



NEW ORLEANS YOUTH ALLIANCE

**New Orleans Youth Alliance  
Authentic Youth Engagement Checklist  
(For Programs)**

<b>Strategy</b> (Organizational Practices/Structures)	<b>(Circle One)</b>	<b>Evidence</b> (How do you know?)
Relationships between youth and adults are mutually beneficial	Yes No In Progress	
Organization staff and leadership check in with youth about their well-being regularly.	Yes No In Progress	
Your organization provides wraparound services to youth who are involved in leadership roles in your organization (e.g., transportation, food, childcare, etc.).	Yes No In Progress	
Youth are engaged in visioning/goal-setting activities to identify strategies to facilitate goal attainment through leadership activities in your organization.	Yes No In Progress	
Your organization has structures in place to intentionally help youth develop leadership skills (e.g., leadership programs, trainings, projects).	Yes No In Progress	
Adults in your organization have been trained to minimize *adulthood in your organization.	Yes No In Progress	
Youth in your organization are prepped for meetings involving youth and adults.	Yes No In Progress	
Your organization implements strategies to check for understanding during youth-adult meetings and events to ensure youth's full engagement.	Yes No In Progress	
Youth in your organization are debriefed for deeper understanding after meetings with youth and adults.	Yes No In Progress	



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<b>Strategy</b> (Organizational Practices/Structures)	<b>(Circle One)</b>	<b>Evidence</b> (How do you know?)
Your organization avoids using jargon in meetings.	Yes No In Progress	
Your organization provides a glossary of key vocabulary youth should know to participate in youth-adult partnerships within your organization.	Yes No In Progress	
Youth are paid (A living wage) for their expertise when participating in the work of your organization.	Yes No In Progress	
Your organization engages young people in the design phase of work in your program.	Yes No In Progress	
Youth have opportunities in your organization to serve in key decision-making roles (e.g., boards, advisory committees).	Yes No In Progress	
Youth are engaged in the design of evaluation/assessment processes in your organization.	Yes No In Progress	

\*Adultism: Behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their permission. This treatment is reinforced by social institutions, laws, customs and attitudes. (National Conference for Community and Justice)



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### Authentic Youth Engagement Checklist (For Foundations)

<b>Strategy</b> (Organizational Practices/Structures)	<b>(Circle One)</b>	<b>Evidence</b> (How do you know?)
Relationships between youth and adults at your Foundation are mutually beneficial (e.g., youth expertise in exchange for expanded social networks and opportunities)	Yes No In Progress	
Your foundation invests in structures to intentionally help youth develop leadership skills (e.g., leadership programs, trainings, projects).	Yes No In Progress	
Your foundation invests in wraparound services for youth who are involved in leadership roles at grantee programs (e.g., transportation, food, childcare, etc.).	Yes No In Progress	
Adults in your foundation have been trained to minimize *adultism in your organization.	Yes No In Progress	
Youth are paid (A living wage) for their expertise when participating in the work of your Foundation (e.g., site visits, meetings)	Yes No In Progress	
Youth are prepped for youth-adult meetings sponsored by your foundation.	Yes No In Progress	
Your Foundation implements strategies to check for understanding during foundation-sponsored, youth-adult meetings and events to ensure youth's full engagement.	Yes No In Progress	
Youth involved in foundation-sponsored meetings/events involving youth and adults are debriefed for deeper understanding	Yes No In Progress	



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<b>Strategy</b> (Organizational Practices/Structures)	<b>(Circle One)</b>	<b>Evidence</b> (How do you know?)
External communications that target or address youth (including grant applications, reports and foundation events) avoid the unnecessary use of jargon	Yes No In Progress	
Your Foundation provides a glossary of key vocabulary youth should know to participate in youth-adult partnerships within your organization.	Yes No In Progress	
Youth have opportunities in your foundation to serve in key decision-making roles (e.g., boards, advisory committees).	Yes No In Progress	
Youth have opportunities to inform your foundation's funding priorities/strategies	Yes No In Progress	
Your foundation engages youth in your grantmaking process to inform funding decisions	Yes No In Progress	
Your grantees are expected to include youth in their evaluation/assessment processes	Yes No In Progress	

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## **Tips for Authentic Youth Engagement**

1. Engage young people with the same level of professionalism that you would your peers.
2. Reciprocate the energy of young people.
3. Focus on engagement and not compliance.
4. Create a pipeline for employment and leadership for youth in your organization.
5. Create job/leadership shadowing opportunities.
6. Use youth engagement activities to teach youth complex topics, skills, strategies.
7. Ensure that your relationships are reciprocal with youth (support and relationships are mutually beneficial).
8. Don't use young people and do not be patronizing. Young people can spot condescending behavior and it can damage relationships dramatically.
9. Respect the expertise young people bring to the table.
10. Engage youth before there is a problem within your organization.
11. Put young people in positions of leadership.
12. Create structures to support youth leadership (e.g., leadership programs, mentorship, exposure activities, etc.).
13. Provide youth space to lead in authentic ways (not the way you want them to lead).
14. Train adults to engage with youth in respectful and developmentally appropriate ways.
15. Provide wraparound services to support youth engagement.
16. Youth are in moments of transition- show them grace.
17. Remember: If young people show up, they are interested/invested in something more.
18. Be understanding.
19. The atmosphere of your program in out-of-school time spaces should be different than school and home (e.g., creative spaces, understanding staff).
20. Staff and leadership should work to be culturally competent.
21. "Skill up" youth, i.e., make sure youth leave your programs and engagement with new, transferable skills.
22. Support youth in expanding their social networks with people who can expand their opportunities, skills and knowledge.
23. Abandon punitive culture within your program/organization and pursue a culture of learning.
24. The youth experience should match what you're selling to external stakeholders.
25. Work to ensure that the impact of your programs is sustainable.
26. Be flexible.
27. Change the narrative about the importance of youth in your work so it centers youth as co-creators and leaders instead of end users/clients.
28. Your organizational agenda is not more important than the agenda of the people you serve.
29. Check to ensure your culture isn't toxic and that your culture matches the professional boundaries and expectations you set and promote to youth.
30. Don't try to mold youth to your ideas. Instead provide them with the experiences, skills and information to establish their own ideas.