

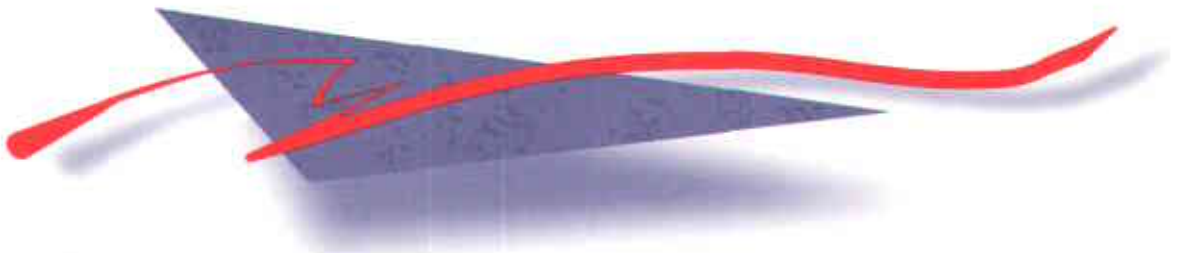


**Young  
People  
Creating  
Community  
Change**



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# **Young People Creating Community Change**



*By Barry Checkoway*

*School of Social Work  
The University of Michigan*

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# Introduction

This workbook is for young people who want to create community change. It is based on the belief that you have a right to participate, a responsibility to serve, and resources to offer the community.

We have tried to provide practical tools for achieving change. Inside, for example, you'll find helpful step-by-step ways to bring people together, set goals and priorities, develop action plans, strengthen diversity, and build support. You can take these steps in sequence from cover to cover, or you can go directly to the ones most relevant to your present situation. If you start this workbook with ideas in mind, and finish with plans in hand, our purpose will be served.

4 Because each person learns in a different way, this workbook features a variety of learning activities, with information on successful programs, individual instructions, and small group exercises, as well as hands-on materials for problem solving and program planning. You can use these activities as an individual, with a small group of people, or with several groups in a training workshop. This workbook is meant to be used.

Young people can create community change. We hope that the following pages will be helpful, but we also know that change does not come from books. It comes from people like you!

# How To Use This Book



This symbol means there is something to think about



This symbol means there is something to distribute



This symbol means there is something to discuss in a group



This symbol means there is something to make copies of before writing

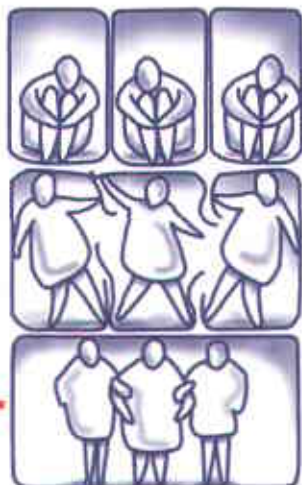
# What Is Community Change?

Community change is when people join together and take action at the community level. It can refer to any of the following:

- Solving a community problem;
- Organizing an action group;
- Planning a local program;
- Involving people in decisions that affect their lives.

Efforts to create change are different from one area to another. But, together, they show that (1) community is a unit of solution, (2) change is possible, and (3) people can participate actively in the process.

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What do you see happening in the picture?  
What are the people doing?  
How does this picture relate to community change?



# Young People Can Create Change!

Young people are solving problems and creating change, with a growing record of accomplishments. Here are some examples:

- Indianapolis youth are assessing needs and planning community improvement;
- Minneapolis youth are reaching out to gangs and challenging the forces of poverty;
- Detroit youth are serving meals in soup kitchens;
- New York youth are rehabilitating housing for homeless families;
- Selma youth are organizing against racial discrimination in the schools;
- Albuquerque youth are protesting against toxic wastes and environmental hazards;
- South Dakota youth are turning school classes into economic development; and
- Los Angeles youth are publishing their own citywide newspaper.

What is the name of a youth program that makes a difference in your community? What kinds of things do they do? What makes it stand out?



# Characteristics of Successful Programs

Research shows that successful community youth programs have some of the following characteristics:

## **Strengthening Community**

Young people are solving problems and planning programs at the community level.

## **Joining Together**

Young people who join together in unity can accomplish more than individuals who act alone.

