



# FOUNDATIONS & PIPELINES

BUILDING SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO FOSTER YOUTH ORGANIZING



## in•fra•struc•ture:

1. an entity's system of organization at the most basic level; 2. public systems, services and facilities that are necessary for sustainable function

# REPORT OVERVIEW & GUIDE

The key sections of the report are identified below, with a brief description of the main points in each section.

## **Key Propositions & Call to Action** ..... **pages 1 – 6**

This section outlines the purpose of this discussion paper, which was to investigate and develop action steps to build a *social infrastructure* that will foster sustained support for self-determined youth organizing work in the Toronto area.

Two questions guided the inquiry involved in this work:

- **What is the social infrastructure required to support youth organizing and leadership that fosters self determination and community development?**
- **What resources are required to establish and sustain this infrastructure?**

The goal of a social infrastructure is to build capacity at an individual, group and community level. A social infrastructure for youth organizing encompasses a variety of different elements that work collectively to build capacity and sustainable support, placing power in the hands of young people in communities.

These include:

- **Tools and Resources**
- **Shared Administration Supports**
- **Learning, Research and Evaluation**
- **Policy Advocacy**
- **Networking**
- **Consulting Supports**
- **Fund Development**
- **Training and Professional Development**

Social infrastructure is rooted in mentorship and partnerships and managed by *coordinated work involving intermediaries, coalitions and collaboratives*, delivered through both physical and online resource hubs, and supported by *strategic funder alliances and social entrepreneurship strategies* that provide the resources for various services.

This section also identifies immediate action steps to develop a social infrastructure for youth organizing through collaborative work among the following groups:

### **Funders and Policy Makers**

- develop strategic, long-term approaches that will support the key elements of a social infrastructure
- systemic shifts in the processes to directly include youth in the development and implementation policies that affect their communities
- analysis of how funders are currently using trusteeship to build on positive practices that preserve the opportunity for self-determined youth-led work

### **Change Agents in Social Institutions and Service Organizations**

- implement initiatives to reform existing practices that systemically marginalize youth and remove power and self-determination from communities
- form stronger links and relationships between youth-serving and youth-led work
- examine trustee relationship between mainstream organizations and youth-led groups to build on positive models

### **Youth Organizers**

- advocate for the role of youth in informing and creating solutions to important community issues, challenging the structures that systemically oppress youth work
- make stronger connections to peers and mentors with an intentional effort to share learning and resources
- continue to deliver effective work in the community and not allow this work to become bureaucratized and focused on sustaining organizations



## Context: Literature & Environmental Scan ..... pages 7 – 17

This section provides an overview of useful definitions and descriptions for such terms as “youth”, “youth organizing” and “social infrastructure”, and looks at the role of funders, change agents in social institutions and intermediaries in fostering sustainable support for youth-led work.

## Research: Methods & Findings ..... pages 18 – 39

This section outlines the key findings from interviews conducted with funders, youth organizers, and young professionals and adult allies who have been providing capacity-strengthening intermediary support to youth-led work. The findings are organized to identify the *current landscape* of youth organizing in the Toronto area, and then to reflect the various perspectives on the *elements of a social infrastructure* that would provide sustainable support to this work.

Findings in relation to the current landscape include:

### Capacity: Pressures and Assets (page 21)

- **Pressures** - generally a lack of time to network and exchange learning with those doing similar work and high turnover due to excessive time spent in administrative management, fundraising and high day-to-day demands.
- **Assets** - passion for the work is very high, there is a strong sense of opportunity for community impact and learning, and a feeling that youth organizing work is becoming stronger and more unified.

### Relationship Management: Peers, Funders, Trustees and Intermediaries (page 22)

Challenges can surface in relation to trust and communications among peers, funders and trustees. Intermediaries can play a role to mitigate these challenges, creating a learning environment with the security of mentoring support.

### Collective Advocacy Needs (page 27)

There was an expressed need for a collective and unified voice on youth and community issues.

The findings indicated the need for the following elements to *build social infrastructure*: (pages 28-40)

- **Support for Core Administrative Capacities**
- **Training and Professional Development Supports**
- **Access to Resources and Tools**
- **Access to Intermediaries**
- **Physical and Online Spaces**
- **Strategic Funding Approaches**

Another key element of an effective social infrastructure includes *generating and sharing knowledge*, so that the learning that occurs as a result of youth organizing work will be captured and shared through common resource spaces, coalitions and networks.

