

Community Foundations: A Tool for Engaging Youth in Community Driven Development

Community Driven Development (CDD) approaches present an effective means to involve young people in local development decision-making, giving them voice and influencing power, with benefits for themselves and their communities. This note highlights a range of key learning points emerging from years of international experience with Youth Banks and Youth Advisory Committees, an innovative tool for engaging youth in their communities. Community Foundations hosting Youth Advisory Committees or Youth Banks see youth in the community as a resource to be tapped into, not a problem to be solved. They see the best way for utilizing the energy and creativity of young people in giving them a large share of responsibility for the identification of youth needs and opportunities for youth engagement, selection of priority projects, grantmaking, implementation of projects, their monitoring as well as raising funds needed for the work.

What Is A Youth Advisory Committee or a Youth Bank?

The terms “Youth Advisory Committee” (YAC) and “Youth Bank” (YB) are used interchangeably, the former more commonly used in the North America, the latter in Europe and elsewhere. A Youth Bank is a group of young people typically aged 14 – 25 who encourage positive community-based activity amongst their peers by awarding grants to groups of youth to enable them to fund their ideas and initiatives. The size of the grants is typically in the range of \$100 to \$2000.

The young grant-makers work as a committee taking all decisions collectively. They determine which issues are most pressing locally by establishing the focus, themes and priorities of the grant-making programs they manage. Equally, it is the youth grant-makers who decide which projects gain their support, having themselves managed all publicity, assessment and administrative aspects of a transparent selection process.

To enable this grant making process to take place, in addition to a group of young grant-makers, the following is required:

1. A local host organization such as a Community Foundation interested in nurturing youth participation. This agency has the role of providing practical support to a YAC / YB committee for administrative and logistical matters;
2. Suitably experienced personnel from an organization with the necessary insight, knowledge and understanding of youth-led grant-making to provide young grant-makers with capacity building and personal development training and offering information, advice and guidance to host organizations;



Youth leaders discussing Youth Bank strategy in a Palestine community.

What are Community Foundations?

Community Foundations (CFs) are independent organizations that provide grants to support a variety of projects identified and implemented by local citizens. The mission of community foundations is defined broadly and their grants respond to a broad spectrum of needs and opportunities. Community foundations are distinguished from other forms of local independent nonprofit organizations by combination of following six characteristics:

- They are grant-making foundations – their main tool is giving grants
- Their mission is broadly defined (e.g. to improve quality of life in a community)
- They serve geographically defined communities – a city, district or province
- They are supported by a broad range of donors and seek philanthropic contributions primarily from inside the community
- They are governed by multi-sectoral local boards reflecting the community
- They build capital endowment, which is an important element of sustainability

3. A donor or donors to provide the initial grant allocation funds and the infrastructure support costs associated with running a Youth Bank.
4. Willingness to let young grant-makers to take the lead, supporting, but not directing them.

Over the last five years, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has provided support to start YBs in many countries including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, Croatia, Russia, South Africa and Palestine. In addition to providing training, making available relevant documentation and being a source of information, expertise, advice and guidance, the Community Foundation's Youth Bank office works with many of its international partners by brokering exchange visits. These efforts enable young grant-makers to learn from each others' experiences and approaches to grant-making.

Benefits and Potential of Youth Banks

It is important to stress that the full positive impact of a Youth Bank goes beyond being a mechanism to distribute financial support. Youth Banks can influence peace building, increase cultural sensitivity and understanding, nurture citizenship and philanthropy, encourage entrepreneurship and reinforce personal development.

Building Peace and Understanding in Divided Societies

Northern Ireland underwent a prolonged period of violent internal conflict lasting over three decades. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has sought to play a part in the process of peace building necessary to forge a just, stable, and prosperous future for all the people of the region. Through YBs, young people from different sides of the conflict engage with each other on Youth Bank committees and deepen their knowledge of the aspirations, culture and perspectives of peers from communities other than their own through the grant making process.