## **Getting Organized**

Young people plan and organize to get things done.

## **Youth Participation**

Young people actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

## **Developing Leadership**

Young people develop new knowledge and practical skills through their involvement.

## **Believing in Change**

Young people believe that change is possible and that they can make a difference.

## **Multicultural Collaboration**

Young people recognize their differences while increasing their collaboration.

## **Adults as Allies**

Young people work with adults who help them to create real change.

# Obstacles to Change

There are obstacles to increasing the involvement of youth in the community. You should expect them as a normal part of the process, and work to overcome them. These are some of the obstacles:

- Adults view youth as “problems” rather than as “resources.”
- Adults plan programs without involving youth in the process.
- Adults do not share their power with young people.
- Young people do not view themselves as a group that can create change.
- Young people may have good ideas, but are unsure how to implement them.
- Young people are not organized enough for real influence.

What are the obstacles to youth participation in your community?  
How can they be overcome?



# Dealing With Change

A major obstacle to young people creating community change can be *adultism* – the notion that adults are better than young people, and that they can control them without their agreement. The result is that adults may resist or oppose youth initiatives; and young people may question themselves, doubt their own abilities, and withdraw from participation.

You should (1) understand that adultism is an obstacle that pervades society, (2) recognize it when it arises, (3) challenge adults to deal with themselves, and (4) know that despite obstacles, young people can create change!

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## Adults as Allies

Despite adultism, some adults work closely with young people and become powerful allies in creating community change.

Adults as allies recognize youth as valuable resources with a right to participate and responsibility to serve the community. They help bring people together, provide resources for activities, deal with bureaucracies, and overcome the obstacles. They respect your ideas, give group encouragement, and build mutual support.

Who is an adult in your community that young people accept as their ally? What kinds of things does he or she do? Who are some other potential adult allies, and how could you enlist their support?

# Assessing Your Adults

1. How would you assess the adults who work most closely with your group? (Circle the correct answer)

Respect your ideas	Yes	No
Give group encouragement	Yes	No
Provide resources for activities	Yes	No
Listen carefully to everyone	Yes	No
Promote active participation	Yes	No
Deal with bureaucracies	Yes	No
Overcome the obstacles	Yes	No
Build community support	Yes	No
Encourage critical thinking	Yes	No

2. Check the items which you think need the most improvement.
3. Underline the ones you could start working on today.
4. Compare your answers with others in your group.

## Starting With You!

Community change can start with you. You can take real problems, formulate some solutions, and organize with others to make a difference. You can take action immediately, but may build a stronger foundation by preparing yourself and developing your own theory of change first. Here are some questions to help you prepare:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- What do you think needs changing in the community?
- What are your strengths and limitations?
- What can you do to prepare yourself for creating community change?



# Making Contacts

Community change can start with one person, but lasting change comes from people joining together, in solidarity.

Make contacts with a few other people who share your interests. Start by mentioning your own ideas, then listen carefully to their responses. Get acquainted and build relationships. These contacts are a source of support and a step toward creating change. Supportive people are all around you, if you want to see them in this way.

# Bringing People Together

Bring people together for informal meetings to discuss what needs changing in the community, the root causes of problems, and the steps that would produce solutions.

These meetings are a way to share information, learn from one another, and build mutual support. Each person should take an active part in the discussion. Democratic dialogue is an awakening process that raises consciousness and builds confidence.



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***“Two eyes see better than one.”***

*—Mauritanian proverb*

# Forming a Core Group



A core group is an informal group of individuals who share common concerns and work together over time. They are few in number and trust each other. They care about the community, want to improve it, and provide a source of support. Who is – or could be – a member of your core group?

## Forming a Core Group

Write the names of some people who are – or could be – members of your core group:

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## Convening the Group

Write the time, date, and place for a meeting of your core group:

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_



# Assessing Community Strengths and Needs

What are the strengths and needs of your community? You may already have answers to this question, but what if the information is incomplete or people have different perspectives?

You can gather your own information! Young people often get information from adults who tell them what they need without involving them in the process. By assessing the needs of young people in this way, adults often emphasize their deficits rather than their strengths, and youth accept these negative definitions of themselves. However, when young people assess themselves, they can raise their consciousness and provide a basis for change.