Funders, policy makers, youth organizers and champions within social institutions and service organizations with a commitment to shared power and decision-making can develop an action plan that moves forward on establishing a social infrastructure, building upon existing initiatives and effective working relationships.



## **Key Propositions & Call to Action 1**

- Social Infrastructure: What Does it Look Like? ..... 3
- Call to Action: Where Are We At? Where Do We Want to Be? ..... 5

## **Context: Literature & Environmental Scan 7**

- Useful Definitions ..... 7
- The Value of Youth Organizing ..... 7
- The Importance of Building Social Infrastructure for Youth Organizing ..... 8
- Mentoring and Partnerships – The Basis of Social Infrastructure ..... 10
- Building Social Infrastructure – Learning from Emergent Models ..... 13

## **Research: Methods & Findings 18**

- Advisors and Project Team ..... 18
- Interview Participants and Analysis ..... 19
- Findings ..... 20
- Youth Organizing in Toronto: Current Landscape ..... 20
- Capacity: Pressures and Assets ..... 21
- Relationship Management: Peers, Funders, Trustees and Intermediaries ..... 22
- Collective Advocacy Needs ..... 27
- Elements of a Social Infrastructure to Support Youth Organizing ..... 28
- Support for Core Administrative Capacities ..... 28
- Training and Professional Development Supports ..... 29
- Access to Resources and Tools ..... 30
- Access to Intermediaries ..... 31
- Physical Spaces ..... 35
- Strategic Funding Approaches ..... 38
- Generating and Sharing Knowledge: Learning from this Approach ..... 39

## **Summary Considerations 40**

## **Reference List 41**

# KEY PROPOSITIONS & CALL TO ACTION

The interest in positive youth development, youth engagement and youth-led work in the Toronto area seems increasingly evident at various levels. An emerging sector seeks to respond to the needs of youth in the city. This sector is composed of various youth initiatives, supporting organizations and funding bodies, and engages governments at the municipal, provincial and federal level. Specifically there has been an emergence of youth-led work, which has not typically been part of traditional community organizing.

This work is seeking to shift institutional power dynamics that have tended to focus on underlying negative perceptions of youth. It is striving to build resiliency without reliance on traditional sociopolitical, institutionalized approaches. It includes a variety of initiatives, such as community-based projects and grassroots organizations that are engaging with youth in creative and meaningful ways.

This trend is certainly not unique to Toronto, but has been observed in work throughout North America<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6</sup>, demonstrating the desire of youth to take an active part in shaping their communities. They are reaching out to peers and adult allies to change the underlying systems that perpetuate exclusion and marginalization<sup>7</sup>. In the midst of this rapid growth in work that ranges from youth-serving programs, youth-led projects and higher level youth organizing, concerns have been raised about the lack of structural sustainability and the strain that is becoming evident based on a patchwork approach of project-by-project funding and the absence of supportive policy frameworks.

An underlying mechanism of mentorship and partnerships that facilitates sustained support to self-determined youth-led work is limited. The gap in this area yields a situation where the skills and capacity that should be developed in youth are inconsistent and underdeveloped.

THE YOUTH  
MOVEMENT,  
IN ITS BOLDEST  
AND MOST  
PROMINENT  
EXPRESSIONS,  
IS DEFINED NOT  
PRIMARILY BY AGE  
BUT BY VALUES.

IT IS A MOVEMENT  
FOR FAIRNESS:  
THE RIGHT OF ALL  
PEOPLE TO SELF  
REPRESENTATION &  
SELF-DETERMINATION.

*Building Youth Movements for Community Change*  
James, T. & McGillicuddy, K. (2001). *The Nonprofit Quarterly*, 8(4), 1-3.

1 Hosang, D. (2003). Youth and community organizing today. *Social Policy*, 34(2), 66-70.

2 Kim, J. & Sherman, R. F. (2006). Youth as important civic actors: From the margins to the center. *National Civic Review*, Spring 2006, 3-6.

3 Lewis-Charp, H., Yu, H.C. & Soukamneuth, S. (2006). Civic activist approaches for engaging youth in social justice. In S. Ginwright, P. Noguera & J. Cammarota (Eds.), *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change*. (1st ed., pp. 21-35). New York, NY: Routledge.