Nurturing Active Citizenship

In all societies the transition from childhood to early adulthood leaves young people vulnerable to the potential to develop negative attitudes and behavior. It is a time of experimentation, questioning authority and received wisdom and developing a sense of identity. Values, world view and aspirations are all forged during this period. Young people have the potential for great energy and creativity, provided they find constructive outlets, encouragement and mentors. Without such opportunities many can become disengaged from the society and become involved in anti-social behavior.

YB presents a channel through which young people can design and implement positive activities, whether as young grant-makers or as participants in projects that receive their support. This contributes to active citizenship in their immediate local environment as they construct responses to the key issues affecting their lives. It also can lead to future active citizenship on the part of Youth Bank 'graduates' who are able to take the experience, skills, insight, knowledge and understanding they have developed through participation in the YB into their future. In this way, YB plays a part in nurturing future community leadership, with youth-led grant-making efforts further cultivating and reinforcing a culture of collaboration and cooperation.

In post conflict situations this has formed a part of wider nation-building efforts while in more stable countries it has contributed to social cohesion and reinforcing the rights and responsibilities of youth to actively shape their own lives and community. A useful by-product has been the generation of media coverage depicting young people in positive roles, offering an alternative to the all too common one-dimensional media portrayal of young people as sources of problems or threat.

Encouraging Social Entrepreneurship

Youth Banks are about self help through collaborative action, in which young people identify the need, and go on to plan and manage their chosen initiative. At the outset of the process they display entrepreneurial approaches to social problems, issues and needs and proceed to acquire additional skills as they solve problems.



Youth leaders discussing Youth Bank strategy in a Palestine community.

Young grant makers are provided with funding and are trained in the practicalities of grant-making. More profoundly, they are challenged with researching and exploring the issues influencing the lives, circumstances and well-being of their peers and the communities they live in, identifying root causes and consequences of social problems and constructing grant programs that will enable young people to address them. In this way, YB seeks to empower young people to be entrepreneurial in the way they approach their activities whether as grant makers or project participants. It is notable that the broad stages of the grant-making cycle – research, planning, promotion, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and analysis – form a framework for effective action in a many spheres of life and work.

Personal Development

A significant personal development experience has been a common feature of the YB approach. Through their involvement, young people gain enormous social, decision making, communication, negotiation, administrative and many other skills. The extent of personal development varies, depending on the level of commitment and duration of involvement, but has an impact across many cultures. This is made possible by two overarching factors: firstly, the positive reinforcement from working with teams of peers on grant-making and projects that act as a vehicle for

their energy and ideas; and secondly, the exposure to the nurturing influence of experienced committed adults.

Impact Evaluation

Given the novelty of community foundations and YB in developing and transforming countries no formal impact evaluation of YB is available from the World Bank client countries as of summer 2007. Experience from the developed countries however suggests that YB can have significant impact on both lives of young people and communities where they live operate. For instance, there are currently over 65 Community Foundations in Michigan, and every one has a YAC. In 2006, YACs made over 1,000 grants totaling over \$2 million dollars.

Mike Goorhouse of Council of Michigan Foundations Based says:” My experiences with the YACs includes conversations with hundreds of program participants and alumni and the impact has been amazing. Many of the comments I hear cannot be displayed in numbers or represented by a survey, but they show the depth at which YACs impact the lives of young people. Many alumni in today’s society will still tell you that they “owe everything to YAC”. It is where they learned about the complexity of communities. It is where they learned what it means to fund develop, build relationships with donors, and make the ask. It is where they begin their lifelong journey as philanthropists who continue to give of their time, talent and treasure whether as mentors, Community Foundation trustees, business owners, or parents. The way they view life has been changed.

