

ASSETS FOR YOUTH WORK GROUP
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 12, 2003

Virginia National Bank
12:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Harold Boyd
Carl Brown
David Brown
Nikki Evans-Bowles
Kathleen Glen
Sarah Green-Holland
Sibley Johns
Heather Kellams
Winx Lawrence
Relda Manuel
Karen Roberts
Tim Sinatra
Bob Taibbi
John Teixeira

Staff Present:

Saphira Baker
Gretchen Ellis
Linda Balnave

Handouts

Assets for Youth Work Group Roster (Revised)
“If this were our last meeting...”
Assets for Youth Work Group Parental
Involvement in After-school Programming
Supplementary Information

December, 2003 Meeting

I. Welcome/Introductions – W. Lawrence

W. Lawrence called the meeting to order, welcomed participants, and thanked them for attending. Members introduced themselves and the agency they were affiliated with. They were asked to check the roster to make sure their information was correct.

A. Revisiting “Vision”

The visions offered last time were summarized:

1. An easily accessible centralized information system about what is available that conveys assets and needs and provides a community calendar and youth program tool kit.
2. An information system coordinating school and program activity recruitment and shared resources that addresses the overlap and lack of school and after school activities.
3. Support for addressing transportation and cost barriers.
4. Increase parents’ involvement and voice and the number of programs that “go to” parents.
5. Programs address the SOLs and as a community take on the responsibility for increasing students’ success.
6. Increase broad-based services, offerings, and activities in technology, carpentry, arts, music, and architecture.
7. Academic credit should be available for participation.
8. Involve youth in planning and discovering activities they would enjoy, particularly subpopulations that are not involved or are underserved.

Members approved the summarized vision statements.

II. Report back on Tracy survey findings/ Would we do anything differently? – Saphira Baker

S. Baker noted that T. Sinatra did a good job summarizing the Tracy Survey findings last time and that her role was to highlight areas that might influence our study locally. In Tracy, California, 3,000 children between the ages of 11 and 18 years old were surveyed. The questions asked in the survey regarding what children like to do were helpful. The Charlottesville/Albemarle area

probably has more single parents and racial diversity than the region studied. The Tracy survey was possibly more “universal” than a local survey might be. This community might want to target low income and/or high-risk children. In the Tracy survey there was great interest in the arts and cultural programs, which may also be of interest here. This locality may have more available recreationally and academically, though that is not discernable from the study. There may be more involvement with gangs and anger management in Tracy than in this region, yet it will be worth asking about those issues in a local survey. Few children (less than 20%) said they would use a Web site for accessing available out-of-school activities; our work group may want to consider this since this is one of the ideas some of us thought was promising. For those with more interest, S. Baker will request the survey findings via email from T. Sinatra and he will forward them to her. She will then send them out to the rest of the membership.

III. Why aren't more young people involved in productive activities?

Methods of inquiry for discussion/approval:

A. Young engagement and asset mapping

H. Kellams reported that the Subcommittee met December 2nd to “brainstorm” regarding the youth engagement and asset mapping project. There would be two benefits from the project. Youth would be involved in the planning process and information would be obtained about gaps in services. The Subcommittee recommends training up to 20 diverse youth from a cross section of the City and County including students “at risk” and from challenged neighborhoods. The project would begin in the spring of 2004 and a report would be finished by May. Students might be trained during spring break. In late April or May the students would do the mapping work. The group would be in middle or high school, racially diverse, and from different geographic areas. Students should demonstrate some leadership potential, motivation, and willingness to participate, with the ability to communicate effectively and identify issues. A \$100 stipend might be offered for completing the project. The Teens Give program might be able to offer staff, supervision, and transportation. There was an attempt to determine some of the costs as well as funding for staff and stipends for the kids. The Subcommittee members also looked at different mapping models, methods, and tools. Position requirements, staff expectations, training needed, and recruitment strategies were also reviewed. L. Peale is developing a composite description and is starting to gather tools. H. Kellams is pursuing whether Teens Give will be able to take over the mapping project. G. Ellis noted that a tentative budget has been set at \$7,000. Subcommittee members were asked if they would consider adding a few 4th or 5th graders to the group of project participants. This might be conceivable depending on the individuals. The parameter ages would be from 11 to 17 years (middle and high school). Adults would supervise small groups of youth. The mapping would be accomplished in 20 hours during 10 different sessions after school or during spring break (two days per week). Children would map communities they were familiar with. T. Sinatra observed that for the Tracy study it worked well to identify different subcultures in neighborhoods and recruit representatives from each area. Children that were not leaders (and not ostracized either) but “saw all” were enlisted. When the different groups came together a person was brought in immediately who was “wonderful” working with groups to break down their “territorial tendencies” and create a more “cohesive unit”. Asset mapping can help identify high youth crime rate areas and the youth activities that are and are not available in those locations. Programs can then focus their efforts in those areas.

