability of these ten...
chapters to formalize programs, improve and expand activities and involve far more local youth. Techno Houses also led to enhanced community capacity to involve youth. With this added capacity, local chapters are able to offer more comprehensive programming, the likes of which were unfeasible prior to this expansion of 21st Century’s programming.

- **AIWA:** According to the AIWA Executive Director, youth involvement in AIWA has strengthened their outreach efforts to more immigrant women. She believes that youth can take on work that immigrant women cannot commit to; according to her, the time that youth can commit to education and organizing campaigns is much higher, especially during the summer time. In addition, when probed, she also acknowledged that youth also bring valuable skills as bilingual organizers.

**Program Outcome #2: Incorporation of New Program Ideas**

Largely as a result of the cross-site exchanges, TOCA, YMPJ, and AIWA were able to translate their learnings into programs and new practices.

- **TOCA:** TOCA used the YLDI grant funds to explore models for youth leadership. Through a site exchange, TOCA were exposed to the idea of providing youth with a youth-only space, to enhance the ability of youth to develop relationships with one another. Staff felt that this was something that TOCA was previously missing.

- **YMPJ:** Since their site exchange with TOCA, YMPJ staff have thought more deeply about how to replicate TOCA’s model of youth and adult partnerships, especially partnerships with elders. YMPJ’s goal is to connect youth to adults who can guide and support them. Elders are especially resourceful, because of their knowledge of the community. According to a staff member,

  We want youth to tap into the resources that elders have and their knowledge about what’s going on in the community. The other day on my way to work, an elder woman yelled out her window, [and said] hey, did you know that a young person was stopped by the cops on this block? We want use that elder to look out for our young people in the community. – Staff (YMPJ)

- **AIWA:** The staff cited the site exchanges, in particular, as important opportunities for them and young people to reflect on strategic improvements to their programming. Young people were able to identify different program elements from the organizations they visited that they have since integrated into their own work, such as an explicit focus on service to communities, deepened political education training on LGBTQ issues, and an overall attention to an organizational culture that is safe and supportive. AIWA leaders concurred in their description of site exchange impact in the following quotes:
Going to visit CAPAY in Boston—people learned about how CAPAY was doing different service projects, feeding the homeless, picking up trash…they saw that [and said], ‘oh, that's a way they are able to keep the youth involved and feel like there are some concrete contributions that are having and impact on the community that keep them coming back.’ So youth started asking themselves what can we put together that would allow youth to do the same thing.

With SMYAL [NYAC organization]… the youth were really impressed with the relationships that the youth in SMYAL had with each other and the organization…how the youth really have a safe space to hang out and be themselves. We were doing homophobia training before the site visit, but I think that that site visit did so much for the youths' consciousness around heterosexism…that we’ve been able to integrate in our trainings.

**Program Outcome #3: Program Restructuring**

At a deeper level, as YLDI helped YMPJ to explore the intersection of youth development and youth organizing, leaders decided to consolidate their programs for better coordination.

- **YMPJ**: YMPJ youth participate in four sequential phases of YPMJ’s programs (arts for activism, education for liberation, compassionate service, community organizing). Staff have realized however, that “youth development is never linear” and prescribing such a rigid path to youth development was unrealistic. According to a staff member, “To say that youth have to go through arts first and education second is unrealistic. Art is never separated from education and arts for activism is part of organizing.” Also, as part their effort to better integrate programs, YMPJ folded the school-based program for youth ages 6-11 with the education program. The younger youth program is now housed at YMPJ. Integrating these programs ensures that the youth experience activities more cohesively and seamlessly. This integrated approach also helps staff better manage the programs.

In addition to these broad program outcomes from YLDI, we uncovered attempts by non-youth organizing groups to further integrate elements of civic activism theory and practice into their programming.

**Integration of Elements of Civic Activism into Programming**

In theory and in practice, civic activism can take many forms—from helping individuals to address oppression in their daily lives to developing group strategies to address injustices in their communities. Whichever form they take, YLDI participants came to better appreciate, through their lively exchanges, the promise of this approach to take youth involvement and empowerment to a higher level. The knowledge transfer that
we described in Chapter VI on collaborative outcomes on activism models illuminates many of these organizations’ best practices and program strategies on civic activism. Staff and youth brought many ideas for developing civic activism in youth from the learning group meetings and site exchanges. Next, we highlight the different ways that two of the organizations, CAPAY and Mi Casa, have tried to integrate a greater focus on social justice and political organizing.

**CAPAY** gathered best practices in civic activism from a number of different organizations but was particularly influenced by the work of youth organizing groups. To support CAPAY’s goal of engaging in community organizing, CAPAY had added a new component, *Empowering Us*, that introduces youth to various political issues that impact their communities (e.g. homelessness, sexism, poverty, globalization, etc.) The goal was to have weekly workshops and structured discussions on relevant political and social issues. CAPAY also began to collaborate closely with the Boston City School to carry out this component.

According to the Program Coordinator, youth need to learn more about political education so they better understand the context for social justices. I was feeling we needed to broaden the issues beyond Asian Americans and we brought in workshops on oppression, racism, differences between institutionalized and internalized oppression. I felt there was more a need to do political education so that we could specifically see how Asian American issues were related to bigger context of social injustice. When we saw how other YLDI groups were doing political education, we realized that seems to be informing their activism and organizing. – Program Coordinator (CAPAY)

In addition, the Program Coordinator planned to bring in trainers on organizing for youth, and have staff at City School work closer with CAPAY youth to introduce them to organizing. These are two different examples of how increased knowledge of civic activism (described in Chapter VI on collaborative outcomes) led to changed program understanding and practices.

After several discussions among **Mi Casa** leaders and Innovation Center staff in Year 3 of the initiative, Mi Casa decided to shift their approach to civic activism whereas

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5 The Boston City School is a multi-racial youth organization that provides education on social justice issues. Its primary goal is to build a youth movement for social change. The City School has organized a number of community rallies and events that CAPAY youth have attended, such as the protest of development in Chinatown that would effectively displace Asian residents.
they had previously had a civic activism program they now “hoped to infuse the principles of the YLDI initiative into all their programming.” They realized that creating an entirely new program was not capitalizing on the organization’s strengths. As part of the “infusion” process, Mi Casa began “doing a lot more empowerment and leadership.” According to the Youth Development Director, Mi Casa focused on raising awareness of social issues and their connecting youth to other agencies who do more civic activism related work. In addition, two projects at Mi Casa, Young Women’s Empowerment and Art and Activism, began to offer youth opportunities to explore identity and exhibit leadership. Young Women’s Empowerment, pairs older youth with younger youth participants from another Mi Casa program. The pairing allows the youth to discuss gender roles and build self-esteem. As a volunteer said:

The lesson [of the Young Women’s Empowerment project] is women have the choice of who they are going to be. A lot of these Latinas don’t have many people to look up to, especially when you look at TV. When they come together they get strength from each other and they learn more about who they are. You can get this on your own, but I think it helps to have other Latinas to look at and compare and see where you are at. – Volunteer (Mi Casa)

The Art and Activism project focuses on the visual arts, “political art” and/or minority artists. As a youth development organization entering the civic activism arena, Mi Casa appears to be more comfortable with this infusion approach, and their journey to this point holds many lessons for other traditional youth development organizations.

**Outcomes of Youth Integration into Formal Structures**

We’re conscious about the kinds of adult we bring into the organization and who we want to recruit. They have to be youth friendly and conscious of the fact that their voice can’t be louder than the youth voice….We want people who are conscious of their own power and conscious of being adults, the more conscious you are of that, the better you can work with CAPAY. – Executive Director (CAPAY)

From YLDI, a number of leaders were able to bring back lessons of supporting youth leadership and empowerment to their organizations. For these groups integration of youth into formal leadership roles and responsibilities required two different components: (1) changes in adult attitudes about the capacity of young people, and (2) action taken to further integrate meaningful youth leadership within their organizational structure and decision-making processes. Next, we describe progress in these two sub-areas of youth leadership integration outcomes.
Youth Integration Outcome #1: Shifts in Adults’ Attitudes About Youth

For organizations in YLDI that are adult-led, adult leaders have come to realize that authentic integration of youth requires some deep rooted changes in leaders’ attitudes and commitment to supporting young people in leadership roles. For instance, at AIWA, participation in YLDI has influenced how adult members in other parts of the organization relate to youth. Although staff said that they sometimes still struggle with their shared leadership model between youth and adults, YLDI raised their awareness of adultism and provided them with strategies for how youth and adults could work productively with one another. According to staff,

I don't think that I had an understanding of adultism before we engaged in this process; and how just as other oppressions disempower and silence people, [adultism] does to young people. And because it is an experience that everybody shares—everybody starts out as a young person—it is something that gets passed on through generations. And it is something that affects everyone regardless of their race, or class, or gender. – Staff (AIWA)

Moreover, participation in YLDI has had an impact on AIWA’s direction by formalizing youth programming as a part of AIWA’s identity. Although the youth program within AIWA is relatively young (established in 1997) compared to the rest of the organization, staff described increasing support within AIWA to be working with youth. Whereas in Year 2 of the initiative, staff shared some doubt around how young people and adults were working together on AIWA’s Health and Safety Campaign, in the final year of the initiative, staff reported,

I think the partnership between young people and adults within the organization has transformed and is a lot stronger and is a lot more defined than it was before….we were sort of experimenting in the beginning about how we were going to have young people working together, and I think that this is really solid now. – Staff (AIWA)

An important indicator of adults’ belief in youth is the increasing crossover between youth and adult programming at AIWA. AIWA now contributes to the youth program’s budget and is committed to the sustainability of the youth program. This will be discussed further in the sustainability section.
Youth Integration Outcome #2: Changed Organizational Practices and Structures to Support Youth Leadership

We found many examples of YLDI’s impact on changed organizational practices and structures to support youth leadership. Organizational leaders were willing to integrate youth in various forms of leadership. Here we describe changes in (1) youth involvement in program and organizational operation, and (2) involvement of youth in governance and other decision making structure. Each of these outcomes is described below.

Examples of Youth Involvement in Program and Organizational Operations

- **21st Century:** The YLDI grant enabled 21st Century to build the capacity of local youth by creating formal positions in what was once an all-volunteer staff. YLDI funds were used, in part, to hire two youth interns in each of the seven Techno Houses, as well as adults Techno House coordinators. With this added capacity, local chapters are able to offer more comprehensive programming the likes of which were unfeasible prior to establishing the Techno Houses.

- **YMPJ** has become more serious about involving youth at the organizational level. Based on the YLDI survey results, the strategic planning process, and youth feedback, the Executive Director became interested in including youth leaders in the organizational decision making process and in providing youth with more leadership roles within their programs. YMPJ established an internship program in 2001 to achieve these aims.

Examples of Youth Involvement in Governance and Key Decision-making Structures

- **Mi Casa:** After careful consideration, the Mi Casa executive director decided to add two youth to the board of directors. The Youth Services Director indicated a strong desire – as indicated by the youth development staff retreat – to “give youth more voice.” Part of this process included working with other community organizations, like Padres Unidos, to help address youth’s desire to organize and become involved in their community. A Mi Casa leader explained that Mi Casa staff has “got to let them [youth] go” and support them in working with community groups organizing around their area of interest if Mi Casa is not providing youth organizing and activism projects. Finally, a youth advisory committee was written in to the business plan, but had not yet been formalized. Its charge, according to the Youth Services Director, would be to offer suggestions for programming, particularly with regard to community involvement.
• **Outright** has also begun to transfer real power to young people by giving one youth run program its own budget and involving them on hiring committees in recruitment. Staff reported, “[We created] in the big budget a youth-defined activity line item and a youth leadership line item, which was fifteen hundred dollars per year, for young people to apply for grants from other young people. That was a really nice shift of resources to young people.”

It is evident from these many examples that YLDI organizational leaders have not only changed their staff members’ attitude about the role of young people, but also have implemented some concrete structures and procedures to transfer real power to youth. However, many of these measures are still in the beginning stages of this work. Some key follow up questions to test their lasting impact are below:

Hence, in addition to the first four set of outcomes related to the program direction of the organization, (i.e., articulation of program theory of change, programming changes, and integration of civic activism and youth leadership) YLDI leaders strived to achieve outcomes related to building their organizational capacity to improve the health, stability, and longevity of their organizations. The fifth and sixth set of outcomes, which we now discuss, pertain to changes in: (1) leadership, organizational planning, and decision-making, and (2) improved organizational systems, processes, and procedures.

**Changes in Organizational Leadership, Planning, and Decision Making**

Effective organizational planning and decision-making begin with effective leaders. YLDI calls our attention to the fact that young, grassroots leaders with limited experience in nonprofit management often lead civic activism organizations. These often very charismatic leaders create the “raison d’être” for the organization in terms of the driving vision, mission, and innovation in youth civic activism work. Although this was not the case with all of the organizations, when a founding or key leader
Questions for Reflection

- Once the YLDI grants ended, did youth continue to be paid for their contributions?
- What kinds of ongoing training do youth receive to feel empowered to contribute?
- Is there a critical mass of youth on boards and other decision-making bodies so that youth do not feel tokenized?
- Are youth’s roles and responsibilities clearly defined?
- Do adults come into “rescue” youth if they feel that youth might make errors in judgment that will affect the organization’s livelihood?
- How are these youth leadership positions sustained in times of staff turnover or funding crises?

decides to move on, this often leaves a void in the organization’s planning and decision-making and erodes the institutional knowledge of “how things get done.” Developing processes for leadership succession and creating systems infrastructures that transcend any individuals help greatly in creating some stability from one leader to another. Within this section, we first discuss YLDI’s role in helping organizations (1) undergo leadership transitions, and (2) establish broader leadership and decision-making structures. Then, we focus on outcomes related to improved planning and decision-making systems such as (3) evaluation.

Leadership Transition

As described in the Chapter V on organizational challenges, many of the YLDI organizations experienced key leadership transitions, which were at times taxing on the remaining staff. In some cases, once the Innovation Center saw that organizations such as C-Beyond, YUCA, and Leadership Excellence were showing a shift in the organization and administrative structure, the Innovation Center sought to help them “push through this process during the site visits.” Not all of the transitions were successful, however. For instance, 21st Century has been planning to transfer responsibilities from the executive director to the youth led board of directors. Despite three years of efforts to move this process forward, the organization is not yet stable enough to execute the transition and continue its program expansion. Similarly, C-Beyond underwent a sudden leadership turnover of three senior staff in the third year of
YLDI grant. Despite all of the organizational development activities that this organization had been engaged in, staff were left reeling and unprepared to react and regroup.