4 Quiroz-Martínez, J., HoSang, D., & Villarosa, L. (2004). Changing

the Rules of the Game: Youth Development & Structural Racism. Washington, D.C.: Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity.

5 Quiroz-Martínez, J., Wu, D. Pei, Zimmerman, K. (2005). *ReGeneration: Young People Shaping Environmental Justice*. Oakland, CA: Movement Strategy Center.

6 Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center (2004). *Making Space, Making Change: Profiles of Youth-led and Youth-driven Organizations*.

Oakland, California: Movement Strategy Center.

7 Fortier, C. (2006). *From the roots up! A report back from the Youth-Led Forum On Building Safe Communities*. Toronto: Grassroots Youth Collaborative.

The current situation does not provide a strong mechanism for youth currently involved in initiatives to connect with each other and access the training, resources and networks that can enhance their work. It is also not effective enough in fostering connections with mentors and partners, or in creating strong foundations for the transition of youth into adulthood. Sustained support is needed to ensure ongoing development at the individual, group and community level in youth organizing work.

The purpose of this discussion paper was to delve into the emerging concerns regarding the lack of an underlying mechanism - **a social infrastructure** - to foster sustained support for self-determined youth organizing work based on effective mentorship and partnerships.

More importantly, the goal was to determine action steps that will move toward strategic collaboration to strengthen and sustain youth organizing in the Toronto area.

As such the following two questions guided the inquiry involved in this work:

- 1. What is the social infrastructure required to support youth organizing and leadership that fosters self-determination and community development?**
- 2. What resources are required to establish and sustain this infrastructure?**

Those involved in the research conducted for this discussion paper expressed a need to actively move forward on developing social infrastructure to build sustainable support for youth organizing work.

As such, this work is timely and reveals the opportunity to build emerging dialogue and initiatives to develop the elements of a social infrastructure.

**“When the timing is right, things tend to form organically, and now the need to fill the void has emerged – it has not been forced by anyone”.**

The goal of a social infrastructure is to build capacity at an individual, group and community level. The diagram on the following page outlines the various key elements of a proposed social infrastructure.

A social infrastructure for youth organizing needs to be flexible and dynamic, encompassing a variety of different elements which work collectively to build capacity and sustainable support, placing power in the hands of young people in communities.

Building social infrastructure for youth organizing is based upon fostering mentorship and partnerships that provide key capacity strengthening supports, managed by **coordinated work involving intermediaries, coalitions and collaboratives**, delivered through both **physical and online resource hubs**, and supported by **strategic funder alliances and social entrepreneurship strategies** that provide the resources for various services.

“...ALL THE WORK HAPPENING AROUND YOUTH RIGHT NOW... IF YOU CAN'T SUSTAIN IT, WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT? THESE PROJECTS ALL HAPPENING SEEMS GREAT ON THE SURFACE, BUT THEY NEED SUSTAINABILITY...”

“THERE NEEDS TO BE RECOGNITION THAT WE HAVE FUNDED PROJECTS\ BUT NO ROOTS HAVE BEEN FORMED, THERE ARE NO STRUCTURES IN PLACE TO SUPPORT...”

“I THINK WE NEED TO DEVELOP SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT... IF IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IT'S GOT TO HAPPEN NOW. YOUTH IS A 'HOT TOPIC' RIGHT NOW BUT IT WON'T LAST FOREVER”