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## Assessing Your Community

Bring people together to discuss the following questions:

1. How would you describe your community?
2. What are its major strengths?
3. What needs to be changed?



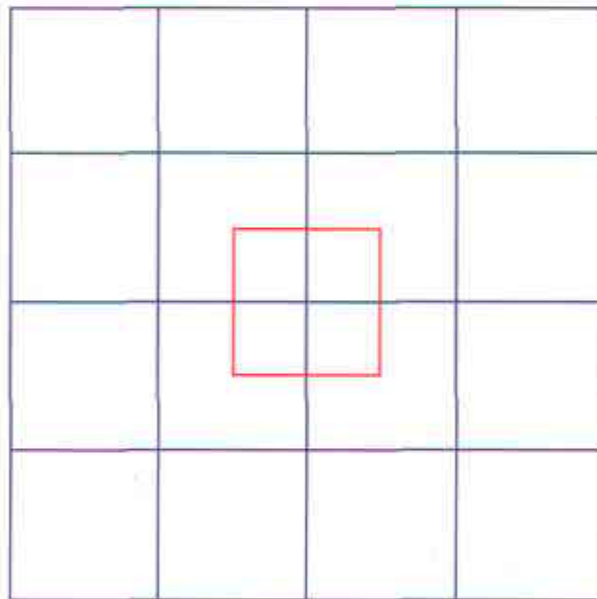


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## Taking Another Look

1. How many squares do you see?  
Write your answer here:
2. Compare your answer with other people.
3. Is there a single correct answer?  
Or do different people see the same thing in different ways?
4. What are the lessons of this puzzle for assessing the community? If people differ in their views of the same community, isn't it time for them to take another look?



From Julian S. Edgerton, *The Worrying Name*  
Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1953, p. 120



# What Do You Want To Accomplish?

What, in the long haul, do you want to accomplish? What are the ultimate ends you seek?

“Goals” are broad statements of purpose, and describe what you want to accomplish over time. They express your values, show what you really care about, and provide direction for the actions you will take.

Young people – more than many other groups – benefit greatly from a discussion of their goals. Often the goals expressed by youth are the ones given to them by their parents, teachers, or adult authorities. These goals may be a form of adult caring, but they do not come from young people themselves. When young people set their own goals, it can awaken their spirit, strengthen their solidarity, and move them into action.

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Here are some examples of goals expressed by young people:

- “We believe that young people should have more power in the community.”
- “The youth coalition wants all young people to live in a safe environment.”
- “Our goal is to rebuild the neighborhood and help people who are homeless.”
- “We are trying to fight discrimination in the schools.”

## Clear Goals are Vital

*“Unity, commitment, and energy all grow strikingly in a group when there is a clear goal that all believe in.”*

*From: Ann Hope and Sally Timmel. Training for Transformation. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, p.102*

## What Do You Want To Accomplish?

In a few words, write your goal:

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**Goals** – are broad statements of purpose.

**Objectives** – are statements of purpose that are specific and achievable in a period of time.

**Tasks** – are particular activities that can be put in order and scheduled on a timetable.

These three concepts – goals, objectives, and tasks – can be conceived as a “family” with relationships among them. Here are some examples:

**Goal:** We believe that young people should participate in the educational decisions of the community.

**Objective:** Three young people should annually serve as full voting members of the school board starting January.

**Tasks:**

Task 1: Make contact with John and Mrs. Smith.

Task 2: Schedule a small group meeting in February.

Task 3: Research the legal issues.

Task 4: Identify who has authority to make change.

Task 5: Speak with key people to get their support.

Task 6: Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper.

Task 7: Go to the school board and present a specific proposal.



## Statements of Purpose

Write your goal, two objectives for the goal, and some tasks for each objective:

Goal:

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Objective:

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Task:

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Task:

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Task:

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Objective:

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Task:

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Task:

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Task:

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# Generating Program Ideas

Goals are broad statements of purpose, but what are some specific program ideas? Now is the time for creative thinking!

Creative thinking is a way to put your heads together and come up with ideas for action. It encourages you to take risks in thinking, without fear of making mistakes, and to open your mind to new ideas, without always knowing where they will lead. In creative thinking, one idea triggers another and another in a haphazard way until there are more than enough from which to choose.