In contrast, hard work and planning on the part of the outgoing leader and boards, two organizations—Leadership Excellence and YUCA—were able to make the transition effective for their organizations. In order to learn from these effective transitions, we describe both organizations’ experiences in detail within Exhibits VII-4 and VII-5.

**Exhibit VII-4. LE’s Leadership Transition: A Case Study in Patience and Persistence**

*During the leadership transition process we have learned that transition, particularly a “founder” transition, is a tricky and complex process. While considerable thought has gone into planning for this, numerous unexpected issues emerged in the process. For example, communication between and among new employees, decision-making procedures, staff management issues had to be reconceptualized because while they might have served the needs of the founder, they were inadequate for the growing organization.*

— Leadership Excellence Year 2 report

At the beginning of the initiative, Leadership Excellence was suffering from “founder’s syndrome,” and the organization was struggling to find a new leader to take the reins. The search criteria were three-fold. The new leader had to embody a philosophy that was at once African-centered, social justice centered, and spiritual. The leader also needed to possess nonprofit management experience (fundraising, organizational management, and board development expertise), and the requisite “youthfulness” that LE youth have come to expect from their leaders. The board of directors created a list of qualified individuals for the position, and then held interviews and social gatherings to get to know them better. Youth also played an integral role in the interviewing process. After two rounds of searching for applicants and two rounds of vigorous interviewing of the candidates, LE chose a new executive director who is exceptionally qualified to take LE into its next phase of civic activism programming and organizational development.

Key factors in the success of LE’s transition were the personnel and operations manuals the organization developed to aid in the transition, and their reconceptualization of new systems of communication between and among new employees, decision-making procedures, and staff management issues.
Exhibit VII-5.
YUCA’s Leadership Transition:
Importance of Leaders’ Commitment to Being Youth-led

During the three-year grant period, YUCA’s leadership changed three times, with new staff in the positions of executive director, program coordinator, and assistant program coordinator positions. Still YUCA was able to make these leadership transitions successful by making strategic choices about who to bring on board. They replaced their former executive director with a new executive director who is from the community and already had credibility with local youth. The new Executive Director described YUCA’s leadership as more indigenous to the community than in the past: “Having indigenous leaders makes us more legitimate within the community. There is much more a sense of a shared experience between staff and youth.”

Replacing an executive director with six years of experience with the organization was no small feat, yet YUCA underwent a fairly smooth transition due mostly to the help of a yearlong transition plan and over two months of overlap with the previous director. The transition was strengthened by internal systems that ensured a sustainable structure for ongoing leadership. This process included formalizing clear policies and procedures that govern the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and staff, professional development, and how organizing campaigns related to YUCA’s mission. “It’s not one person running the show,” noted a staff member, “The current leaders have to make sure that the infrastructure continues [when staff leave]. The foundation support was key for that.” The hiring process itself has been a learning experience for everyone involved, as the Executive Director noted, “There has been a lot of trial and error.” Sustaining a unique youth-run, youth-led structure required leaders with specific characteristics, and the hiring process forced YUCA to better articulate these characteristics, which explained here by the ED:

For organizations led and run by young people, “on the job training” is a crucial part of every staff position …with the implementation of the associate director position…we had never articulated the nature of the commitment required…We learned that it is one thing to be committed to social change and youth organizing and it is another thing to be committed to a learning process that is by nature long term, where mistakes are made and owned, beliefs are challenged and sometimes changed, and flexibility and adaptability are paramount. (Year 3 Final Report)

Leaders also need to be comfortable being both a leader and a peer, “because YUCA’s leaders and members are about the same age, it’s hard to balance,” added the ED. The Youth Board at YUCA played a large role during that organization’s transition between executive directors by delegating executive responsibilities among the members and assigning a board member to be an executive director coach, a position which both supported the executive director and provided the board with important information on issues or challenges that arose during the transition process.
As highlighted in the stories of YUCA and LE, successful transitions involved a number of key factors, such as guidance from the Innovation Center, well thought out recruitment strategies, and clear personal and professional standards, as well as one element of chance – finding the person who fits into the organization’s culture and beliefs. At the same time, we learned from the less successful experiences of 21st Century, Outright, and C-Beyond, that this process has to be tailored to the specific organizational context and culture. There is no one simple solution except for planning ahead, ensuring that systems and documentation are in place to stabilize the organization during and after the transition process, and establishing clarity about characteristics and skills of the incoming leader.

Broader Leadership and Decision Making Structures

Beyond focusing on smoothing out leadership transitions, organizations also focused on building their boards and restructuring their planning and decision making structures. For example, along with the successful hiring of a new executive director, LE has also successfully recruited and established new members of their board of directors who are active participants and committed to the goals of the organization. Not all efforts in this area resulted in satisfactory results, as in the case of Outright’s restructuring effort (see Exhibit VII-6).

In addition to attention to leadership and broader decision making structures, organizations must pay attention to processes and mechanisms that aid in the organizational planning and continuous improvement cycle. A central activity in this area includes evaluation. From our review, it is evident that the Innovation Center’s attention to creating organizational supports in this area resulted in leaders’ increased value and practice of strategic planning and evaluation.

Increased Value and Practice of Evaluation

Because participation in the evaluation technical assistance was more widespread, almost all of the organizations came to greatly value the opportunity to demystify and harness the power of evaluation—what evaluation is, how to do it, and how it adds value to their organizational planning and fundraising. This truly represented a seismic shift for many, who came into YLDI with a great deal of mistrust of evaluations and evaluators. Exhibit VII-2 (page 164) recaps the major products that emerged from each groups’ evaluation capacity building work, and Exhibit VII-7 summarizes the ways in which groups’ engagement in evaluation capacity building impacted their thinking and functioning.
Outright focused much energy in the third year of the YLDI grant on transitioning to a new organizational structure. The shift in organizational structure was precipitated by a sense that they no longer wanted a hierarchical organization (i.e. led by an E.D.) and they needed to create room for young people on staff. In one staff member’s words, the Outright community felt that a new organizational structure was necessary if they were going to authentically “shift power from adults to young people.” The process that Outright engaged in to create a new, more flat, organizational structure was very inclusive and participatory. Once this process was complete, a manual was developed that outlined staff roles, the new organizational supervisory structure, and other Outright policies. It also included details on the kinds of training (mediation, conflict resolution) that staff would need to make the structure succeed. This guide was to be a central step in supporting Outright’s transition to the new organizational structure, and also transfer the thinking behind the structure to incoming staff—as several key Outright staff members were looking to leave the organization.

Unfortunately, a combination of factors, including staff dynamics, a leadership vacuum, staff and advisor burnout, and funding transitions (including the loss of YLDI)— complicated Outright’s efforts to stabilize and test the new organizational structure. The group underestimated the amount of time, energy, and resources it would take to implement a nonhierarchical decision-making structure. While the new structure allowed for widespread staff and youth input and decision-making, it was less capable of enabling staff to move quickly and effectively when problems arise. Because this was a very strong, internally staff/board driven process, the Innovation Center was not involved as a TA provider. Some questions arise from Outright’s experience: How can organizations support consensus decision-making models that also are able to hold staff accountable? Could there have been a stronger leadership transition plan in place to help staff and youth sustain the intensive work that they began under YLDI? We will revisit some of these issues in the sustainability section.
Exhibit VII-7.  
Using Evaluation to Their Advantage

**YWP.** The biggest impact to YWP’s capacity has been in the area of evaluation. Through the technical assistance portion of this project, SPR worked with YWP to articulate short term and intermediate outcome goals and to develop logic models that define their work. The hope is that YWP can use these tools as a guide to streamline their data collection and analysis. When asked about the benefits they received from participating in YLDI, the Executive Director reflected, “We have learned a ton about evaluation from working with [SPR], that has been really significant.” –Executive Director, YWP

**AIWA:** “As a result of the evaluation process with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR), [we] gained insight to our strengths in providing strong opportunities for youth participation and leadership, in creating opportunities for them to meaningfully engage in their communities and in engaging youth in positive civic activism experiences. We also learned from the evaluation process areas where we can improve and spend more resources to develop.” –AIWA Year 3 Final Report

**YUCA:** Reflecting back on the SPR presentation of the first round of YLDI evaluation data, the Executive Director said, “The learning groups helped us go deeper in terms of evaluation work. We saw that our evaluations were already pretty good. We became more aware of creating a sense of safety and other youth development issues that are important when working with individuals. When doing organizing its mostly about the collective. But with youth development, you have to consider the well being of the individual, too.” Through its YLDI work, YUCA has staff have heightened their awareness of and appreciation for program evaluation as a useful tool for continuous organizational improvement. “I always felt evaluations were a burden but now I see the value,” the Executive Director explained, “having a lens to step back helps us always look at the root issue or core, not the symptoms.”

**Outright:** “With the assistance of SPR, we conducted the most comprehensive annual survey that we have ever done in the history of Outright. The results are really helping us understand more about who we are serving and their needs.”

**21st Century:** Participation in YLDI has also heightened 21st Century's interest in self-assessment and strategic programming. According to the ED, the Techno House structure creates evaluation possibilities such as tracking test scores and young people's development of analytical skills. “Having a structure where you can keep copies of report cards and a place to do testing is important. When everything is volunteer and you’re meeting in Pizza Hut, it’s hard to do assessment,” she explains.

**YMPJ:** “Evaluation is central to our work, and sometimes we are better at it than others. We think evaluation is not only the last step of one cycle, but the first step of the next.” from *Learning by Doing: A Manual for Youth Development and Youth Organizing* by YMPJ

In the end, YLDI organization leaders saw how their time investment in evaluation paid off. The Program Director of AIWA, for example, noted, “Because of the [YLDI] evaluation, we have been able to get funding from the Ms. Foundation’s Collaborative
Fund for Youth-Led Social Change. And I think that it will continue to be useful to share with funders…that we have these results to share.” For others like Mi Casa, usage of the YLDI youth survey for internal program planning purposes led to the organization-wide decision to administer the survey across all of their youth program components. With feedback from the results, both Mi Casa and YMPJ are now focused on building leadership opportunities for all of the youth that they serve.

**Enhanced Organizational Systems, Processes and Procedures**

Systems are the processes, both formal and informal, by which the organization functions—in short, how things work. –Venture Philanthropy Partners

The Ford grant gave many organizations the opportunity to take the next big step in ensuring the sustainability of their programs through developing, implementing, or strengthening organizational systems and structures. Through the creation of policy and procedure manuals, many organizations used the grant to document their daily operations and ensure future sustainability. Outright created or revamped many of their organizational procedures. They used technical assistance funds to hire a consultant who developed a training curriculum manual for their new supervision, support and accountability system. YUCA also used funds to examine itself as an organization, both its structures and the inherent assumptions from which the structures were built. Part of YUCA’s capacity building effort was the documentation of organizational and programmatic policies and procedures, and training manuals. A strategic planning committee was created, with staff, youth and board members contributing to the agenda. Also, YUCA has started the process to gain 501(c)3 status.

Before the Ford grant, “organizational planning usually took a backseat to delivering services and implementing our programs,” at Leadership Excellence. Now LE has learned that it is necessary to take time every year to plan. In response to an organizational assessment, which assisted them in “better determining our areas of organizational and programmatic needs,” LE developed and strengthened their existing accounting, bookkeeping, and financial systems, and hired an executive director who brought practical experience with organizational audits and fundraising to the organization. LE’s interim Executive Director explains how they were able to strengthen the organization without straying from its roots:

[YLDI] has definitely brought us to that next level, where we’re coming out of our ‘mom and pop-ish’ period, but I don’t think we’re losing our
grassroots flavor, and I appreciate that because it was always my concern. Like get more money and you get your systems structured, but then what do you leave? And so they’ve allowed for the room and the space to maintain, and they want us to maintain that grassroots flavor, and we definitely want it. But be able to get our systems in order so it’s a little more effective and more efficient.

21st Century used the Ford grant to embark on the creation and institutionalization of seven Techno Houses. Each of the seven chapters have worked to strengthen their infrastructure in different ways. At the Greene County Chapter, youth leaders were responsible for developing systems for the Techno House. They set up filing systems, designed sign-in sheets, created membership lists and kept the inventory system. In addition, youth from 21st Century attended a weekend training session and set up their own mock credit union, which “has equipped them with technical skills for the demands of keeping financial records and maintaining a board of directors…So far they have successfully been able to run this credit union and save money together.” For YMPJ, participating in a structured reflection process has enabled staff to define some important organizational processes, such as staff development and how to manage resources for sustainability, that they had not thought of before. Once these systems are in place, it is critical that staff takes the time to get their processes, procedures, practices, and policies down in writing.

**Documentation of Practice**

Documentation outcomes, tied closely to the YLDI deliverables, guided the participating organizations through a process of self-definition and clarification. Documentation for YLDI purposes occurred in three different forms: four organizations created training and curriculum manuals to fulfill their YLDI deliverables (AIWA, LE, YMPJ, YWP), another three organizations created handbooks (CAPAY, C-B, YUCA), and three organizations created internal reports for the Ford Foundation, documenting their progress and experiences over the grant period (Mi Casa, NYAC, TOCA). Through curriculum development and reporting, some organizations were able to “push their vision” around different issues, such as integrating meaningful youth leadership into the organizational structure or expanding the scope of their organizing efforts. Eight of the twelve organizations used mini grants from the Innovation Center to fund customized technical assistance around documentation of program practices and curricula, creation of logic models, and development of an organizational vision or identity. “Creating manuals helped [one organization] look back at our work and to capture ideas and
learnings. At the same time, it’s not a finished product. It’s dynamic,” noted the YUCA Executive Director.