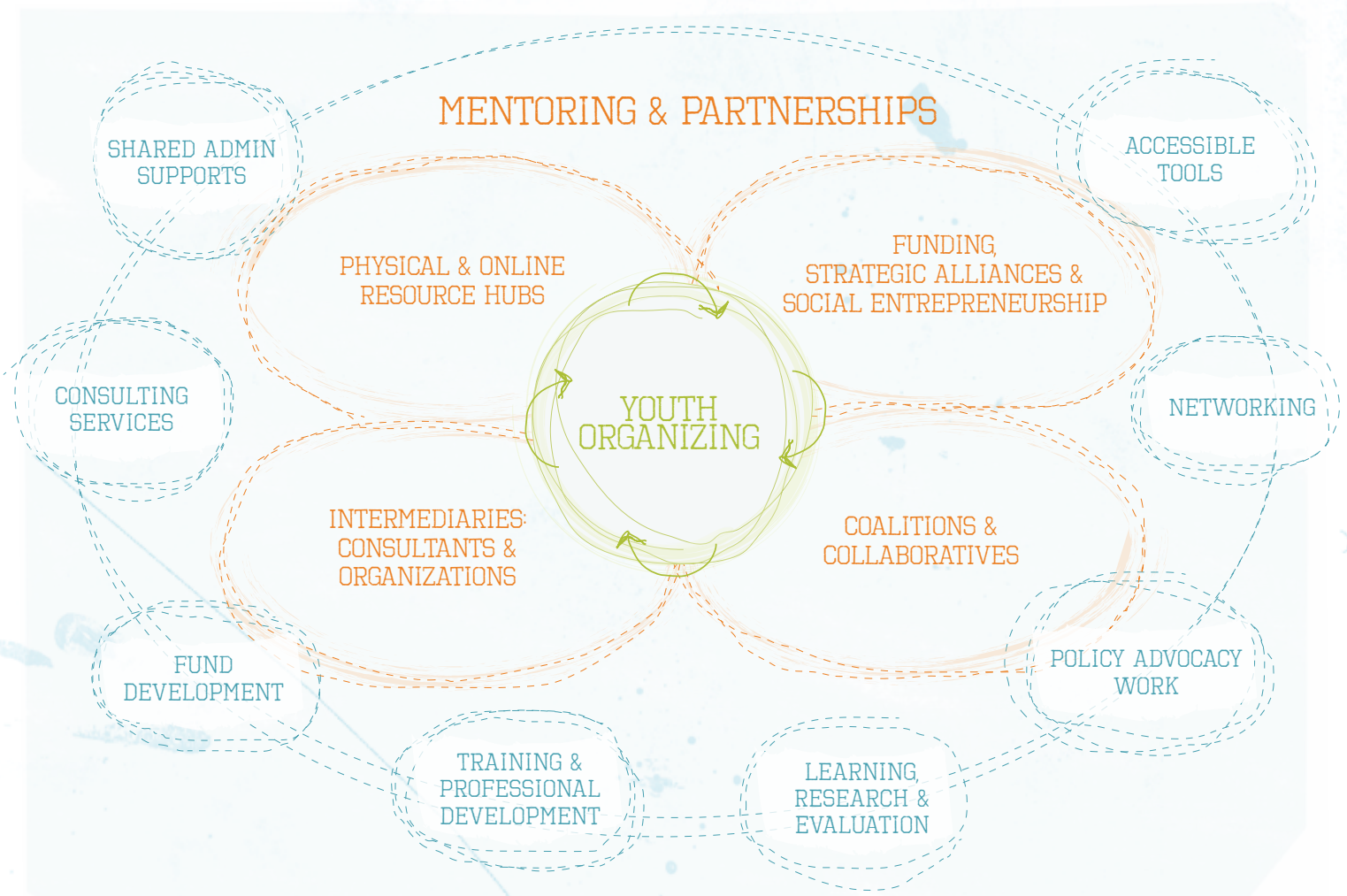




“IT’S ABOUT CONNECTIONS AND CONNECTORS... MORE THAN ONE PERSON IS AVAILABLE, THERE IS A NETWORK YOU CAN COUNT ON, RATHER THAN PLACE ALL THE PRESSURE ON AN INDIVIDUAL PERSON OR ORGANIZATION.

PEOPLE DON’T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH AND THUS WE’LL SEE A LOT OF CONTINUED INITIATIVES. ORGANIZATIONS WON’T DIE OUT AND WE’LL KEEP PEOPLE MORE CLOSELY ATTUNED TO THEIR PASSIONS”

## SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT YOUTH ORGANIZING



**“The people I see in youth organizations, we will later see in community organizations. So, part of it is not just in the investment of the organization, but in the investment in the person. The investment in a social infrastructure that supports capacity strengthening for youth organizing goes beyond the immediate and future development needs of the youth sector, but is ultimately about participation, about creating ways and spaces to have people involved with power and ownership in community.”**

“COULD SMALL GROUPS RATHER THAN BE INCORPORATED OR HAVE A TRUSTEE, WORK IN AN INFRASTRUCTURE – HOW DO THESE GROUPS HAVE A SAFE SPACE TO TRY THEIR IDEA, GET CHARITABLE DOLLARS, GET ACCESS TO ADMINISTRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE, MENTORING, CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT FROM SOMEONE BEFORE THEY ARE EXPECTED TO BE A LEGAL ENTITY?