When adults discourage young people from taking risks, or discipline them for making mistakes, they may frustrate their imagination and increase their dependence on adults to do their thinking for them. But young people have a right to think for themselves and would benefit from techniques to generate ideas.

Here are three ways of generating ideas:

- 1** One Person – sits quietly and writes his or her ideas on a piece of paper. This process assumes that each person has valuable information and can benefit from some time to think as an individual without interruption by others.



- 2** Brainstorming – encourages a group of people to generate as many ideas as possible without pausing for elaboration or evaluation that could frustrate the process. The theory is that one idea will flow from another, especially when people put their heads together and defer judgments until later.

### Rules of Brainstorming

1. Clearly state the purpose or problem to be solved.
2. Generate as many ideas as possible, each person giving one at a time or building on the ideas of others. Go for quantity. Anything goes.
3. Save your judgments until a later time. Accept all ideas.
4. Write down every idea.
5. Following brainstorming, categorize or prioritize the ideas as a separate stage of the process.

### Brainstorming List

Write your goal:

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Write your program ideas for this goal:

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- 3** Round Robin – brings people together to take turns and offer one idea at a time without discussion until all the ideas are posted on large pieces of paper. This process is more formal than brainstorming, but usually generates a large number of ideas.



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## Round Robin Rules

1. Assemble your group in a circle.
2. Clearly state the purpose or problem to be solved.
3. Ask each person to list as many ideas as possible, individually and silently, on paper for a few minutes.
4. Go around the group for each person to briefly give one idea at a time from his or her list, without discussion.
5. Post all the ideas on large newsprint paper.
6. After posting all ideas, discuss or clarify them as appropriate.
7. Categorize or prioritize the ideas.

## Round Robin List

Write your goal:

Write your program ideas here:

# Setting Priorities

What are some ways to accomplish your purpose? Faced with a long list of program ideas, how do you set priorities and make decisions among them?

There are many criteria to consider when setting priorities and making decisions. For example, which program ideas will:

- Accomplish your goal?
- Benefit the most people?
- Stand the greatest chances of success?
- Win support from your group?
- Match your available resources?

These are not the only criteria, but they are important ones to consider.

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## Prioritizing Ideas

1. Post your group's list of program ideas on large newsprint paper.
2. Discuss the criteria you will use to set priorities.
3. Ask each person to put three asterisks (\*\*\*) after his or her top choice, two asterisks (\*\*) after the second choice, and a single asterisk (\*) after the third choice, based on the criteria.
4. Count the asterisks after each idea, and discuss the results.
5. Which ideas received the most asterisks?  
Are these your priorities?

# Making Decisions

Young people make many personal decisions on a daily basis, but tend not to make decisions at the community level, where adults often act in their place. But participation in decision making is everyone's right in a democracy.

Here are some ways of making decisions. Check the one that best fits your situation, and discuss your answer with other group members.

- One Person – One person decides for group members without their active participation.
- Handclasp – One person makes a suggestion, another agrees, and the decision is made without more discussion.
- Clique – A few people plan beforehand to get their way, and come to the meeting with their minds made up.
- Majority Vote – People have differences of opinion and go along with the one receiving the largest number of votes.
- Groupthink – People give the appearance of agreement because they want to avoid conflict, but their “silent consensus” masks underlying disagreements.
- Consensus – People come to an agreement after all of the opinions have been heard. It takes time, but builds support.
- Other – (please specify)

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# Developing an Action Plan

How will you accomplish your purpose? What specific steps will you take? Who will do what by when?

Planning is a process of determining what you want to do and how you will do it. It involves making choices about the goals you will seek, the actions you will take, and the resources you have available or need. The planning is continuous and flexible, involving people in every phase of the process.

An action plan is like a list of “steps to take” or “things to do.” In its simplest form, it includes the following:

1. Make a list of specific steps;
2. Put the steps in order;
3. Determine who will be responsible for each step and when; and
4. Start at the top.





## Plan of Action

What To Do?

Who Does It?

When?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

# Managing Time

Who will do what by when? How much time is available to you? How much time will you need?