While most of the organizations clearly thought that creating systems, policies, and procedures and documenting these helped their organization’s advancement to the next level of organizational maturity, for one organization, the investment in documentation and organizational development did not yield the kind of results that they had hoped. From the perspective of the evaluation, it is really difficult to say what changes occurred in C-Beyond’s administrative structure over the last year. The ED, who was primarily responsible for the development of new systems, moved on and it is unclear whether remaining staff and young people have an investment in retaining the structures she created. One staff member described:

We had an abstract goal of organizational development but no clear idea of how that process worked and no consultants to guide Lisa, senior staff, or youth through that process. There was no way to weigh what we would get direct benefit from. – Staff (C-Beyond)

This staff member continued, “People look at these [organizational tools] and think they can be helpful, and they can, but you have to be very choosy about what’s going to be the best investment of your time.” The consensus at C-Beyond was that the organization had focused on organizational development and administrative structures to the detriment to their programming and to the detriment of staff’s morale. There is much uncertainty if any of the structures that were put in place will likely be sustained as new leadership takes over, and as C-Beyond redefines itself in the coming years. This last example in particular raises some critical questions about how to better support grassroots nonprofit organizations in organizational reflection and building:
Questions for Reflection

- How do we assess if leaders and organizations are ready to embark upon organizational development work?
- Who should be working on this so that regular programming is not disrupted? On the other hand, who else should be involved so that there is buy-in and commitment across the organization?
- How can an outside consultant provide direction without usurping organization’s sense of ownership of the process and outcomes?
- In the cases of C-Beyond and Outright, how can organizational development and restructuring work transcend particular leaders, particularly if they in the middle or right at the end of the process?

These questions lead us to the final segment of our discussion on sustainability and the lessons learned from these significant efforts at organization capacity building.

Sustainability

In a final analysis of YLDI collaborative and organizational outcomes, it appears that what many of these organizations accomplished, programmatically and organizationally, is unparalleled. These accomplishments should be understood in light of their occurrence under trying circumstances and amidst high expectations for participation in and contribution to the YLDI learning community. In Chapter VI and this chapter, we sought to identify, chronicle, and assess the extent of cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral growth within YLDI organizations. By the end of the initiative, the leaders’ discussion of their continuing struggles to understand, learn, change, and take risks marks a sophisticated level of critical self-reflection and a heightened level of understanding of youth development, civic activism, resource management, and organizational management. In Chapter VI, we asked whether knowledge acquisition of promising practices in youth development and civic activism had led to concrete organizational changes. Our analysis reveals that it did.

However, the next question is, how will these efforts begun under YLDI be sustained without the $5.5 million that was invested in this initiative? In this final section, we discuss the issue of sustainability. We ask, what fundamentally changed in the organizations? How have they institutionalized their expanded staffing,
programming, new youth positions, policies, processes, and procedures? We address these questions in three sub-sections: (1) financial sustainability, (2) focus on civic activism, and (3) focus on organizational development.

**Financial Sustainability**

Commensurate with YLDI’s vision of not only building the capacity of the participating organizations, but also impacting the youth development field, the Ford Foundation made a sizeable investment of time and resources to ensure adequate support for the various activities. For many of the participating organizations, the sunset of the YLDI grants and the economic downturn created some amount of distress among YLDI leaders. Initially, six of the 12 organizations reported their financial situation as dire. Exhibit VII-8 provides a snapshot of where the groups were financially at the end of their grants. The reason these six organizations had a difficult time transitioning off their grants, was because the grants made up a high percentage of their annual budget. Grants ranged from a mere 9% of the annual budget for Mi Casa and YMPJ, to a high of 38% for CAPAY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit VII-8. YLDI Organizations’ Financial Outlook</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>21st Century:</strong> At the close of YLDI, the sustainability of 21st Century’s satellite branches (Techno Houses) largely rested on local fundraising efforts. The organization had no ready source of funding to fully replace the YLDI resources that were used to launch the techno houses. The main costs of maintaining techno houses were associated with rent and maintenance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CAPAY:</strong> With limited funding to sustain the one remaining staff member’s salary, CAPAY was in a difficult funding situation. Although the Program Coordinator had been very active in sending out proposals and letters of interest, the search for replacement funding from foundations continued. In the meantime, CAPAY continued its grassroots fundraising efforts, e.g. phone-a-thons, car washes, etc. to collect enough money to pay for some of its operating costs. Fortunately, CAPAY is located in a university that provides for some of their overhead expenses, such as rent and utilities. Without this support CAPAY may have had to close down.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOCA:</strong> The impact of YLDI on TOCA’s funding had not been large, especially since the majority of its funding came through food systems, not youth development. The Co-Director acknowledged that the Ford Foundation grant is like a “stamp of approval” in the funding field, though smaller foundations assumed that TOCA no longer needed their support after participating in YLDI.</td>
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The smaller organizations within YLDI found themselves the hardest hit by the grant transition. For example, C-Beyond, found itself in a financial crisis because their two biggest sources of funding, grants from the Ford Foundation ($50,000/year) and the Mott Foundation ($100,000/year), were coming to a close at around the same time. Through this experience, staff came to a deeper understanding of the importance of diversifying their funding and sustaining their grassroots fundraising efforts. The development director explained:

We moved away from our values, which is that we need to be getting a lot of our money from grassroots sources. Because of that funding [YLDI and Mott] the money from grassroots sources looked really small. Rather than focusing on grassroots sources that will get you through the long haul you’re trying to figure out how you’re going to replace the big money. It’s a catch 22. We’re suffering the consequences and reaping the rewards at the same time. – Staff (C-Beyond)

For those YLDI organizations whose grants represented a smaller percentage of their budgets, the transition from YLDI was not as consequential. TOCA not only got a $100,000 grant for winning the Leadership for a Changing World award, it also received large government grants to support its food systems work.

In other cases, the YLDI organizations were able to rebound more quickly, in part due to the increased capacity and recognition they gained through participation in the learning group. For example, two of the organizations were able to secure funding from the Ms. Foundation’s Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change. In the process of disseminating their YLDI evaluation youth survey results, the youth program within AIWA gained greater legitimacy and support from the adult leaders and funders. Their story is illustrated further in Exhibit VII-9.

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6 Mi Casa, YMPJ, AIWA, TOCA
Despite the sunset of YLDI funding, AIWA staff did not express concern about their youth component’s financial health. In part, this is due to a multi-year grant they received from the Ms. Foundation’s Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change, which the YLDI evaluation data helped to secure. Participation in YLDI and this subsequent grant provided a higher level of stability for AIWA’s youth program. When the youth program was first formed, AIWA leaders held strong concerns about the youth program’s alignment with their organizing mission. Today, this is not an issue. Staff stated, “As the youth program is larger and more institutionalized within the organization…ideologically AIWA is more open to thinking about what are the issues that are facing low-income immigrant youth that we can build solidarity with adults.”

In addition, the new Executive Director of LE was able to successfully raise funds within a short time of taking on leadership within the organization. Within six months after LE’s grant ended, she increased LE’s annual organizational budget from $355,000 to over $504,000. In the post-YLDI period, at least seven of the YLDI organizations reported that they were in good or satisfactory financial health.

In the process of transitioning off YLDI, the organizations were optimistic and committed to continuing key activities begun as part of YLDI. As we will discuss next, these activities include continuing networking, focusing on civic activism, and focusing on organizational development work.

**Continuing with Networking**

Energized and stimulated by the relationships and connections that the groups have formed, many promised to keep in contact (e.g., by phone and email) in order to continue the peer-to-peer support. Many planned to maintain informal relationships with each other to support their personal growth and organizational development. Specifically, one group, AIWA, expressed a number of areas that they could contact their YLDI colleagues for technical assistance and support, such as research and discussion around co-gendered program, involvement of adult allies in the work, and intergenerational organizing. Nearly a year after the close of the YLDI grants, some organizations still use the listserv to communicate with others. There is continued consensus across almost all organizations that they want to continue to build upon the relationships that germinated within YLDI. Although these groups are highly committed to continue networking on their own, questions arise regarding how to sustain this committed learning community. What methods are most effective for supporting meaningful networking and information
exchange between physically distant peers? What kind of sharing is most effective at this stage of their relationship and at this stage in their development as leaders? How does networking and learning from each other change as leaders move onto other positions or organizations?

**Maintaining a Focus on Activism**

A number of organizations took concrete steps to integrate additional elements of civic activism into their programming. For example, LE staff re-energized their civic activism focus by partnering with Youth In Focus, a youth-led evaluation training group, to enable their youth to conduct critical analysis of resources and incidents of police brutality in Oakland. As previously discussed, CAPAY’s program expansion led to the incorporation of a weekly political education component and a more substantive collaboration with local community organizing groups. One group, Mi Casa, may not be able to sustain the civic activism focus, but their interest in promoting greater youth leadership within their organization appears to be very promising. Exhibit VII-10 describes their story more in-depth.

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**Exhibit VII-10. Prospects of Sustaining Civic Activism at Mi Casa**

For Mi Casa, sustaining the civic activism focus will be a challenge. Since its inception, Mi Casa employed a service provision model that fostered individual client growth through counseling, outreach, training, and referral services. By definition, the model focuses on individual client needs. However, YLDI pushed organizations to move beyond individual youth development and begin emphasizing youth civic engagement and strengthening of communities. Mi Casa struggled to make this transition. Staff had little expertise on civic activism, and as an organization, Mi Casa had little or no experience working on community-wide issues. When the YLDI program began, no additional staff were hired, but rather, existing employees were recruited to operate the program. These employees understood the service provision model, but were slow to internalize the concepts behind YLDI.

The organization, in the long-term, hopes to infuse youth leadership across the youth development division. Toward that end, a Mi Casa leader spoke of including language in the 2002 Mi Casa Business Plan. Although not offering specifics, a Mi Casa leader cited the creation of a youth advisory committee, apart from the two youth positions on the Board of Directors, as an opportunity to promote youth voice and leadership.

From the site exchanges, many of the organizations became more interested in addressing identity-specific issues at their organization (e.g. homophobia, co-gendered programs, racism). An important element of sustaining these expanded programmatic
areas is to retain key staff who were active participants in YLDI. As discussed in Chapter V, high turnover of leaders and staff has made knowledge transfer and application of insights gained from YLDI site exchanges and learning group meetings particularly challenging.

**Continuing Focus on Organizational Development**

The goal of YLDI is to deeply strengthen the organizations’ capacity to the extent that staff is re-energized and supported to refocus on or continue their quality civic activism programming. In this sense, the organizational development and infrastructure work supported through YLDI, should not have to be attended to for several more years. At the same time, however, it is important that these groups institutionalize sustainable organizational learning practices, such as staff reflection time, evaluation, staff orientation and professional development, regular reviews of strategic plans, etc. Our analysis of the changes in decision-making, systems, processes, and procedures suggest that staff was highly motivated and interested in maintaining these processes.

In addition, some of the organizational development efforts begun under YLDI (e.g., leadership transition and organizational restructuring) require some follow-up work. For example, YUCA staff, who had recently helped create a new associate director position on staff, realized that “structural change requires behavioral changes.” According to the Executive Director,

> The changes in structure required that all staff…change how they have been working. For some people this meant giving up responsibilities and leadership. For others it meant learning to look to a different person for support and assistance. Thus this change was structural and programmatic, but perhaps most importantly it was behavioral as it was about personal comfort, trust, and risk taking. With the [new] associate director position…we did not fully anticipate the behavioral changes that would be required of staff. [We], by default, had been fulfilling some of the responsibilities of the associate director. – Executive Director (YUCA)

This recognition prepared YUCA to attend to how staff relate to each other. Based upon their YLDI experience, YUCA would be interested in seeking additional resources for capacity building. However, the Executive Director acknowledges the uniqueness of this kind of support from the funding community because, in his words, “most foundations are focused on innovative programs that can be replicated. I feel like we’re going from an emerging to a established organization, and that brings a lot of organizational needs but not a lot of funding.” He notes that, if YUCA could secure sufficient funding, the
organization would “continue to work on vision, do board development, and hire lawyers and other technical assistance to help us with becoming a 501(c) 3.”

**REFLECTIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES**

It is evident, from the many hours that we spent with YLDI leaders, that most, if not all, of the participants emerged from YLDI highly committed to civic activism, youth empowerment, social justice principles, and appreciative of the importance of organizational capacity building. A number of organizational leaders came away from YLDI with an increased ability to articulate their program theory of change. With this new tool, they were better able to communicate the essence, urgency, and “magic” of their work with marginalized youth to a variety of audiences. Many expanded their programming capacity and coordination. Those who were new to youth organizing, “tried on” a new focus on political education and activism work in their communities. Several of the organizations demonstrated to others that “youth-led” is not just a concept, but a reality. Hence groups were inspired to rethink how they promote youth leadership within their own organizations. Some of the hardest work within this initiative was for the groups to devise ways to improve their planning and decision-making. Through engaging in strengthening their organizations, YLDI groups came to appreciate the value of engaging in strategic planning, developing a theory of change, engaging in self-evaluation, establishing a workable financial system, and getting down their best practices, policies, and procedures on paper.

The individual growth that leaders experienced, however, cannot be translated to organizational change unless former learning group participants are committed to engaging other members of their organization in the same kind of internal learning process over a period of time. The implementation of innovative theories and practices needs to be nurtured in the same deliberate and supportive manner as their learning experience in YLDI. Without attention to retention of staff and the creation of structured opportunities for staff professional development to reflect upon their youth development and civic activism practice, the YLDI knowledge and relationships would be hard to sustain.

We believe that those leaders who invested their grant dollars towards capacity building purposes, as was the intent of the major grants, rather than operating funds or expanded programming services, were more likely to operate differently and continue to reap the benefits of their initial time and resource investment. This was certainly not always the case, as organizations like C-Beyond and Outright focused on organizational
development to the detriment of staff morale and their programming work. Those, however, who incorporated a stronger civic activism or youth leadership mission in their strategic plan, for instance, show the seriousness of their commitment and may be more likely to use this organizational blueprint to assess their progress.

As we bring this analysis to a close, we recognize that our discussion of outcomes has mostly pertained to the initiative’s impact on the YLDI participants. One of the desired outcomes of this initiative was to increase the youth development field’s understanding and appreciation of civic activism and youth leadership as an integral component of youth development programming. Another targeted outcome was to help youth development practitioners access models and information on how to integrate civic activism into youth development programming. Although YLDI organizational leaders have attended national conferences and presented with the Innovation Center and SPR staff, the dissemination phase of YLDI begins full-fledged with the dissemination of this evaluation report and accompanying papers. However, there are already very encouraging signs of YLDI’s influence. YLDI has generated much interest on the topic of civic activism and its intersection with youth development among funders and researchers. This is demonstrated by the number of specially edited publications on this topic, conferences on youth engagement in social change, and requests for meetings with the Innovation Center and SPR to share our knowledge of work and impact in this area. (See Appendix B, Summary of Evaluation Activities.) In addition, the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing has documented increased funding to youth activism groups from 2001 to 2002, despite overall decline in foundation giving. Further, as we alluded to earlier, groups like the Ms. Foundation, The Diana, Princess of Wales Fund, etc., have launched or will start initiatives modeled after YLDI and/or have given to clusters of grantees that do civic activism work with youth leaders.