And then you can talk about the impact that YACs have made in the Michigan Communities. Young people now serve on boards of many organizations and are involved in the leadership of local government. Many communities know all about what the YAC does, and they look to the youth members as resources as they work to build a better place to live. As the alumni of YACs infiltrate all parts of society, they are resurfacing as knowledgeable donors and assets in communities all over the state.”]

In more formal way, the evaluation report “Leadership, Volunteerism, and Giving” presents the results of 10-year longitudinal study of youth grantmaking in Michigan and is available on:

www.youthgrantmakers.org/LessonsLearned_menu

Twelve Steps in Youth Bank Development

Whilst a detailed understanding of all aspects of youth-led grant making can only fully be developed by engaging in the work, it is vital that any Community Foundation considering this activity is provided with an outline of the

Community Foundation Supporting Youth Committee / Youth Bank must:

- have a commitment to young people's well being and to their active participation in decision making, coupled with a deep belief in their potential to unlock imaginative solutions to local problems;
- develop a detailed understanding of the practical stages a YAC -YB engages in, have a belief that such a process will enable them to achieve some of their objectives in relation to youth empowerment;
- have the capacity to provide young grant-makers with administrative, logistical and mentoring support; including training, guidance and technical support required to get the youth-led grant-making initiative up and running; secure funding for grants and to cover infrastructure support costs such as travel, training and printing.

stages of developing a YB. In outline, the stages are as follows:

1. Recruiting an interested group of young people aged 14 - 25 to form a committee of young grant-makers; Highly recommended is to recruit them from a mix of places - not just, for example, from one school, and to recruit a diverse group, e.g. girls/boys, younger/older, high achievers/facing problems, studying/at work/unemployed, ethnic mix, etc.
2. Providing training for the YAC in the fundamentals of grant-making. This includes capacity building and personal development training covering a range of topics such as research techniques, planning, interviewing skills, publicity, decision making, project management, equality & human rights and monitoring and evaluation;
3. Assisting the YAC to undertake research into the following areas:
 - identifying the needs and circumstances of young people in the area and the major issues facing their peers;
 - assessing the nature, quality and scope of responses by others to the needs identified, with a view to identifying gaps and the potential for innovative alternatives to existing responses.
4. Facilitating the YAC to analyze their research findings in order to set their grant making priorities, issues, needs and areas of interest they wish to focus on with the money the CF has provided and any more they decide to raise
5. Assisting the committee to prepare the relevant paperwork they will need to successfully run their grant programs. This includes information and publicity materials, application packs, assessment interview protocols, template grant letters and monitoring and evaluation materials.
6. Enabling young grant-makers to develop a simple administrative system for the processing and tracking of each grant application.
7. Working with the committee to create a communications strategy involving a range of information dissemination and publicity actions aimed at creating awareness amongst young people.
8. Facilitating the committee to launch each grant program through a launch event coupled with media work and targeted information circulation to raise awareness.
9. Enabling the young grant-makers to undertake assessments of all applications received. This will involve checking each proposal to establish if it meets the criteria YAC have set and interviewing the applicants to find out more about the proposed project.
10. Assisting the committee to collectively make grant decisions. This involves a meeting of the full YAC to consider the recommendations made by members who undertook the interviews. This stage involves considerable discussion followed by a period of administrative activity with grant or rejection letters.
11. Facilitating young grant-makers to undertake monitoring and evaluation as grant-aided projects get under way. This is intended not only as a means of checking that projects are spending their money on the intended activity, but also as a vehicle to enable all involved to reflect on and learn from the projects.
12. Assisting the committee to organize a celebration event to showcase the work and achievements of projects funded under the grant round and highlight the successes of the Youth Bank. The new grant cycle starts after the event.



Youth Bank Work in Azerbaijan

The Eurasia Foundation identified that there were limited opportunities for youth in Azerbaijan to gain the skills needed to become active members in their own communities, especially young women. Poor education, high unemployment rates and a lack of extra-curricular opportunities have made it difficult for youth to exercise their potential to work, study and participate as active citizens in their communities. Previously funded training programs have attained real results in building the capacity of young people to act as community participants, but few mechanisms exist to apply acquired skills to achieve practical results.