B. Participant survey

S. Baker described the idea of a survey of agency participants and staff. This would not be a comprehensive survey of 200 organizations locally, but a conversation with young people at current sites as to their preferences and current experience. These youth might also venture out and get their peers engaged in determining what is a good program, what works well, and where there are gaps. They could go to programs that are working with children now and ask about preferences – what they liked about the program, what could be better (extended hours, services, etc.), why their peers are not involved, and parental involvement. A lot might be learned about

why kids do what they do It was also noted that interviewing program staff as to unmet needs would generate valuable information.

C. In-school survey

The in-school survey would be more ambitious. The intent is to conduct a “universal” survey of all middle and high school students. They would be asked how they hear about activities in and outside of school, whether they have access to a computer or telephone, and the block they live on. The survey would help to pinpoint where in the City and County children have difficulty accessing out-of-school resources. It would give a sense of and help build a case for promising approaches. There was some concern expressed that the kids might not take the survey seriously. The survey might help to get information about available resources to the schools and help break down some barriers between school and after school programs. However, schools have parameters about what can and cannot be asked and there are a lot of important issues involved. An exploratory committee might be needed to determine the feasibility of an in-school survey. The cost of the survey might be at least \$17,000 for analysis, tabulation, and some software.

Members discussed the different survey options. The program participant survey was deemed doable and useful since people who facilitate after school programs know where the gaps are and what works and what doesn't work. Parents are aware of work and school situations that limit involvement. It was suggested that staff and parents also be surveyed. There would be some costs for tabulation and analysis. Although there are 160 organizations in the *Guide to Youth Services*, a quick survey of 25, primarily out of school, programs might be conducted. The survey would include programs that are not sponsored by the City and County. Concern was expressed that some information would be missed since there are few programs in rural areas. A different way of conducting the survey might be considered in rural locations. There may also be language barrier problems. In some cases, an in-school survey might be difficult to complete without translation. However, most ESL students' facility with English is good after one year, especially beyond the elementary school years. Regarding the participant survey, some children do not come to after school because they have to watch their siblings. What percentage of children do not attend youth programs because child care is an issue? One recommendation might be to form a task force on day care. Parents may not answer questions because they do not want it known that they have children watching children. At one computer lab, school age children often come, bring their siblings, and use the facility as a day care center. The program participant survey may miss children in rural areas and those watching other children. The in-school survey may reveal more of the barriers. To do the in-school survey well, follow up interviews might be required. A smaller representative sample might be used. The Tracy survey had \$90,000 in project money. Many tasks were outsourced. Two years of intensive work were involved. Focus groups of parents and service providers helped to supply some answers. Some responses were site specific. It is important not to get “too frustrated and overwhelmed” about missing something. It may be beneficial to push for the mapping and in-school survey for the moment and try to get some funding through a grant. The program survey may then serve as a test of the results. Another possibility is to do a different survey or mapping activity each year for the next three years. This year asset mapping might be done and next year the agency survey might be conducted.

On the other hand, it might be better to start more broadly with the in-school survey and then use the youth mapping for what is determined to be missing. Youth could work with the in-school questionnaire, help follow up with teachers, and interpret the answers. In the second stage, youth interviews could be conducted focusing on areas that did not assess well or where the results were unclear. The in-school survey followed by focus groups would provide more information than the other survey and mapping projects. “Buy in” will need to be obtained from school representatives. It may take time and energy to get the schools involved. If school officials are asked which children to involve, they will go to the youth that are already engaged in school. Other children that are “at risk” or are “troublemakers” will not be mentioned and will be left out. It will be very

important to find the youth that are not necessarily “in tune” with the administration and staff. C. Brown and H. Boyd offered their assistance in helping to identify kids. In addition, youth generally know why other juveniles are not involved (for example, they have a job or have to baby-sit) so some “great” anecdotal information can be obtained directly from them. It was suggested that a graduate class at the University of Virginia (possibly in Community Psychology) might want to develop the survey and do the tabulation. Interns are helpful to bridge the gap between adults and kids. W. Lawrence asked for volunteers to join the existing Subcommittee (Gretchen Ellis, Relda Manual, Heather Kellams, and Lacy Peale) to discuss the different options and bring a recommendation to the Work Group. S. Johns, T. Sinatra, and S. Green-Holland volunteered to join the Subcommittee. It was decided that the Subcommittee would meet on January 9th. The Subcommittee should determine what is possible between now and June for \$10,000 or less that would give some indication why “at risk” youth are not more involved in productive activities. A definition of “at risk” will be brought to the meeting. Finding children through the free lunch program may not be possible due to new federal laws that restrict access to information. However, this might be an idea to pursue. The entire Work Group will meet on Friday, January 23rd from 12 to 1:30 p.m.