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7 See for example, a special issue of the Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families Newsletter in which results of the YLDI evaluation was published: *Insights*, Volume 5 issue 1 Fall 2003.

8 See for example, the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth’s October 2003, Youth Engagement in Community Change Conference.

9 This information is based upon the Funder Collaborative Analysis of 3 tiers of giving by foundations, which included in Tier 1 (giving to youth organizing groups), Tier 2 (giving to community organizing, youth development, civic engagement, issue/population based, and community building), and Tier 3 (giving not directly related to youth organizing, but in potentially overlapping areas.)
The YLDI experience raises many lessons that, in turn, give rise to recommendations for others interested in building capacity within the civic activism field. In the next and final chapter of this report, we revisit the questions that launched this evaluation and provide recommendations on how to promote and sustain this important work.
VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the first YLDI design meetings, held over five years ago, YLDI has been a massive collaborative endeavor, involving youth, practitioners, trainers, scholars, and funders. Although SPR has only been involved as a participant in the learning group for half that time, our evaluation has taken on its own epic proportions. In this concluding chapter, we take a step away from our data, so that we can begin to articulate the relevance of our findings on civic activism for the youth development field. We start by briefly revisiting and addressing each of the three research questions that guided our inquiry. From there we move on to the next order of business, which is to begin a dialogue about the significance of this work for practitioners, funders, and researchers.

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: How is civic activism an effective approach for reaching youth not engaged in conventional youth development programs?

One of the assumptions of YLDI was that civic activism reaches youth populations not being reached by “traditional” youth development programs. The source of this assumption lies in evidence that youth development, as it developed in the 1980’s and 1990’s, had failed to reach “at risk” adolescents, particularly those in their late teens. The following quote from *Unfinished Business: Further Reflections on a Decade of Promoting Youth Development*, frames the issue.

The lessons of the past decade suggest that youth populations at the high ends of the age and risk continua—older youth (especially those 18 to early 20’s, but even 14-17 year olds) and “high risk” youth (those young people already out of school, engaged in high-risk behaviors, or involved in the courts)—were not as well served by the [youth development] paradigm shift. (Pittman, et al. 2000)

Before we can answer the question of “how” civic activism is effective at reaching such populations, we must first address the question of whether YLDI youth are indeed “older” and “at risk.”

Stated simply, YLDI organizations were successful at recruiting and retaining the hard-to-reach “older” youth population that Pittman et. al. refer to above. The average age of YLDI youth is 16, and some organizations recruited youth into their early twenties (22-23). Although we do not have comparative data on retention, we do know that 45% of the YLDI youth we surveyed had been at the organization for one year or more. Further, as presented in Chapter II, YLDI leaders reported that youth participants faced numerous challenges. Leaders indicated that 50% of youth come from single parent
households, 43% come from households that receive public assistance, and approximately 30% deal with issues of alcohol, drug, and/or physical abuse. Many youth were referred to YLDI organizations by the courts, foster care, through group homes, etc. Further, youth we interviewed told us that they struggled with negative public perception of their abilities, limited options for employment and support, services focused almost exclusively on solving their “problems,” ready availability of negative support structures and coping strategies, such as gangs and drugs, and premature adult responsibilities and financial pressures. This evidence confirms that, although not all YLDI youth were similarly “at risk,” YLDI organizations were effective at engaging “at risk” youth in mid to late adolescence.

When looked at in the context of organizational approaches and youth outcomes, we can identify several core reasons that older “at risk” youth migrate to civic activism. First, our findings on youth outcomes indicate that youth were attracted by the focus on their own cultures and backgrounds. Whether in the context of identity-support or youth organizing programs, youth saw themselves reflected in the faces of peers and adult leaders, in the pictures and artwork that hung on the walls of the organization, in the content of workshops and presentations, and in the issues that groups were seeking to address. For the vast majority of YLDI youth, this sense of belonging was different from the types of experiences they had in other youth-serving organizations and settings. It was especially pivotal for adolescents and young adults engaged in identity-search, or for youth who had internalized negative views of themselves or their identity.

Second, civic activism appealed to these youth because it provided a forum and context for them to reflect and problem solve on day-to-day challenges faced by their families and communities. As focused on throughout this report, one of the key strategies of civic activism is “popular education,” where youth’s “street” or common sense knowledge is recognized and acknowledged as a form of expertise and wisdom. Unlike many service-oriented settings that implicitly (or explicitly) blame young people or their families for making bad “choices,” YLDI organizations frequently encouraged youth to turn the microscope off of themselves and onto their institutions and the broader society. Thus, youth were able to name some of the common place barriers facing their families and communities, such as inadequate school resources, overzealous or inadequate policing, polluted air and water, unsafe working conditions, lack of green spaces, lack of youth facilities or activities, etc. Moreover, youth organizing groups provided youth with
the tools and resources to collectively strategize and take action to address those challenges.

Finally, as youth enter mid to late adolescence they are looking to “practice” adult roles, which includes a refinement and honing of skills and values that are necessary for future employment and economic self-sufficiency. It can be argued that civic activism is successful in attracting “older” youth partially because it provides youth with applied vocational and leadership opportunities. Although YLDI programs would not likely describe what they do as “vocational training,” there is no doubt that many youth gravitate towards civic activism because they are challenged to apply themselves, extend their skills, and exercise their voice in ways not available in their schools, workplaces, communities, or even, often, in their families. Further, in many YLDI groups, youth are paid for their time, and although the pay is not high, it is a motivator especially in locations like the South Bronx, where the YLDI organization\(^1\) is one of the only employers. Like other workplaces, youth within these settings are held accountable to completing a workload and are expected to keep regular hours. Unlike many other types of workplaces, however, YLDI youth are often held accountable by their peers and are given opportunities weigh in on organizational or programmatic decisions. Therefore, for many older youth, particularly those who have not been successful in school, YLDI organizations are appealing because they provide a unique opportunity to take on roles and responsibilities usually reserved only for adults.

### Research Question #2: What is the contribution of YLDI projects to positive youth development outcomes, including the programs’ effect on identity development and the ability of youth participants to engage in positive social change and civic life?

This research question seeks to test two core assumptions about the work of YLDI organizations. First, the Innovation Center and the Ford Foundation believed that YLDI organizations were supporting positive developmental youth outcomes at a rate similar to that of other high quality youth development organizations. Second, they believed that these organizations were uniquely successful at achieving outcomes related to positive ethnic, racial, and or/sexual identity and commitment to civic and social change. This second set of assumptions is pivotal, as the Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center generally believed that identity-support and civic action practices were missing from the

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\(^1\) Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ)
traditional youth development framework. The following quote, from *Broadening the Bounds of Youth Development: Youth as Engaged Citizens*, frames this issue.

> While positive youth development framework represents a much needed advance in youth development approaches, it was developed to respond to a western, white, middle class youth context and reflects that bias. Therefore to make the framework applicable in a broader array of settings, the youth development strategy has evolved to consider more fully the interface between individuals and social aspects of human development, structural conditions, and social participation by youth. (Innovation Center, 2001)

Thus, the Innovation Center and the Ford Foundation were interested in identity-support and civic action as innovative youth development strategies with the potential to broaden the reach and impact of the youth development framework beyond what they perceived as its “western, white, middle class” origins.

Our findings on YLDI organizations’ contribution to positive youth development outcomes are clear. A high percentage of young people within YLDI organizations are consistently getting the types of supports and opportunities they need for healthy growth and development. Further, preliminary evidence suggests that YLDI organizations are successful at a rate comparable to or higher than that of other adolescent-serving youth development organizations. We found, for instance, that the percentage of YLDI youth who report consistently high quality relationships with adults and youth within the organization is nearly twice that of youth within other adolescent-serving youth development organizations. The percentage of YLDI youth reporting consistent opportunities for participation and leadership was three times higher than that of youth within other adolescent-serving youth development organizations. YLDI organizations were also very successful at supporting community involvement, while providing experiences of safety and skill building at a rate similar to that of other youth development organizations. Across all of these domains we have rich qualitative data that resonates and supports these findings, while also demonstrating that these experiences contribute to young people’s ability to be productive, to navigate, and to connect. Thus, our research confirms that, through the use of civic activism practices,

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YLDI organizations are providing youth with a well-rounded and rich developmental experience.

Looking specifically at issues of identity, we found evidence that identity-support practices lead to a more affirmed and more balanced sense of ethnic, racial, and/or sexual identity. Youth within identity-support organizations were two times more likely than youth within youth organizing groups to report consistent opportunities to affirm and explore their identities. Our qualitative results support this finding. This tells us that supporting young people’s identity is not a mystery, and that, in fact, identity can be supported through replicable practices, such as: the active engagement of community adults as mentors; celebration of culture and identity through art, dance, spirituality, and other forms of expression; critical education on the history of ethnic, racial, and/or sexual identity groups; workshops on issues of power and oppression; and support groups. Further, we found that identity-support practices were associated with higher levels of certain developmental youth outcomes. For instance, when compared to youth within youth organizing groups, youth within identity-support organizations reported being more consistently interested and challenged by the work of the organization, as well as feeling a higher overall level of safety. Thus, an environment that explicitly addresses and welcomes the unique ethnic, racial, and/or sexual backgrounds of youth, may also help organizations create more safe, interesting, and challenging settings for youth of all backgrounds.

Like our findings on identity, we found that positive youth outcomes for civic engagement and community involvement map to specific organizational practices. Overall, YLDI youth participants indicated that they receive consistent opportunities for community involvement at a rate twice that of youth within other adolescent-serving youth development organizations. Likewise, our analysis revealed that the vast majority of YLDI youth—within both identity-support and youth organizing groups—were getting some level of exposure to community issues. Youth organizing groups, however, emerged as exceptionally strong in this regard, providing consistent and structured opportunities for youth to deepen their knowledge of community at a rate one and a half times that of identity-support organizations. Youth within organizing groups also demonstrated high levels of other developmental outcomes, such as youth leadership and youth decision-making. This tells us that youth organizing practices—including political education, campaign development, and direct action—are particularly effective at raising
young peoples’ knowledge and awareness of community issues and at creating contexts for them to apply and act on that awareness.

Beyond the youth development, identity, and activism outcomes that we set out to measure, our analysis of civic activism revealed some unanticipated outcomes. We discovered, for instance, that civic activism is characterized by an emphasis on group processes and consensus building. Youth and adult leaders within YLDI organizations emphasized that leadership and achievement is embodied in the ability to listen, empathize, and cooperate. Thus, leadership, within a civic activist context, is not so much about individual achievement as it is about learning how to participate in group processes, build consensus, and subsume personal interests and ideas to those of the collective. Similarly, over the course of this evaluation we realized how important community-change outcomes are to the work of these organizations, particularly to youth organizing groups. Although we did not measure them systematically, we identified a number of intermediate community change goals, such as increased youth involvement in community decision-making, increased press or community attention to a key campaign issue, and changes in policies, rules, or regulations.

**Research Question #3:** How did technical assistance from the Innovation Center contribute to YLDI organizations’ ability to develop and nurture leadership skills for young adult workers and to sustain and expand their work in civic activism and youth development?

The “technical assistance” offered by the Innovation Center was not the standard nonprofit management TA. YLDI was created with a tremendous understanding of the challenges that hinder the effectiveness and longevity of emerging and innovative civic activist organizations. The Innovation Center moved with agility to support the participating organizations, tackle challenges, and engage in meaningful exchanges and organizational learning. This initiative was powerful because of (1) the role of the intermediary as the constant throughout high staff turnover, (2) flexibility to renegotiate grant objectives as the YLDI organizations focused in on their actual programmatic and organizational development needs, (3) promotion of common values of youth leadership across diverse organizations. Most importantly, the technical assistance consisted of a combination of group-level learning, that capitalized on the Innovation Center’s expertise, and peer-to-peer learning and individualized follow up to reinforce and extend knowledge gains and attitudinal shifts from the learning group activities.
YLDI contributed in many ways to participating organizations’ ability to develop and nurture leadership skills for young adult workers and to sustain and expand their work in civic activism and youth development. The learning partners emerged from YLDI highly committed to civic activism, youth empowerment, social justice principles, and appreciative of the importance of organizational capacity building. With increased knowledge of models, theories, and practices of civic activism and youth leadership, a number of organizational leaders were able to better articulate their program theory of change. Consequently, with this newly articulated theory of change, they were better able to communicate the essence, urgency, and importance of their work with marginalized youth and to gain support as a potent civic activism and youth development strategy.

The groups were able to devise ways to improve their planning and decision-making, leadership transition, and governance structure. Through engaging in strengthening their organizations, YLDI groups came to appreciate the value of engaging in strategic planning, developing a theory of change, engaging in self-evaluation, establishing financial systems, and documenting their best practices, policies, and procedures on paper. It should be emphasized that over the course of this initiative, documentation and evaluation, in particular, became of great significance to these groups. Both of these mechanisms allowed the YLDI leaders to prevent institutional memory loss of innovative practices and to ground their organizational and program planning in accurate and useful youth data.

Many expanded their programming capacity and coordination. Those who were new to youth organizing, integrated a new focus on political education and activism work in their communities and those who had not worked with specific populations, integrated a stronger identity-specific focus to raise youth’s awareness and support their identity development needs. Several of the organizations demonstrated to others that “youth-led” is not just a concept, but a reality. Hence groups were inspired to rethink how they promote youth leadership within their own organizations. In fact, many were able to report changed attitudes, and organizational structures and practices that supported the integration of youth into authentic leadership positions.

LESSONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The YLDI learning group was a context for civic activism and youth development practitioners to exchange information on program strategies and to address shared challenges. In this section we highlight some of the key “lessons” emerging both from
the work of the learning group and from our evaluation. We highlight lessons on (1) core strategies and approaches, and (2) organizational capacity and structure. We end this section by highlighting some innovative civic activism practices.

Core Strategies and Approaches

We start by introducing lessons regarding core strategies and goals.

Lesson #1: Building on and extending the Youth Development Framework.

Lessons from the YLDI learning group on civic activism illustrate that there is great power in drawing on existing knowledge and frameworks within the field of youth development. After years of refinement, the youth development field is reaching some degree of consensus on the core supports and opportunities youth need for healthy development (see National Research Council, 2002). These supports and opportunities are important for all youth serving organizations, and act as a necessary base or foundation for program-specific approaches such as youth organizing or identity-support. That is, effective identity-support is dependent upon the creation of physically and emotionally safe spaces for youth, as well as on the creation of a sense of belonging. Likewise, youth engagement in social change occurs best when focused attention is paid to youth involvement in decision making, skill building and positive relationship-building. Drawing on and expanding the existing youth development framework is pivotal for defining a common language for work with young people, providing a context for the creation of shared tools and resources, creating benchmarks or standards for accessing the quality of young people’s experience, and for creating stable and ongoing funding streams and training opportunities to support community-based work with youth.