DO THEY EVEN NEED TO BECOME A LEGAL ENTITY? IT'S ABOUT CONTROL OF PROGRAMMING, USING A SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE COULD BE ANOTHER MODEL – NOT ONE SOLUTION, A MIX, A COMBINATION OF THINGS.”



An existing or emerging group of young people looking to address an issue in their community would be connected to this infrastructure from one or more entry points:

- through a funder that they have approached to support their idea;
- through a coalition or collaborative to which they are connected;
- through an intermediary they are aware of, or have a relationship with;
- through their connections to other youth organizing groups (a likely entry point); OR
- through a physical or online resource centre.

It is important to recognize the overlap among these areas.

For example some funders and some coalitions provide intermediary supports, and in some cases intermediaries may also provide funding (e.g. “re-granting” catalyst funds to seed new ideas/projects).

Different groups will be at different stages of development and will have different goals based on their identified needs (e.g. to build an organization vs. desire to focus on a particular project).

All groups should be able to access the social infrastructure to build capacity for their work to be successful. Groups would also access different support at different points as they move through stages of growth and development.

The elements captured in the diagram are further explored in this document, through research findings and an examination of current thinking and practice which form the beginnings of the “foundations” and “pipelines” to build a sustainable infrastructure for youth organizing.

# CALL TO ACTION: WHERE ARE WE AT? WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

There are good examples involving funding and delivering elements of social infrastructure for youth organizing that currently exist in other jurisdictions. There are also strong emerging practices and models within the Toronto area that can be further explored and enhanced to develop and sustain a social infrastructure.

While there has been increased attention to youth issues and an increase in youth organizing and youth-led work in the Toronto area, long-standing systemic issues and power dynamics in relation to policies, program delivery and funding practices have not shifted in a significant way, fragmenting the good work that exists.

To begin to move forward in developing an effective social infrastructure that provides sustainability and the necessary ongoing capacity supports for youth organizing, strong relationships based on trust and respect for different experiences among the following groups are critical.

→ **Funders and policy makers** who may be supporting pieces of youth-led work now must come together to collectively develop strategic, long-term approaches that will support the key elements of a social infrastructure. This should include collaborative funding strategies, but also consideration of roles that funders can play to invest in both capital assets (such as physical spaces) and youth-led social entrepreneurship.

It should also involve action steps for systemic shifts in the processes by which policies that affect communities (e.g. justice, environmental health or education issues) directly including youth in how these policies are developed and implemented. There also needs to be an analysis of trustee relationships and how funders are currently using trusteeship. Positive practices that keep the opportunity for self-determined youth-led work as the end goal must be the model funders seek.

An immediate next step in this regard can involve a convening of funders and policymakers to reflect on this report and identify action steps that they can take. This would include supporting intermediaries and advocacy collectives to build skills and networks among youth organizing work, and create space for youth leadership on policy issues.

→ **Change agents in key social institutions and service organizations** need to develop and implement initiatives to reform existing practices that systemically marginalize youth and remove power and self-determination from communities.

Youth serving organizations and youth-led groups need to form stronger links and relationships as currently a disconnection between the two has been identified. As such, there is often division between these two different groups with no coordinated vision to work together. An intermediary with experience in working with both groups can play a key role in helping to bring them together.

The trustee relationship must also be examined with respect to how it exists between mainstream organizations and youth-led groups. Many larger agencies are being inundated by youth-led groups looking for a trustee as this is the only manner by which they can access most funding opportunities.



As noted in relation to funders, positive models which break down the power dynamics that frequently arise between agencies and youth-led groups need to be seen as the models to pursue moving forward. Again, the role of the intermediary can be explored in this regard.

→ **Youth organizers** need to ensure their mandates address the role of youth in community issues and not just what is traditionally seen as “youth issues”, which can lead to a very limited view of youth work. In doing so, they need to continue to advocate for the role of youth in informing and creating solutions to important community issues, challenging the structures that systemically oppress youth work.