Grant-making took place in August/September of 2006 with 28 projects receiving funding. Funding was made available for young people to open a youth café, to paint a sports stadium, to work with children in orphanages, to offer carpet making training, to publish a young people's newspaper, and provide computer and English language courses for disabled young people. These examples demonstrate the quality of ideas and applications received, the value for money provided, the extent to which young people actually led their project and the impact and benefit to local community. An external evaluation is planned for 2007.

To discuss YB experience in Azerbaijan and in other countries or any aspect of setting up a YB contact Vernon Ringland at vringland@communityfoundationni.org ++44(0)28 90 245927



Youth Bank Work in South Africa

The Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation Youth Bank is a group of dynamic and diverse young people who strive to make a positive difference in the community by funding youth initiatives, thus changing the lives and developing the youth in the local area. The aim of the Youth Bank is to secure a better future for youth in the community. In Enele's words, the idea of the Youth Bank is to get young people to serve community where they live through the community foundation concept, to build leadership and to develop relationships between all

different cultural groups. Young people serving on the Youth Advisory Committee are a diverse group reflecting the broader community of Rustenburg, their ages ranging from 13 to 25 years. Within the Community Foundation the Youth Bank is managed by a program manager and YAC is one of standard sub-committees formed by the foundation's board of trustees.

The work of YAC is not without challenges. For young people of Rustenburg a major challenge was to balance the YAC program with their school program and they struggled to keep the team together for a long time. Attending the meetings was a challenge also because many did not have a proper transportation. The biggest challenge later on became the fundraising for the program and YAC members feel that they still rely on the foundation too much.

To discuss the YB experience in South Africa, please contact Bakang Enele at nposupport@mweb.co.za , Tel: 014 592 90 51 or Ellen Masobela at 014 592 15 25

Recommended Reading and Websites

www.youthgrantmakers.org Site of the YAC in Michigan, USA

www.wingsweb.org/information/publications_community.cfm Includes 2005 Community Foundations Global Status Report

www.wings-globalfund.org Site of the Global Fund for Community Foundations, basic information available in English, French, Spanish and Russian

www.communityfoundations.org.uk Site of CF network in United Kingdom

www.cfc-fcc.ca Site of CFs of Canada – bilingual in English and French language

Few Facts About Community Foundations

- Over 1300 Community Foundations (CFs) currently exist in more than 40 countries around the world
- The oldest and largest CFs operate in the USA. Their combined assets are over 35 billion US\$ - five American CFs have assets over 1 billion \$ each, 20 have assets over 500 million \$; 16 give annually grants worth 50 million \$ or more
- Around 95% of inhabitants of Great Britain have access to one of the 65 CFs covering almost all territory of the country
- The first CF in World Bank client country was established in Slovakia in 1994, the first CF in Africa in South Africa in 1999. The first CFs in Ghana and Egypt were registered in 2006, in Tanzania in 2007...
- The first CF in Germany was registered in 1996: in 2007 more than 150 CFs exist in the country
- The first CF in Russia was established in 1998: today 19 CFs operate around the country



Youth Bank members from Cluj, Romania discuss their plans.

This note was prepared by Juraj Mesik, (Social Development Department, the World Bank), and Vernon Ringland (Community Foundations of Northern Ireland), with contributions from Bakang Enele (Greater Rustenburg Community Foundations, South Africa), Mike Goorhouse (Council of Michigan Foundations) and Gaynor Humphreys (Community Foundations Initiative). This Note has been edited by the Community Driven Development Team in the Social Development Department of the Sustainable Development Network of the World Bank. Social Development Notes are distributed widely to Bank staff and are available online at www.worldbank.org/socialdevelopment. Additional copies can also be requested via e-mail: socialdevelopment@worldbank.org.