Lesson #2: Articulating the intersection between identity-support and positive youth development.

Our findings on identity-support evoke several implications for practitioners. Identity development is a key developmental task of adolescence, where youth seek to develop an autonomous and yet socially integrated and connected sense of self. Adults and youth, therefore, need to define the intersections between identity formation and healthy youth development. The practices of identity support groups are often seen as confined to groups with “special” needs. With the unprecedented diversity of America’s 60 million youth, identity support practices need to move from their current position at the margins, to become part of the standard practice of any organization that touches youth’s lives. All youth should be have access to information on their unique histories.
and backgrounds, and be able to find adult role models within the organization. All youth should feel safe to explore their identities free from the threat of stereotyping, harassment, or rejection. Finally, identity-support should be a parallel practice to developing youth as civic actors in their communities. Along with their personal transformations, youth can draw from their strengthened sense of self to unite with like-minded individuals—youth and adults—to connect to their community and to join social movements to create a more just and fair world.

**Lesson #3: Drawing on youth organizing strategies to engage youth as leaders in their communities.**

Our findings on youth organizing highlight a number of key lessons for practitioners. First, youth organizing is not a strategy reserved for radicals or insurgents, but is, rather, a practical approach to bringing about grassroots community change. Youth organizing groups within YLDI embraced a strategy for institutional and community change that emphasized the need to work within the system to the extent possible (i.e. through participation in decision-making bodies), while always being prepared to apply pressure from outside the system (i.e. protest and boycott). They adopted a social justice orientation that was positive and affirming, and that helped youth channel their anger and energy into productive civic concerns. Second, findings from youth organizing groups illustrate that if provided with a structure and framework for identifying challenges in their communities, developing a community change agenda, and engaging in direct action, youth do have the interest and enthusiasm to take on community change issues. This is important given rising concerns about civic disengagement and apathy among youth. Finally, given the very specific, focused, and intensive nature of organizing work, not all youth serving organizations are well-suited to take on a youth organizing effort. Strategic alliances, however, between youth development and youth organizing groups can expose youth to social justice issues and provide them with an effective outlet to address civic concerns.

**Lesson #4: Creating formal and well-defined decision-making roles for youth.**

Among YLDI groups, *formal* and *independent* structures for youth leadership, such as independent youth councils or boards, were more successful at promoting youth involvement in decision making than were structures that relied on youth input into adult processes. Formal structures and processes are important because power differences between youth and adults cannot be rectified by decree alone. Putting two or three youth members on an adult board, for instance, may serve to inform youth about board
functions and lend a youth perspective, but it is unlikely to provide youth with authentic decision-making power or influence. The power imbalance, based in the differing levels of experience and education that youth and adults bring to the setting, are too great. Thus, our case study results indicate that youth are best able to demonstrate decision-making in settings where they have discrete roles and responsibilities that do not directly overlap with adult roles.

**Lesson #5: Teaching adults to “step back” without “tuning out.”**

In order for youth involvement in decision making to work, adults need to “step back” and have faith that, if given the responsibility, youth will make sound and thoughtful decisions. In the words of one staff member within a youth-led organization, “You have to be a good listener, willing to take a back seat, even if you’re afraid it’s not going to go the way you want.” It is equally crucial, on the other hand, that adults not “tune-out.” Even within “youth-led” YLDI organizations, adult leaders played ongoing support and advisory roles. The challenge of youth leadership is learning how to provide a high level of “support” to youth decision makers without “taking over” and usurping their authority.

**Lesson #6: Creating the time for youth decision-making and input**

*Lack of time* consistently proved to be an impediment to youth involvement in decision-making, and often differentiated youth-led from adult-led decision-making structures. Youth-led organizational processes tended to occur much more slowly in order accommodate and respond to the learning curve that youth brought to the process. Organizations that seek to support increased youth involvement in decision-making need to assess if they are willing and able to slow down their processes so that youth can play an authentic role.

**Lesson #7: Using a focused approach with a defined set of youth.**

From this evaluation, we learned the importance of minimizing a “scattershot” approach to youth development, in which organizations over extend themselves to do too much in order to meet funders’ expectations to serve large numbers of youth. These organizations had clear, focused approaches to programming (e.g., identity support and youth organizing). Due to the background characteristics and the contexts where these youth live, many were specific, targeted, and unapologetic in who and how many they wanted to reach. This is critical because it allowed them to develop a population-specific
program curriculum and to develop, close, stable, mentoring relationships with youth throughout their leadership and organizing skill training and activism work. In the case of youth organizing groups, this meant a low staff to (core) youth ratio, which also enabled some form of compensation.

Lesson #8: Creating Linkages between young people’s families and schools.

Although linkages between young people’s families, schools, and peers were not a centerpiece of our study, we discovered that many YLDI reached out to young people’s families and schools. Activism groups reached out to parents, for instance, to build relationships and reduce mistrust, while identity-based organizations often reached out to families in an effort to increase intergenerational participation in the organization. Many YLDI organizations formed connections with schools in an effort to provide academic assistance (i.e. through tutoring), create safer and more inclusive school environments (e.g. by reaching out to GLBTQ youth and educating on homophobia), and recruit youth to participate in activism and social change work. Overall, such linkages helped extend the reach of YLDI organizations and their ability to successfully support youth.

Organizational Capacity and Structure

In addition to issues of programming, our evaluation yielded key lessons on organizational capacity, which are presented in detail below.

Lesson #1: Meaningful organizational development must be tied to programming goals.

As evident throughout the implementation of YLDI, organizational development worked best when it was focused on enhancing the capacity of YLDI organizations to conduct civic activism programming. That is, strategic planning, documentation, evaluation, etc. were not done in the abstract, but, rather, were integral steps towards achieving the goal of devising ways to better support the core civic activism work with youth. For instance, much of the documentation effort centered on effective curriculum and best programming practices that enabled YLDI leaders to use this to train new staff and youth leaders to engage in civic activism and social change.

Lesson #2: Sustainable organizational development must occur parallel to—not in the place of—programming work.

YLDI “paid” program leaders to “pause” and consider issues of organizational development and sustainability. Unfortunately, a few organizations within YLDI became mired in organizational reflection and/or reorganization and, in the process, ended up
putting their programming work with youth and the community on the backburner. In retrospect, organizations that focused exclusively or even primarily on organizational development goals for an extended period of time, experienced low staff morale and high staff turnover. We’ve drawn a few key lessons from this. First, programming work must be the organization’s first priority and must continue alongside organizational development work. Paraphrasing one leaders’ statement, the end goal is to fulfill the mission of the organization, not to build a sustainable organization. It is important that staff and leaders not to lose sight of that. Second, when doing staff-intensive organizational development work, it is important to take extra steps to ensure staff buys in to organizational changes by listening carefully and attending to their emotional and professional needs.

Lesson #3: Thoughtful leadership and staff transitions are key to maintaining organizational stability and capacity.

Our findings clearly point out the challenges faced by organizations when staff or key leaders leave to take on new opportunities. A few organizations within YLDI struggled under the weight of repeated staff and leadership transitions, often losing key pieces of institutional history and capacity with each successive departure. Two YLDI organizations, however, managed to transfer leadership smoothly, and their experiences have helped frame our understanding of best practices. First, in each of these cases, the executive directors that were leaving the organization were invested in supporting a smooth transition and were committed to continue working at the organization until their successor had come on board and felt equipped to lead. Second, great care was taken in selecting a successor whose values and approach were a good match to the organization. Youth within the organizations were involved in the hiring process to ensure that whoever was selected had their approval. Third, in one case, a year-long transition plan was put in place so that the incoming ED would have a roadmap to guide him as he settled into the position.

Lesson #4: Evaluation should be tied to the civic activism program theory of change and strategic/continuous improvement planning process.

At the onset of the YLDI, self-evaluation was an ongoing area of anxiety for many YLDI groups, often consisting of disconnected and ad hoc efforts to assess specific interventions (i.e. workshops) and/or respond to requests from funders. We found that many organizations were collecting data (often a lot of data), but that they did not have a strategy for analyzing or using it. Many YLDI organizations reported greatly increased
capacity in evaluation over the course of the grant, mainly based in an increased understanding of its purpose. Through participation in the YLDI learning group and individualized technical assistance from SPR, YLDI leaders were able to demystify the evaluation process, clarify their individual organizational goals for evaluation, and understand evaluation’s strategic value for organizational change and fundraising. Most importantly, the organizational leaders learned the importance of making decisions on program and organizational improvement that are data-driven. Through collaborating with SPR to customize components of the YLDI youth survey leaders gained an increased understanding the significance of standardized dimensions tied to research-based youth development and civic activism frameworks. Further, through the use and analysis of the YLDI youth survey, leaders were able to get feedback from their youth on the relative power and effectiveness of their programming strategies. Consequently, these organizations were motivated to engage in some important staff-wide critical reflection about their work.

**Lesson #5: Documentation is critical for minimizing institutional memory loss and promoting best practices.**

Much of what was discussed, exchanged, and developed prior to and during the initiative was documented by the YLDI learning partners. They took pains to record their innovative workshops, trainings, and best practices, so that when leaders and key staff leave the organization, not all valuable knowledge is lost. In addition, as these organizations grow and expand, these manuals, guides, and curricula can play an important role in orientating new staff to the program philosophy and concrete strategies to engage youth.

**Lesson #6: Stipends and/or hourly pay for youth in leadership positions may help with recruitment and retention of youth into leadership positions.**

Many of the YLDI organizations paid youth a stipend or hourly wage for their time. Although the wage was often quite small, they represented conscious investment of scarce organizational resources and was important for several reasons. First, it helped legitimize the role of young people within the organization, and also helped create a formal mechanism through which the organization could hold youth accountable. Second, it formally recognized young people’s time as valuable. Third, the visibility of youth in staff or internship positions helped inspire other youth to become more active within the organization. Finally, as discussed earlier in this chapter, youth stipends or
hourly pay may have contributed to the ability of YLDI organizations to attract and retain an “older” youth population.

**Civic Activism Practices**

Finally, we thought it might be useful to briefly highlight some core practices or approaches that characterize civic activism, before moving on to frame recommendations for funders. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather captures many of the practices we felt were most innovative.

**Practice #1: Popular education and the identification of personal and civic challenges.**

One of the assumptions of civic activism is that young people are experts in their own lives (not “empty vessels”), and that the starting place for all new learning is their day-to-day experiences. Many YLDI organizations philosophically draw from a tradition of popular education, where every learning process begins with eliciting young peoples’ experiences and knowledge. Popular education sessions often sought to make connections between youths’ day-to-day lives and larger social issues, centering on issues such as racism, policing, school quality, environmental justice, and immigrants’ rights.

**Practice #2: Hands-on immersion and exposure to history.**

One of the most innovative and powerful strategies that characterized the work of YLDI organizations, was their use of intensive “immersion” workshops to engage youth in history. Through “visualization” and “role-play” workshops and exercises, young people were exposed to what it was like to be in another time or place, and this helped them come to a visceral understanding of history and/or social issues and roles. For instance, Leadership Excellence engages youth in a guided visualization they call the “Middle Passage Experience,” where participants are taken from life in Africa, to slavery in early U.S. history, to contemporary times. The purpose of such workshops is to break down defense mechanisms so that young people can take a hard look at the legacy of history on their families and communities, as well as their own behavior and attitudes. These types of workshops depend upon a high level of emotional and physical safety within the group, but when done well they help open up avenues of discussion that more didactic approaches would not. Other projects built travel into their work though bus tours to historical civil rights sites, trips to Africa, or participation in distant rallies or youth events.
Practice #3: Exploring oppression through “political” and “critical” education.

One of the most universal strategies used by civic activism groups was political and/or critical education. This approach enabled youth to learn about social movements (e.g. the civil rights movement), political processes (the electoral process) and current events (e.g. racial profiling and the effects of 9/11 on immigrant communities). Through political and critical education, civic activism groups hoped to support critical thinking skills and develop values and attitudes that would help youth deal with and take action against injustice. On one level youth were seen as experts on these issues, and they were encouraged to share their experiences, as well as compose and defend their own opinions. On another level, youth were pressed by program leaders to think about these issues abstractly, on a scale beyond their individual experience, including a consideration of the international or global characteristics of power and oppression.

Practice #4: Popular youth culture as a medium for political analysis, expression and identity.

YLDI organizations used art forms like Rap, Hip Hop, and poetry as mediums for discussion, critique, expression, and to help create a shared sense of identity. These mediums were useful because they have meaning to young people, they capture and reflect the day-to-day workings of individual lives, and they often highlight the dynamics of social class and race in the U.S. The creative use of music and art as a medium for resistance was particularly powerful. For instance, youth within Leadership Excellence put on a guerrilla hip hop concert, renting a flatbed truck, equipping it with speakers and sound equipment, and driving through their community performing freestyle rap to educate residents on an upcoming state proposition. Youth at Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, put on guerilla theatre performances to raise awareness of key campaign issues.

Practice #5: Direct Community Engagement

Finally, civic activist organizations engaged youth in education, advocacy, and community action. Youth presented at conferences, spoke in front of city councils, and contacted community leaders. Young people often spoke about such opportunities as chances to come into their “power,” and exercise a sense of voice. These efforts did not only build young peoples knowledge, they contributed to real community change. Community “wins” created a sense of efficacy and hope, illustrating that civic and community work can be transforming both youth and for their communities.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS

As a comprehensive evaluation of a large capacity building initiative, our findings on YLDI collaborative and organizational learning outcomes can greatly inform funders about the needs of civic activism organizations and the effectiveness of key capacity building strategies. We present our overarching recommendations below.

Recommendation #1: Stabilize funding streams for civic activism work, including youth organizing and identity support strategies.

As illustrated throughout this report, civic activism has surfaced as an innovative strategy for reaching older and at risk youth populations who are often not reached effectively by other youth development approaches. Moreover, civic activism holds the prospect of youth-led community change. The infrastructure of support for civic activism groups, however, remains weak. At the sunset of the Ford Foundation grant, many YLDI organizations still lacked a coherent and stable funding base. Their fundraising efforts, both for foundation and government grants, were complicated by the ongoing perception that civic activism is “radical” or “contentious.” Thus, there is definite need for funders to dispel myths about civic activism to their boards and communities and to make investments that will help stabilize and legitimize civic activism within the fields of youth development and community organizing. Beyond issuing direct grants to civic activism organizations to support staff retention and direct programming, we recommend that funders take note of the capacity building needs of civic activism groups.