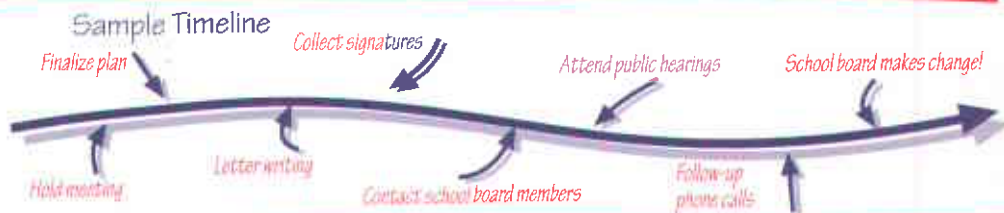
Time is a resource that gives guidance to your plans and establishes the deadlines for completion of specific steps or tasks.

## Who Should Do What By When?

1. Brainstorm the specific steps in your project.
2. Write one each on a small slip of paper.
3. Draw a timeline across a long piece of paper. Mark off weeks or months along the length of the timeline, including the starting and ending dates.
4. Arrange the steps in the appropriate order on the timeline.
5. Confirm the date and person responsible for each step.

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### Sample Timeline



### Your Own Timeline



# Working in Groups

Community change is a group process. Although an individual can take initiative and have an impact, lasting change comes from people working in groups. Groups working together usually can do more than an individual acting alone.

Working in groups also can have drawbacks, especially if inadequate leadership, disruptive members, or trivial pursuits are a problem. Also, groups are not always necessary. Sometimes one person can do the job alone, or a situation may need more immediate action than a group can provide.

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## Guidelines for Groups

1. Ask group members to think about a group that stands out in their minds because it worked well.
2. Ask them to share what worked well and why?, and post their responses on a large newsprint paper.
3. When the posting is done, ask them to review the whole list, make observations, and discuss guidelines for working in groups.

*From: Barbara Israel, University of Michigan*

## Assessing Your Group

1. How would you assess your group's present level in the following areas? (Circle one number for each question.)

	Very Adequate	Somewhat Adequate	Somewhat Inadequate	Very Inadequate
Group leadership	1	2	3	4
Clear goals	1	2	3	4
Careful planning	1	2	3	4
Social diversity	1	2	3	4
Trust among members	1	2	3	4
Sharing information	1	2	3	4
Making decisions	1	2	3	4
Holding meetings	1	2	3	4
Getting organized	1	2	3	4
Listening to others	1	2	3	4
Respecting differences	1	2	3	4
Completing tasks	1	2	3	4
Dealing with conflict	1	2	3	4
Working together	1	2	3	4

2. Add the numbers circled and put the total here:
3. Underline the three items you think need the most improvement.
4. Circle an item you could start working on today.
5. Compare your total with other group members and discuss the results.



# Strengthening Diversity

Most communities are not “monocultural,” with people having the same social and cultural characteristics, but “multicultural,” with significant group differences. It will not be long before one-third of the United States population will be of African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American descent, and diversity will be a fact of life.

“Multicultural community change” is a process in which people recognize their group differences, while also increasing interaction and collaboration among them.

## How Do You Describe Yourself?

Check more than one category if appropriate:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African-American              | <input type="checkbox"/> Latino-American              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Mexican-American/Chicano     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian-American                | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bi/Multiracial                | <input type="checkbox"/> Portuguese-American          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cape Verdian                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Puerto Rican                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese-American              | <input type="checkbox"/> South/Central American       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuban-American                | <input type="checkbox"/> South Eastern Asian-American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino-American             | <input type="checkbox"/> White or Caucasian           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indian-American               | <input type="checkbox"/>                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese-American             | <input type="checkbox"/>                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Korean-American               | <input type="checkbox"/>                              |

How did you feel about making this selection?

How does your response compare with other group members?

How does your group's composition affect your way of creating change?

Are there ways to alter your group's composition, or your way of creating change?

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What are the different social and cultural groups in your community? Do your members and leaders represent this diversity? What are some ways to promote multicultural participation in creating community change?