IV. How do we decrease the gap in parent participation? – W. Lawrence

A. Outcomes/ideas that have worked

G. Ellis commented on how little information there is concerning parental involvement in after school programs. There are reports that explain why parental involvement is important and offer suggestions on how to increase involvement with outcomes potentially identified (see “Assets for Youth Work Group Parental Involvement in After-school Programming - Supplementary Information”). Some promising practices are noted but the “level of or impact of parental involvement” has not been documented. Since there is little information on how to get parents involved in out of school activities, the Work Group will have to rely primarily on information on parent involvement in schools. N. Bowles suggested members might want to look at the reports on the Family Friendly Schools Web site (<http://www.familyfriendlyschools.org/>). N. Bowles was asked to bring the full packet to the next meeting.

B. How important is parental involvement/engagement to youth involvement?

W. Lawrence inquired why members thought parental involvement in youth activities was important. Since “at risk” kids generally have a lot of problems in their home environment parental permission to participate in activities facilitates the involvement of children. When parents “bless” involvement and watch youth activities, it is good for children because it demonstrates their parents’ pride and support. When parents see kids having fun it brings closeness to their relationship because at those times “life does not seem as serious”. Communication is increased. Trust is built up. When parents are not involved it is often due to “tangible” economic barriers. Programs can offer role models that kids would not get at home. If youth are involved in activities, it can have a “ripple” effect on the parents. Parents can help other parents become involved and this helps “adjust attitudes”. Parents might suggest that other parents investigate a certain “great” program and that helps parents realize the importance to children of time spent with them. Parental involvement also helps children fulfill their commitments and helps programs deal with behavior issues. About four programs represented required parental participation. Parents are encouraged to come to other programs. There is a fear that if parental participation is required children will not be able to attend, so there is some reluctance to put up this barrier.

Members were asked to respond to the question, “What things have you found that increase parent participation (best practices for involving parents)?” The following written responses were received:

- Have performance for kids and invite parents.
- Ask parents for their involvement in particular tasks related to the program.
- Provide transportation for parents.

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- Make it a group parental activity.
- “Activity Fair” at the schools to give information on all community activities, resources, sports.
- Website/email information site.
- Telephone recorded information line about activities/programs.
- Carpooling system for parents to give other parents rides to activities/events.
- Understand parents’ concerns/worries about children – link their concerns to the program.
- Personally written or oral communication from the involved authority to the juvenile’s parents.
- From very small and friendly contact with a parent to building a trusting relationship with them ... you are there to help them.
- Impromptu involvement in an activity in progress i.e. a game being played by the kids... and parents participate.
- Organizing and planning as well as chaperones.
- Any program where the child is on stage, on a team, etc.
- Having programs that do not conflict with work (parents’ jobs as a barrier to their involvement).
- Youth presentations where parents become the audiences.
- Parent club where parents have input in types of programs the organization utilizes.
- Periodically call the parent and let them know what their child is accomplishing in the program.
- Develop relationship with parents from beginning and encourage their involvement and stay in contact.
- Invite parents to have different roles with program.
- Developing trust.
- Bringing all types of parents together.
- Recognizing parents’ strength that you want them to share with the group.
- Have incentive for parent to attend.

V. Next Steps – S. Baker

A. Homework: Defining local “unmet need” (waitlists, etc.)

Members were asked to come to the next meeting with available information about programs’ current capacity to serve young people. For example, if we were to increase access to existing opportunities, are there sufficient slots in programs? Other questions arose such as: Is registration full? Is there a waiting list? Is scholarship money required? Did they miss the deadline? Is there not enough staff? Is transportation an issue? S. Baker will send out an email reminding folks to bring some basic information about existing capacity and need. This doesn’t need to be formal, but will provide general guidance for the work group’s efforts. Members should respond by email and/or bring responses to the January 21 meeting and give some idea of the numbers of youth involved. This information may help in the development of the survey.

B. Draft change and time line

The charge and draft time line will be sent out via email for members’ review and comment prior to the next meeting.

Pending Issues for Discussion (future meetings):

- Best practices for parental participation
- Work on report on mapping assets and/or surveys
- Unmet needs
- Coordination of Services
- Accessible Information
- Youth Access to phone, computer, and transportation
- Program structure, schedule and requirements

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- ◆ **THE NEXT MEETING OF THE ASSETS FOR YOUTH WORK GROUP WILL BE ON FRIDAY JANUARY 23RD FROM 12 TO 1:30 P.M. AT THE VIRGINIA NATIONAL BANK.**
- ◆ **THE SUBCOMMITTEE WILL MEET ON JANUARY 9TH FROM 12 TO 1:30 P.M. AT THE VIRGINIA NATIONAL BANK BOARDROOM, 2ND LEVEL.**