Recommendation #2: Build capacity through the use of intermediaries and local technical assistance providers.

The use of the Innovation Center as an intermediary was an important design element of YLDI. The Innovation Center wore many hats throughout the initiative including that of grant manager, TA provider, information broker, facilitator, and advocate. For a large national initiative of relatively small organizations, with high expectations for networking and mutual learning, the use of an intermediary was pivotal to sustaining the relationships and cohesiveness of the group. As an intermediary, the Innovation Center used some of the best thinking in collaboration design. The Innovation Center was able to provide organizations with a national (and even international) perspective, helping to link them to physically distant organizations and resources, while also having the ability to broker relationships with local TA providers who could offer more hands-on and individualized TA to the groups. These types of relationships and networks, between foundations, intermediaries, and local providers, have great potential.
to facilitate information sharing and to provide a support infrastructure for community-based groups. Such networks are, however, still under-developed. There is a role for funders to play in the extension of training and information infrastructures, similar to that which YLDI created on a small-scale, that could connect leaders of community-based organizations to accessible and affordable professional training and organizational development support.

**Recommendation #3: Enhance networking and field enhancement by sponsoring collaborative learning communities.**

The learning group structure of the YLDI initiative proved highly successful at bridging differences between groups, minimizing competition, and facilitating the genuine exchange of expertise, information, and experiences. The success of the learning groups can be attributed to the following design elements. First, the structure of the learning group meetings reflected a collaborative paradigm of organizational learning, emphasizing that all participants are teachers and learners. This approach was clear from the onset, as potential grantees were included in the design meetings for the initiative. Second, the Innovation Center and the Ford Foundation emphasized the need for executive directors and one other high level staff to attend each meeting. This contributed to the overall capacity of the group and, thus, the potential for learning, but also encouraged the transfer of knowledge back to the organization. In addition, it was clear that the learning and professional development of these practitioners was not done when the initiative ended. Many of these organizations were ready for another round of more advanced and continued group learning. Moreover, a logical next step for funders to play is to provide supports for other local, regional, and national youth development networks to be mentored by these YLDI civic activist leaders and experts.

**Recommendation #4: Build in project deliverables that help advance organizational goals rather than just report project outcomes.**

Another effective design element of YLDI, was the requirement that programs commit to program “deliverables.” Deliverables were negotiated with the Innovation Center and the Ford Foundation at the onset of the grant and included training and curriculum manuals, handbooks, and documentation reports. Deliverables were effective in a number of ways. First, they helped contribute to the exchange of information and expertise across groups. Second, they had the potential to help advance the organizational capacity building goals of the organization. Several of the organizations used the deliverables as an opportunity to create well developed tools for their own use,
while others were not so ambitious. Finally, deliverables served as a key touchstone in the Innovation Center’s efforts to monitor grantees’ progress over the course of the grant.

**Recommendation #5: Support further research on civic activism.**

As is framed in the following section, “Implications for Future Research,” ongoing research is needed in order to test YLDI findings, expand and improve emerging measures of civic activism, and explore intriguing questions about the applicability and efficacy of civic activism in different settings.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Throughout this case study of civic activism we have linked rich details of program practices to specific developmental youth outcomes in order to better theorize the mechanisms through which YLDI organizations and programs support youth development. Likewise, we have examined the challenges and development cycles of YLDI organizations so that we could better understand the influence of specific initiative design elements, as well as the efficacy of networking and technical assistance activities. Like all case study research, we cannot generalize our findings to all civic activism groups or to all learning initiatives. Our goal is, rather, to theorize why certain elements appear to work better in some contexts than others. Our work has generated many interesting questions that we hope fellow researchers will consider.

**Testing YLDI Findings**

The following studies are essential for testing the generalizability of the findings and models we have developed throughout this report.

- **Impact Study of Civic Activism Outcomes.** The only way to capture program impact, hence drawing a causal relationship between program strategies and youth outcomes, is to conduct a comprehensive impact study using an experimental or quasi-experimental design. An experimental or quasi-experimental study of civic activism, however, would face numerous challenges, the most prominent of which would be addressing self-selection bias, identification of a comparison or non-intervention group, small sample sizes, and recruiting of grassroots civic activism organizations.

- **Cost-benefit Analysis of Civic Activism Strategies.** The intensity of service youth receive within civic activism groups is often quite high compared to that of other youth development interventions. As a result, the expense per youth served may be relatively high. Important factors to factor into such an analysis would be (1) the significance of community
change victories, and (2) a way to assess the intensity of contact youth have with the organization (separating out, for instance, outcomes of core youth from those of the broader membership).

- **Longitudinal Tracking of Civic Activism Youth Participants.**
  Longitudinal tracking is important because it would help make the link between the types of developmental outcomes youth express in the program and early adult outcomes. What are the long-term consequences of participation in civic activism groups? In particular, are participants still civically engaged five or ten years after participation? If so, what types of activities do they participate in? It also addresses the question of soundness of upfront investment: does targeting funding, albeit at perhaps a higher level per participant, lead to reduced public investment later (e.g., incarceration, welfare, etc.)? Are youth making different life choices after their participation in civic activism?

**Expand and Improve Measures for Civic Activism**

Our study also raises some intriguing areas of study that are both methodological and content based, and that would inform the criteria through which civic activism programs are evaluated.

- **Defining Community Outcomes.** Our findings on youth organizing groups point to the pressing need for measures and indicators to assess community change outcomes. Such measures should be able to capture incremental community shifts, or intermediate community outcomes like those we describe in our findings. They should also include, however, a strategy for weighing intervening or complicating factors that cannot be easily controlled for by a community based organizations (shifts in political leadership, catalytic events that shift public opinion, and so on). One key question to consider is: *Is it reasonable to hold organizations accountable to community outcomes?*

- **Defining Group-Level Leadership Outcomes.** As talked about in Chapter IV, YLDI organizations often emphasized group-level leadership outcomes over individual-level leadership outcomes. Group-level outcomes—such as increased power sharing between youth and adults, effective listening skills, adherence to democratic group decision-making processes, and group identification—were important aspects of the work YLDI organizations do with young people. An exploratory research study that defined and tested indicators and measures for capturing group-level leadership would be invaluable for research on civic activism and for organizational self-assessments.

**Questions for the Field**

Finally, our study generated a number of research questions that we feel merit further exploration.
• What does identity-support look like within more diverse, and less homogenous, settings? Are the outcomes and strategies the same or different? To what degree are issues of safety and relationship building tied to a race, culture, or identity- specific approach, like that taken by YLDI groups?

• Many identity-focused YLDI groups focused on preparing youth for civic action, rather than on civic action itself. What are the long-term effects of this type of preparation? In early adulthood, are youth exposed to such preparation in identity-support groups more civically active than youth who are not? Is there a developmental trajectory youth take before they are “ready” to take action in their communities?

• How does the paid leadership and skills training youth receive within civic activism groups compare to more traditional types of vocational training? How are the youth similar? How are they different? To what degree is pay a motivator for youth organizers? To what degree do they think of their work as a job? Further, how do they use that experience when they leave? (i.e. do they put it on their resume? Applications for schools? References? Etc)

• How do the nature of developmental supports and opportunities and civic activism methods vary by cultural context? YLDI groups were selected for their diversity, so we were cautious to make any generalizations of best practices based upon one or two representative cultural groups. Key questions for further exploration in this area include: How can program practices be made culturally appropriate to various populations? Also, given the crucial links many cultural groups have across generations, what are effective methods of intergenerational civic activism?

In conclusion, over the course of this evaluation we have learned a great deal about civic activism and its potential to transform individuals and communities. Despite the monumental accomplishments of the members of the YLDI, the “field” of civic activism—which overlaps greatly with youth development and civic engagement, but is unique onto itself—is just emerging. In many ways, we see this initiative as a turning point in the youth development field. The pendulum has swung back a bit from a romanticized notion of programs for “all” youth, to a renewed recognition of the challenging contexts that confront many youth of different racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and immigrant backgrounds. At the same time, civic activist organizations have raised and continue to raise the bar for what youth can do. Their youth are seriously engaged in critical reflection about themselves and their society, uniting with their peers in positive collective action, and engaging community leaders to see uncommon and innovative alternatives to chronic problems in our society. It essentially
comes down to a matter of will and commitment. Adult leaders of today can choose to let the number of disenfranchised youth increase daily or be open to creating, learning, replicating, and supporting models and programs of youth empowerment so that youth determine for themselves how to solve problems and make our society a better and more just place to live.
REFERENCES


Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development website. (www.theinnovationcenter.org)


Zweig, Janine M. 2003. *Vulnerable Youth: Identifying their Need for Alternative Educational Settings.* The Urban Institute, with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.
## APPENDIX A. REFERENCE INFORMATION ON GRANTEES

### CHART A-1. ORGANIZATION LOCATION AND MISSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th>Mission/Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>21st Century</strong></td>
<td>To inspire, assist, organize and develop young people of all ages, in and out of school, to be skilled community focused leaders, resiliently and creatively empowering themselves and their communities to affect positive change now and in the 21st Century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selma, AL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA)</strong></td>
<td>To foster the empowerment of low-income Asian immigrant women as a means for their active participation in the decision-making process that improves their working and living conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C-Beyond</strong></td>
<td>To contribute to ending racism and discrimination of all forms by providing leadership development and organizing community action campaigns with high school aged youth in low-income, predominately which communities of California.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY)</strong></td>
<td>Aim to establish and maintain a forum for free dialogue and for positive change in our communities. Our initiatives are diverse and include avenues to abolish stereotypes, to educated ourselves and others about Asian Pacific Americans, to celebrate our heritage, and to improve race relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Excellence (LE)</strong></td>
<td>To address urban social problems through grassroots community organizing and by providing leadership skills to low income African American children and youth ages 5-18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mi Casa</strong></td>
<td>To advance self-sufficiency for primarily low-income Latinas and youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC)</strong></td>
<td>A social justice organization that advocates for and with young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outright</strong></td>
<td>To create safe, positive, and affirming environments for young gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning young people ages 22 and under. Outright aspires to a youth-driven philosophy in which youth needs and beliefs form decisions, and collaboration of youth and adults provides support, education, advocacy, and social activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland, ME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tohono O’odham Community Action (TOCA)</strong></td>
<td>Strives to bring about fundamental changes in the structures of economic development, food systems, cultural preservation, and youth development within the Tohono O’odham community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sells, AZ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ)</strong></td>
<td>Faith-based youth organization working toward peace and justice in the Bronx through youth development and community organizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bronx, NY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth United for Community Action</strong></td>
<td>YUCA creates opportunities for youth of color to engage in grassroots community organizing within the environmental justice movement. Led and run by people of color, YUCA seeks to provide a vehicle for youth to empower themselves and develop productive life skills through community organizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Palo Alto, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Women’s Project</strong></td>
<td>YWP recognizes teen women and girls as valuable community resources, supports them where their environments fail, invests in them through training and peer support, and engages their skills and talents to solve community problems and challenge institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
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### Chart A-2. YLDI Organizations’ Individual Program Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Total Number of Participants Served</th>
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<td>21st Century</td>
<td>Committed Leaders</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Pre-teen through College, 11-23</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Winter Camp</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer Camp</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Camp</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Techno Houses</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AWIA</td>
<td>Summer Internship</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Year Internship</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Core Leaders Program</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian Youth United Program</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Meetings</td>
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<td>CAPAY</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Youth Learn</td>
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<td>16 and older</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian American Studies Workshops</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Meetings</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symposium</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C-Beyond</td>
<td>Voice of Youth</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>High School youth, 14-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekend Training</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Summer Internship</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Member Meetings</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Leadership Excellence</td>
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*Data in this table is self-reported from the organizations.
### CHART A-3. ORGANIZATION AGE, BUDGET, STAFF SIZE, AND GRANT RANGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Age of Organization (2002)</th>
<th>Annual Budget (99-00)</th>
<th>Staff Size at Wave II</th>
<th>Grant Range (annual)</th>
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<td>Under $560K</td>
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<td>CAPAY</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Under $130K</td>
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<td>$50K</td>
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<td>Dorchester, MA</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-Beyond</td>
<td>5 years</td>
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APPENDIX B
SUMMARY OF YLDI EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

KEY ACTIVITIES

Over the course of the two and a half year YLDI evaluation, SPR partnered with the Innovation Center and YLDI grantees, to complete all of the major tasks outlined in our original evaluation proposal. Specifically, we completed the following: (1) finalized the design of the evaluation with input from the Innovation Center, the Advisory Board, and YLDI staff; (2) completed two rounds of data collection with all 12 YLDI sites; (3) designed and analyzed two rounds of youth surveys; (4) provided technical assistance on assessments to YLDI projects (work that was extended through PERC); (5) designed a youth internship program for the evaluation, (6) attended YLDI learning group and youth conference, (7) engaged in rigorous cross-site data analysis, and (8) engaged in extensive dissemination activities, through presentations, papers, and newsletters. Below we provide details about each of these activities.

Evaluation Design Activities

- **Convened start-up meeting with Advisory Board and Innovation Center.** In partnership with IC, SPR launched the evaluation by convening a start-up meeting in July 2001 in Chevy Chase, MD with members of the Advisory Board, made up of experts in the field of youth development and civic activism, including Carmen Sirianni, Michelle Gambone, Barbara Sugland, Prue Brown, and Francisco Villarruel. Among the Advisory Board members, we have kept in close communication with Carmen Sirianni and Michelle Gambone.

- **Interviewed other grantees funded by Ford.** To inform our evaluation design to that of the YLDI cohort, we interviewed Ford grantees who do similar work. This group included key researchers in the field of youth development and education, e.g. Karen Pittman, Margaret Beale-Spencer, the Jewish Fund for Justice, and Pacific News Service, a youth program in San Francisco.

- **Designed field protocols for 2 sets of site visits.** To guide our 2-3 day site visits, we prepared field protocols for discussions with YLDI staff and youth participants. On-site discussions covered topics such as organizational theories of change, capacity-building needs, including staff development, and organizational practices to support positive youth development and civic action, including youth participation, community involvement, and identity development.
- **Conducted ongoing review of youth action/civic activism literature.** We have engaged in an ongoing literature review, particularly around civic action, civic identity, youth organizing, and social movements to deepen our understanding of these aspects of YLDI’s work.