## What are the Differences?

1. Ask the members of your group to form pairs to take turns listening and speaking.
2. The first speaker will speak for 5-10 minutes without interruption in response to the following: Which social or cultural group do you identify with most at this time? What are some benefits of belonging to this group? What are some disadvantages?
3. Once the speaker is done, the listener will paraphrase what was heard, and ask questions if clarification is needed.
4. The speaker and listener will switch roles and repeat the procedure.
5. Bring everyone together to discuss: What are the differences between you and the other person? Which different groups are represented overall? How do these differences affect your ways of working together? How do the differences affect the process of creating community change?



# Dealing With Conflict

Conflict is a normal part of creating community change. As you try to accomplish your goals, there will be resistance from people who are invested in the status quo. As your community becomes more multicultural, there will be group differences in beliefs and behaviors, which will lead to conflict. If there is no conflict and everyone agrees, there may be something wrong.

Some people deal directly with conflict, either by bringing it out in the open, listening to others, and seeking to accommodate differences. However, other people have difficulty with conflict, either suppressing its existence, avoiding its discussion, or escalating its emotions in ways that weaken the group.

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How do you and your community deal with conflict?  
How could it be handled more effectively?

# Getting Organized

Community change is not a one-time event, but an ongoing process that benefits from organizational structure.

Structure includes regular roles and relationships for working together, methods of problem solving and program planning, styles of leadership, patterns of participation, and other elements.

The key is to recognize that (1) structure strengthens your capacity to accomplish results, and (2) you can select a structure that fits your particular situation.

Which forms of organizational structure will create community change? There is no single answer to this question, although two frequent forms are:

- **Committees** – that involve small groups of people performing particular functions, such as investigating a problem or coordinating a project. They enable people to share responsibilities and work in teams.

- **Meetings** – that bring people together to exchange information, develop ideas, and make decisions. They can turn interest into commitment and mobilize members for action.

What are some others?





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## How Effective Are Your Meetings?

(Circle one answer for each question and discuss your answers with others.)

### Do you...

Plan the meeting?	Yes	No
Follow a printed agenda?	Yes	No
Start on time?	Yes	No
Clarify the purpose?	Yes	No
Agree on process?	Yes	No
Encourage participation?	Yes	No
Promote new ideas?	Yes	No
Stay on the topic?	Yes	No
Make decisions?	Yes	No
Record the results?	Yes	No

Looking at your answers, which ones could you improve?

# Building Support for Your Project

Youth projects do not operate in isolation, but in a field of forces that facilitate or limit their progress. Even excellent ideas are no guarantee of success, if support for implementation is not built.

What are some ways to build support for the implementation of your project?

**Implement**, v., To accomplish; fulfill; complete; carry out.

## Develop a supportive structure

Recognize yourself as a force for change. Form a core group, and network with others.

## Formulate a strategy

Building support is more than hit or miss; it takes an overall strategy. It requires a commitment to thinking ahead, anticipating alternatives, and producing results. Who are your constituents? How can you build their support?

## Assess facilitating and limiting forces

What forces will facilitate your progress, and how can they be strengthened? What forces will limit your progress, and how can they be overcome?

**Strategy**, n., The art and science of mobilizing resources toward goals.

**Constituent**, n., One who cares about an issue and shows support for implementation.

## Identify the influentials

Who are the individuals or groups that can influence implementation? These are not random relationships, but ones that result from a strategy to identify them and build support.

## Establishing Relationships

How can you establish relationships with influentials?  
Who can make personal contact and sensitize them to the issues?



Which person in your community has strong support from others?

What does he or she do to build support?

## Force-Field Analysis

“Force-field analysis” provides a summary of which forces will facilitate or limit your progress toward the goal, and what can be done to address them.

1. Write your goal at the top of a piece of paper, like that on the following page.
2. Under the minus (-) column, list the forces that will limit your progress toward the goal.
3. Under the plus (+) column, list the forces that will facilitate your progress toward the goal.
4. Underline the 2 or 3 limiting and facilitating forces that you think are most important and that you can do something about.
5. For each underlined limiting force, list some specific steps you could take to reduce or eliminate it.
6. For each underlined facilitating force, list some specific steps you could take to increase it.
7. Compile your list of steps, put them in priority order, and use them to plan for implementation.