- **Created a form on participant characteristics and risk factors.** This form was created prior to round two of data collection.

**Qualitative Data Collection**

- **Conducted two rounds of site visits.** From August to November in both 2001 and 2002, we made 2-3 day site visits to 11 out 12 YLDI sites. During the site visits we spoke with programming staff, interviewed and "shadowed" youth participants and observed program activities. With regards to NYAC, the 12th site, per the request of IC, we held several phone meetings and interviews with the project director and then program evaluator to glean lessons learned from their work. Further, we acquired transcripts from a set of project director site visits to NYAC’s demonstration sites and integrated quotes from these visits into our write-up.

- **Prepared and revised in-depth site visit summaries.** Following each the site visit, site visitors synthesized information into a comprehensive analytical site summary. The summaries included descriptive and exploratory accounts of each projects’ youth leadership objectives and youth development and civic activism work. One sample write-up was provided to IC and the advisory board to illustrate the kind of information we collected on site.

- **Observed IC Site Visits.** To understand IC’s role in the initiative, including its role in providing technical assistance to YLDI sites, SPR accompanied IC on four site visits (TOCA, 21st Century, Leadership Excellence, and C-Beyond) to observe their work and interaction with the sites.

- **Reviewed initiative level data from IC.** To enhance our understanding of the initiative during its first year (prior to the evaluation), we reviewed IC documentation material. The information that we reviewed, including site visit notes, requests for technical assistance and site exchanges, grant proposals, final reports, and grantee products provided us with important information which we included in our analytical site summaries and data analysis.

- **Attended and documented YLDI youth conference.** In addition to attending the conference, SPR trained two youth “evaluators” to conduct and videotape interviews with fellow young people while at the conference. Through this process we were able to further capture youth voice and perspectives.
Designed, Administered, and Analyzed Round 1 Youth Surveys

- **Designed youth survey.** SPR worked closely with Michelle Gambone to modify the existing YDPOP survey to include a civic activism measure for YLDI grantees. In addition, SPR adapted measures of identity and coping from the work of scholars such as Jean Phinney and James Connell.

- **Customized youth survey for each site.** SPR site visitors worked closely with each site to add (and modify) questions to fit the activities, program design, and desired outcomes of each site.

- **Analysis of survey data.** As of April 15, 2002, SPR received completed surveys from 10 of the 12 YLDI agencies. We have analyzed and developed customized reports for each of these agencies using a special approach to analyzing patterns of responses that characterize youths’ experiences within the projects as "optimal" or "insufficient" along youth development and civic activism dimensions. We used qualitative data to aggregate organizational data in order to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of various strategies.

Technical Assistance to Grantees on Self-Assessment

- **Assisted sites in developing assessment and documentation procedures.** A number of organizations in YLDI requested technical assistance in assessing the quality of their work and documenting their outcomes to share with funders and other constituents. Some examples of the kind of TA requested include:
  
  - **Customize youth survey for sites.** A few sites (AIWA, CAPAY, Outright, C-Beyond, TOCA) requested that the youth survey be customized so they could use the information for their own reporting and planning purposes. At TOCA, for example, we helped the staff develop a related questionnaire that would serve as a youth needs assessment/recruitment tool.
  
  - **Review of existing evaluation tools.** Several of the sites requested our help in reviewing the effectiveness of their existing evaluation tools. For instance, Outright requested our help in reframing their "big and much needed Outright survey" and in designing and analyzing a separate survey on HIV knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.
  
  - **Support with documentation procedures.** Some sites needed support in designing procedures to document the effectiveness of their work. YMPJ requested help with data collection methods for their documentation deliverable to IC and to document their organizational history.
  
  - **Conduct training on the benefits of evaluation for program planning and designing good survey questions.** We led a two-
hour interactive presentation, attended by all C-Beyond youth and adult staff, in which C-Beyond identified research questions at the community, organizational, and youth level and received a general training on designing good survey questions.

- **Assist sites in developing a logic model to articulate their work with staff and external entities.** We worked with YWP to help them streamline their assessment tools and to make sure their tools map back to their logic model.

- **Review grant proposal section on using assessment results.** SPR assisted CAPAY by reviewing and providing targeted suggestions for the self-evaluation design and analysis components of their grant proposals.

- **Assist sites in using our data collection protocols.** Some sites expressed interest in learning how to collect information about their work using our field protocols. NYAC for example, was trained on using SPR's YLDI site visit materials, including the youth survey and field protocols. The director then used protocols as he visited different sites that NYAC supports.

- **Provide sites with targeted feedback on their programs.** SPR provided Outright with a memo, detailing challenges and lessons learned related to their organizational restructuring efforts.

- **Continued TA support with PERC funds.** We continued working with 6 of the YLDI throughout 2002-2003, convening an evaluation learning group meeting in May, 2003.

- **Provided one-on-one overview of survey and site visit results to individual sites.** We met individually with sites to review their evaluation results and to give them an opportunity to respond to them.

### Youth Internship

- **Recruited and hired youth intern.** An important goal of the evaluation is to infuse youth voices into the design and data collection efforts. As such, we hired Randa Powell, an 18-year old, 4-year youth participant from Leadership Excellence, as the SPR intern for one year. Randa contributed to the project in the following ways:

  - **Review and pilot tested survey questions.** Randa took the YLDI survey and provided comments on the language, accessibility, length, and sequence of survey questions.

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1 Planning and Evaluation Resource Center (PERC) is a project supported by the Innovation Center of Youth Development.
− **Site-visit to C-Beyond.** Randa accompanied SPR staff on a half-day visit to C-Beyond. During the visit, Randa observed an interview with the executive director and participated actively in a conversation with C-Beyond staff about its efforts to branch into a neighboring city.

− **Participate in YLDI project meetings.** Randa regularly attends project meetings and summarizes meeting notes and team discussions. During these meetings, Randa participates substantively, representing a youth perspective and also speaking of her personal experiences at Leadership Excellence. Randa often summarizes meeting notes to distribute to project staff.

− **Engaged in career exploration with SPR YLDI team-members.** As a way to better understand her career options, Randa scheduled lunches with YLDI team members to understand the nature of SPR’s work, as well as the educational and professional experiences that led each team member to the company.

− **Participate in disseminating activities.** Randa was a guest speaker at the San Francisco Bay Area Youth Development Funders’ Meeting. At this meeting, she co-presented with a youth member of Californians for Justice, Shawn Ginwright and Hanh Cao Yu. Randa did an excellent job representing the youth perspective on the value of civic activism. In addition, Randa participated in a meeting at the June National Symposium on Youth Involvement in Community Research and Evaluation at the Wingspread Center in Wisconsin. Randa also interviewed youth at the YLDI youth conference.

**Data Analysis**

- **Analyzed qualitative data from data collection efforts.** We sifted through site visit summaries, interviews with other Ford grantees, final project reports to IC, observation data from our paired site visits with IC, and organizational projects. We prepared extensive data matrices, mapped to core survey constructs, to identify key patterns and themes emerging from the data.

- **Conducted analysis of surveys.** In partnership with Michelle Gambone, SPR staff analyzed the survey results of YLDI grantees, developing thresholds of analysis and identifying optimal and insufficient results for different dimensions of youth development and civic activism. SPR further worked to clean the datasets and aggregate results according to approach and organizational model for involving youth in decision-making.

- **Prepared individualized evaluation results for each site.** SPR developed bound packets for each YLDI site that included results from the survey and site visits, including (1) response frequencies for each survey...
question, (2) threshold data for each survey category (relationship building, skill building, identity, etc), and (3) excerpts from site visit summaries that relate to the youth development framework and key survey measures.

**Dissemination**

SPR has sought to disseminate YLDI findings as broadly as possible. In our original evaluation design, we proposed to do two conference presentations, 2 articles, 3 newsletters, a practitioners toolkit, as well as mid-management and final report. One of these products (i.e. toolkit) was expanded in scope and subsumed under the PERC project. We have, however, added several different dissemination venues in its place. Our core activities are detailed below.

**Conferences and Presentations**

- **Presented preliminary evaluation findings at Learning Group Meeting at the Highlander Center in TN (March 2002).** SPR provided an overview of emerging findings to YLDI sites and International Fellows at the final Learning Group meeting. At this meeting, we presented patterns on how the YLDI projects actualized youth leadership, community involvement, community organizing, and the role of identity in their work. We also shared the survey results from the first round of the youth survey, highlighting optimal and insufficient results along the youth development and civic activism dimensions.

- **Organized Panel and presented at the American Educational Researchers Association (AERA) on April 3, 2002: "Experiential Learning through Civic Activism."** SPR convened a panel discussion to explore linkages between the work of YLDI and experiential learning. SPR designed a framework that links the goals of YLDI to theories of experiential learning and developed relevant questions for panelists to address. Panelists included YLDI staff (Shawn Ginwright-Leadership Excellence, David Shuffler-Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, and Sophia Kim-CAPAY); Carmen Sirianni, advisory board member, and Carla Roach also participated.

- **Organized paper symposium and presented paper at Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD) (April 2003).** The title of the symposium was, “Supporting Adolescent Development through Civic Activism.” Presenters included advisory board member, Francisco Villarruel, Margaret Beale Spencer (University of Pennsylvania), and Nat Williams (Hazen Foundation). Richard Lerner (Tufts University) served as the session discussant, and Hanh Cao Yu was the Chair. SPR presented a preliminary synthesis of YLDI youth outcomes entitled, “Filling the gap in youth development: the Intersection of Civic Activism and Identity in Youth Development.”
• Organized and presented panel presentation at Council on Foundations. Dallas, TX. (April 2003). The title of this panel presentation was “Collaborating to Learn: Broadening Youth Development and Strengthening Civic Activism.” The speakers for this panel included Wendy Wheeler (The Innovation Center), Yomara Velez (Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice), Hanh Cao Yu (SPR), and moderator, Denise Shannon.

• Presented preliminary YLDI findings at PERC meeting of YLDI groups (May, 2003). We presented the core findings presented at SRCD to five YLDI leaders and received feedback.

• Presented YLDI findings on youth organizing at Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families Conference (October 2, 2003). This panel included Nat Williams from the Hazen Foundation and representatives from the Funders Collaborative for Youth Organizing.

• Presented YLDI findings at FCYO conference at Asilomar (August, 2003) Findings from the YLDI evaluation were presented at this practitioner retreat to highlight the effectiveness of civic activism strategies in promoting positive youth development outcomes. Retreat participants included staff of various youth organizing groups across the country.

• Scheduled to present at International Civic Education Conference. New Orleans. (November, 2003). SPR presented a paper entitled, “Civic Activism among Marginalized Youth,” in a session on inclusive service and participation.


Papers and Publications


• Prepared article for Insight, the newsletter for Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families (Vol 5(1) Fall 2003). This newsletter article is titled “Sneak Peek on Research: Intersection of Civic Activism and Youth Development.”

- **Prepared article for Journal of Nonprofit Management (to be submitted November 2003).** This article, titled “Collaborating to Meet the Organizational Challenges of Promoting Youth Civic Activism,” focuses on findings presented in Chapter V and VI of this final report.

- **Prepared article for the Journal of Youth Issues (to be submitted November 2003).** This article entitled: “Assessing The Case for Civic Activism: Developmental Outcomes of Youth Organizing and Identity-Support Organizations,” focuses on results presented in Chapters III and IV of this final report.

### Other Dissemination Activities

- **Made connections with funders and other researchers interested in youth development and civic activism.** SPR has met with several funders to discuss our work with YLDI and to share our research study. These connections include:
  
  - **San Francisco Bay Area Youth Development Funders (November 2001).** Headed by Amanda Berger of the Funders’ Collaborative for Youth Organizing and Leticia Alcantar, the purpose of this meeting was to present the research work conducted thus far on the value of civic activism programming on youth development outcomes. This meeting had a high turnout of well over 30 funders, including Robert Sherman of the Surdna Foundation and Craig McGarvey of the Irvine Foundation. We made a number of important connections, including meeting the program officer from the Diana Princess of Wales Fund, as well as the major leaders of the Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

  - **Pew Charitable Trust Civic Engagement and Youth Organizing Meeting, Boston, MA (February 2002).** Organized by Carmen Siriani, this meeting brought together top leaders in the field of civic engagement, community youth development, and youth organizing to discuss the intersection of these related areas. SPR shared information on the YLDI study on an opening panel, moderated by Wendy Wheeler. We made invaluable connections with other participants and brought back a wealth of materials to augment the literature base for the YLDI study.

  - **Meetings with the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FYCO).** SPR met with staff from FYCO about doing a research
study with a large group of their youth organizing grantees. We are currently moving forward in designing a research study that will complement the YLDI evaluation, but focus more substantively on how youth organizing (in its own right) is an important strategy to affect community change. We anticipate this study starting in the Fall of 2003.

− *Meeting with a representative from the Diana Princess of Wales Fund.* We met with Lisa Hoffman from the Princess Diana Fund to discuss their focus on supporting youth organizing work among vulnerable and marginalized populations. Their cohort design is focused on groups that other foundations have not traditionally supported (for instance, GLBTQ and groups with disabilities). As a result of this conversation, we agreed to stay in regular contact to further our understanding of how YLDI is both similar to and different from the work the Fund has been supporting.

− *Meeting with representative from The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (June 2003).* We met with Grant Garrison, Special Assistant to the President of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to inform his strategic planning around funding civic activism.

− *Meeting with Loren Harris, Ford Foundation (Spring 2003).* We met with Loren Harris, Program Officer at the Ford Foundation, to inform his research and program funding around challenging structural racism through youth development.

− *Meeting with other researchers doing research in areas related to the YLDI study.* We met and shared our research findings with Kay Sherwood of Public/Private Ventures, Connie Flanagan, Shawn Ginwright, Nat Williams, and Benjamin Kirshner and Jennifer O’Donoghue, of Stanford’s Gardner Center for Youth Development.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

As we conclude the YLDI evaluation, we are looking ways to expand and deepen this work. For instance, at the completion of this first year of funding we will seek additional funding from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), in order to move forward with longitudinal tracking of YLDI participants. We feel our collaboration with IC and the YLDI grantee leaders has been an especially productive one. This evaluation has been an immensely inspirational and rich experience. SPR is glad to have been an integral part of this initiative.
APPENDIX C

SAMPLE YOUTH SURVEY: YUCA

This survey asks about your experience at YUCA. What do you get out of participating in YUCA’s programs and being a part of YUCA? There are no right or wrong answers. This will help us to improve our programs and also measure the impact of YUCA’s work.

Name: ________________________ (OPTIONAL)

1. Are you male or female? (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER)
   - Male  1
   - Female  2

2. Write in your age. _______ years old

3. Which best describes your ethnicity? (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER)
   - 1 African-American ____________ Please specify
   - 2 Asian-American ____________ Please specify
   - 3 Hispanic ____________ Please specify
   - 4 Native American ____________ Please specify
   - 5 Pacific Islander ____________ Please specify
   - 6 White ____________ Please specify
   - 7 Multi Racial ____________ Please specify
   - 8 Other ____________ Please specify

4. How long have you been coming to YUCA?
   (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE)
   - One month or less ................................................................. 1
   - 2-3 months ............................................................................ 2
   - More than 3 months, but less than 1 year .......................... 3
   - Between 1-2 years ............................................................... 4
   - Between 3-5 years ............................................................... 5
   - 6 or more years ................................................................. 6

5. In the last 4 weeks, I came to YUCA:
   (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE)
   - Not at all ........................................................................ 1
   - 1-2 times in the past 4 weeks ........................................... 2
   - About once a week ....................................................... 3
   - A few times a week ......................................................... 4
   - Everyday or almost every day........................................ 5
6. Over the past 4 weeks, when you came to YUCA, how many hours did you usually stay: (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE)

a. On a typical \textbf{weekday}, I stayed:

Zero hours....................................................................................................1  
Less than 1 hour...........................................................................................2  
1 to just under 2 hours ............................................................................3  
2 to 4 hours ............................................................................4  
More than 4 hours ...................................................................................5  

b. On a typical \textbf{weekend day}, I stayed:

Zero hours....................................................................................................1  
Less than 1 hour...........................................................................................2  
1 to just under 2 hours ............................................................................3  
2 to 4 hours ............................................................................4  
More than 4 hours ...................................................................................5  

7. Which of the following activities have you participated in at YUCA in the last 12 months? (CIRCLE ONE IN EACH COLUMN)

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<td>a. Higher Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. F.I.R.E. Internship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. About how many adult staff at YUCA: (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH STATEMENT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two or Three</th>
<th>More Than Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Pay attention to what’s going on in your life?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Would say something to you if something in your life wasn't going right?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Say something nice to you when you do something good?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Provide help for you in a crisis?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Could you go to if you need advice about personal problems?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Could you talk to if you are upset or mad about something?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Could you go to for help if you had a big problem?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. How often do these things happen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I feel safe when I am at YUCA.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Kids bring weapons to YUCA.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I worry about getting beaten up or hurt at YUCA.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. If someone wanted to hurt me or beat me up here, someone at YUCA would stop them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. People make sure rules about how we treat each other are followed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. How safe do you feel at YUCA, compared to when you are hanging out in your neighborhood? (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER)

- At YUCA I feel a lot less safe compared to hanging out………………………..... 0
- At YUCA I feel a little less safe compared to hanging out…………………………. 1
- At YUCA I feel just as safe as other places compared to hanging out…………………. 2
- At YUCA I feel a little more safe compared to hanging out………………………… 3
- At YUCA I feel a lot more safe compared to hanging out……………………………. 4

11. How much to you agree or disagree with each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I feel respected by staff at YUCA.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I feel respected by other youth here.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. YUCA has rules for how people are supposed to treat each other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. The staff here know a lot about me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. The staff here know what is important to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. I am not comfortable sharing my cultural background and heritage with the people at YUCA.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. There is no one here who pays attention to what's going on in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. The next set of questions are about your experience while at YUCA, how often do you experience the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I get chances to do things with other people my age.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I get chances here to learn about young people who are different from me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Sometimes young people get the chance to be responsible for something or to be in charge. Do you get to do any of these things at YUCA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I get to decide which activities I’m going to do here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. When I am in an activity, I get to choose how I do things.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I get to decide how I spend my free time here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. How often in the past six months at YUCA, have you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once or Twice</th>
<th>Several times</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Helped guide the direction of YUCA’s campaigns by evaluating, analyzing and revising campaign goals and objectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Been in charge of things like meetings, workshops, notetaking, leading tasks as part of a campaign effort (like coordinating outreach).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Helped decide what happens when someone breaks the rules, such as creating an attendance policy and holding people accountable for completing tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Helped plan activities or events like workshops, orientations and trainings for new Higher Learning Core members and staff, parent potlucks and fun nights.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Been the leader of an activity or event.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Helped set rules for the organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Have a say in where YUCA as an organization is heading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. We are interested in your opinion about YUCA. Circle the answer that best describes your experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I feel like I belong here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I feel like my ideas count here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. People listen to me here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. If I didn’t show up at YUCA, people would miss me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I feel like I am a part of YUCA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. There are people my age here who accept me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Think about your experience while at YUCA. How often do you experience the following?

Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development
17. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>At YUCA, I get to learn how to do things I did not think I could do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Staff here challenge me to do my best.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>At YUCA I am getting better at doing things I care about.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. While at YUCA, how often do you experience the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>I get to help out in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I get to go places that I don’t usually go.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>I’ve learned about ways I can make things better in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about activities at YUCA? (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>I’ve learned a lot more about things for young people to do in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I know more about what is going on in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>I know more about how to get things I need in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>I know more about problems that need to be fixed in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>At YUCA, I learn how to identify when something unfair is happening in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>At YUCA, I work on projects that make things better in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>I'm involved in activities that people in the community think is important.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YLDI Report. Appendix C

20. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your participation in YUCA activities in your community? (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I’ve developed close connections with people who care about the same issues as I do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I’ve become an active participant in community events.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I have participated in a political event such as a meeting, rally or demonstration.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I have used the skills that I've learned at YUCA to organize (events, projects, demonstrations, etc.) in other places.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I have expressed my opinion on issues to local public officials either individually or with a group.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. I am better prepared to take action against social injustices (or problems in the community) and change things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. I am better equipped with the skills and resources to make my community better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. With others at YUCA, I have figured out solutions to problems in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. I feel that my work with YUCA has had a positive effect on my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. **The following statements define identity broadly as race, culture, gender, class, and sexual orientation**—How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about activities at YUCA? (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER)

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>At YUCA, I have found out more about my own identity, such as my racial/ethnic group, gender, class or sexual orientation.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly people who have the same background.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Because of YUCA, I have a clear sense of my background and what it means for me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my group membership (for instance, being a person of color or being a woman).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>I am happy that I am a member of the social group(s) that I belong to.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>I have a strong sense of connection to others who share my identity because of YUCA.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>YUCA helps me to understand what my group membership (for instance, being a person of color or being a woman) means to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>In order to learn more about my background, I have often talked to other people about my identity(s).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>I have a lot of pride in my identity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>I participate in cultural practices related to my cultural background, such as special food, music, or customs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>I feel a strong attachment towards people who share my background.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td>I feel good about my cultural background.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

**When something bad happens to me in my life, .....**

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>I tell myself I’ll do better next time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I say I didn’t care about it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>I try to see what I did wrong.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>I tell myself it didn’t matter.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>I try to figure out what I did wrong so that it won’t happen again.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>I say it wasn’t important.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. Is there anything else you want us to know about what it's like for you when you are at YUCA (for example: other things you like or things you'd like to change)?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

SURVEY DEVELOPED BY THE COMMUNITY ACTION FOR YOUTH PROJECT (CAYP), A COOPERATIVE PROJECT OF GAMBONE & ASSOCIATES AND THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND REFORM IN EDUCATION IN CONJUNCTION WITH SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES
APPENDIX D.

COMPARISON GRAPHS BY APPROACH

This appendix presents demographic comparison data broken down by primary approach, as discussed in Chapters III and IV (youth organizing, identity-support and broad civic activism). Although the charts we present here provide information on all three approaches, it is the differences between identity-support and youth organizing groups that are most significant given our comparisons of outcomes in Chapter IV.

GRAPH D-1. GENDER BY APPROACH

Young women constitute at least half of the youth participant population in all of the YLDI organizations. Organizations with an youth organizing or broad civic activism approaches attracted more young women than young men. In all of categories (identity-support, youth organizing, and broad civic activism), there are organizations that target their programs specifically or predominately at young women (AIWA, YWP, and Mi Casa).
Age varies considerably by the approach of the organization. The broad civic activism organization serves a much larger range of youth, while youth organizing and identity groups serve predominately high school aged youth. This is not surprising given their different programming and strategies to attract and retain youth members – the nature of youth organizing and identity support being less service orientated, and more action oriented, suggests they target slightly older youth populations.

As discussed briefly in Chapter II, many of the YLDI organizations differentiate between the core youth that receive the most intensive programming, and the broader youth membership who are in contact with the organization.
The race and ethnicity of the youth participants, vary significantly by approach. The identity groups are dominated by two organizations, LE and 21st Century, that target African-American youth. Missing from this graph is TOCA, the Native American group, for whom we do not have demographic survey data.

Youth organizing groups tend to be multi-racial, with the exception of AIWA, which targets Asian American young women. The remaining youth organizing groups were intentional about serving a diverse population of youth.

The broad civic activism organization (Mi Casa) serves primarily Latino and Latina youth, though their doors are open to youth of all races and ethnicities. By nature of being such a large and service-oriented organization, Mi Casa attracts a rather diverse array of participants.
Over half of the youth at youth organizing groups remain involved with the organization between 1 and 5 years. The percentages for the identity-support groups are largely impacted by LE, who administered their survey to the participants in their one-week summer leadership camp. These youth tend to become involved in other LE programs throughout the year. Over fifty percent of youth at the broad civic activism organization remain involved in the organization for 2-3 months to one year.

**Graph D-8. Number of Hours Spent in Organization on a Weekday by Approach**

Almost half of youth involved in youth organizing groups spend more than four hours at the organization on a weekday, largely due to the fact that many youth organizing groups provide stipends or wages for their core youth participants. Two thirds of youth participating in identity-support groups spend two to four hours at the organization on a weekday.
The broad civic activism organization supports many more full and part-time staff members, on average, than the identity-support and youth organizing groups. Both identity-support groups and youth organizing groups have relatively small staffs, however identity-support groups extensive use of volunteers accounts for the larger number of youth that these organizations serve.

Correlating with the graph above, the broad civic activism organization has a considerably larger annual budget than the youth organizing and identity-support groups, in order to support their large staff and provide the multi-faceted services to a broad spectrum of people. On average, the identity-support groups have slightly larger budgets than the youth organizing groups, again correlating with the larger number of youth served.
APPENDIX E
COMPARISON GRAPHS BY DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

This appendix presents demographic comparison data broken down by decision making structure, as discussed in Chapters III and IV. The structures move from the most inclusive of youth (youth-led and youth-led projects) to those where youth share decision making power or have some input into organizational decisions (intergenerational, and adult led, youth input).

GRAPH E-1. GENDER BY DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

Gender of the YLDI organizations’ youth participants varies across the dimensions of decision-making structure. Youth-led organizations have a larger percentage of young women (65%), while youth-led projects have a slightly higher percentage of young men (52%). Both the intergenerational and adult led, youth input organizations had a majority of young women.

GRAPH E-2. AGE BY DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

Not surprisingly, the age range of YLDI program participants varies widely by decision-making structure. Youth-led structures and youth-led projects serve almost exclusively high school aged youth, due to the numerous responsibilities youth take on within the organizations. Adult led and intergenerational structures accommodate younger and older youth.
Graphs E-3 through E-6. Race and Ethnicity by Decision Making Structure

When considering race and ethnicity by decision making structure, the YLDI organizations retain their diverse composition.

**Graph E-3. Race and Ethnicity of Youth Led Organizations**

- African-American, 15%
- Hispanic, 12%
- Pacific Islander, 8%
- White, 14%
- Multi Racial, 4%
- Other, 2%

Youth-led organizations are largely Asian-American, due to the impact of CAPAY.

**Graph E-4. Race and Ethnicity of Intergenerational Organizations**

- African-American, 46%
- White, 25%
- Multi Racial, 5%
- Other, 2%

Intergenerational organizations have the largest percentage of white youth, particularly because of Outright.

**Graph E-5. Race and Ethnicity of Youth Led Projects**

- Hispanic, 42%
- African-American, 42%
- Native American, 5%

Youth-led projects are evenly split between Hispanic and African-American youth.

**Graph E-6. Race and Ethnicity of Adult Led, Youth Input Organizations**

- African-American, 55%
- Hispanic, 29%
- Native American, 3%

Adult led organizations have the largest percentage of African-American youth, influenced largely by LE.
Across the dimensions of decision making structure, the length of time youth are involved in the organization differs. While one third of youth in adult led organizations only participate for one month or less, almost half of youth participating in youth-led projects are involved for between one and two years. Almost half of youth in youth-led organizations and over half of those in intergenerational organizations are involved in the organization between one and five years.

**Graph E-8. Number of Hours Spent in Organization on a Weekday by Decision-Making Structure**

While two thirds of youth in youth-led organizations and over half of youth in intergenerational organizations spend between two to four hours at the organization on weekdays, 84% of youth in youth-led projects spend *more* than four hours in the organization on a typical weekday.
**Graph E-9. Average Organizational Staffing Structure by Decision-Making Structure**

Not surprisingly, the youth led organizations and youth-led projects employ more youth staff than do organizations with the other decision making structures. The intergenerational and adult led organizations do utilize more volunteers, however. These volunteers are most likely adults.

**Graph E-10. Average Number of Core and Membership Youth Participants by Decision Making Structure**

Interestingly, the adult led organizations have the largest number of core youth participants and the smallest broad membership. Generally, the difference between core and membership in these organizations is very slight. Youth led organizations have the smallest core youth group, though these youth must work together to make all of the decisions for the organization. Youth led projects and intergenerational organizations have the largest broad memberships largely because the civic activism components are generally only a small part of the entire organization’s programming.
GRAPH E-11. AVERAGE ANNUAL BUDGET SIZE BY DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

Youth led organizations have significantly smaller budgets, on average, than do youth-led projects, intergenerational organizations, and adult led organizations. The organizations supporting youth-led projects have, on average, the largest budgets, because they are supporting numerous other projects as well. Both intergenerational and adult led organizations generally have a broader programmatic scope than do the youth-led organizations. In addition, youth-led organizations employ many youth and teen staff and therefore pay fewer full time staff salaries.