With support from the key groups noted above, youth organizers must work to make stronger connections to peers and mentors with an intentional effort to share learning and resources, growing their collective capacity. Succession planning in youth work can also be more effectively fostered in this way.

These key groups must meet together with a commitment to shared power and decision-making to develop an action plan that moves forward on building a social infrastructure. In doing so, they do not need to start from scratch but first identify the work that is already happening, and the relationships that have already begun to form, and build upon this work.

An intermediary who can serve as a convenor and facilitator between youth organizers, service organizations and the policy and funding communities could play a key role in bringing these groups together to form this plan.

Strategies need to adequately resource intermediaries, coalitions and youth organizing groups and provide training, tools, resources, networking, communications, administrative supports and physical space.

All these key groups need to be involved to bring the needed resources to build this infrastructure. New resources are required. There is also the opportunity to intentionally allocate resources more effectively to support social infrastructure through doing work in different ways, spending existing money and time differently.

Communication processes must also be put in place to support the ongoing effort that will be needed to ensure that the integrity of mutually trusting relationships is maintained as the infrastructure develops over time.

An action plan should inherently include mechanisms to gather learning, which can involve community-based research initiatives and evaluation strategies that fully embrace the learning that comes from both the challenges and successes that emerge in youth-led work. These should be applied in a continuous improvement approach that will inform the development of the infrastructure over time.

Steps can be taken immediately to convene these key groups to build the foundations and pipelines needed to move away from a patchwork approach to supporting youth organizing and establish the communities that will sustain this work.

“WE...HAVE A CHOICE TO MAKE. WE CAN DECIDE NOT TO TAKE YOUTH ORGANIZING SERIOUSLY AND LAMENT THE APATHY, CONSUMERISM AND CRIMINALIZATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE THAT WE SEE IN THE MEDIA. OR WE CAN SUPPORT THEM TO DO THE WORK THAT IS TRANSFORMING THIS NATION, ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME”

Urban Transformations: Youth Organizing in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington D.C.  
Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing



# CONTEXT: LITERATURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

## Useful Definitions

This discussion paper involves a qualitative research study that builds upon literature and existing models promoting the importance of youth organizing and specific needs for sustainability and growth. In order to understand the literature, it is important to define various terms.

## Youth and Youth Organizing

The term 'youth' can be confusing, as it is defined differently depending on the organization. To name just a few examples, the City of Toronto refers to youth as those between the ages of 13 and 24, while the Government of Canada defines youth as those ages 15 to 29. The Grassroots Youth Collaborative, an organization involved in this report, defines youth as 13 to 29. Funders also identify variant age ranges in association with youth – the Laidlaw Foundation in Toronto and the Surdna Foundation in New York City identify youth as ranging from 13-25 years of age.

The City of Toronto's report *Involve Youth*<sup>8</sup> describes some of the issues and concerns surrounding the term youth – "There is some concern that adolescence is being extended too far. Some have argued that the 'youth' label infantilizes young adults and extends the period of their powerlessness".

Considering this, psychosocial development literature speaks about "adolescence" and "young adulthood" ranging from 12-18 and 19-35 respectively, noting these phases of development as a time of identity development<sup>9</sup>. It involves navigation of relationships and intimacy that go beyond family of origin to members of a wider society.

The Surdna Foundation has begun to identify the term "young professional" in relation to work they are doing in youth organizing, identifying a group of young people who have typically had experience running youth-led initiatives themselves, and who are entering another phase of supporting grassroots and social activist work, much of which is youth-led.

THE TERM YOUTH CAPTURES A DIVERSE  
GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT  
EXPERIENCES OF POWER AND PRIVILEGE.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP THIS IN MIND  
WHEN LOOKING AT THE MANY ELEMENTS  
INVOLVED IN THE YOUTH SECTOR.

---

<sup>8</sup> City of Toronto (2006). *Involve youth 2: A guide to meaningful youth engagement*. Toronto: City of Toronto.

<sup>9</sup> Erickson, E.H. (1994) *Identity, youth and crisis*. W.W. Norton and Company.



In addition to recognizing the complexities of defining youth, it is important to remember the role of the array of influences upon youth development which can provide positive or negative experiences that shape a young person's perspectives and behaviours. Here again, psychosocial development literature is helpful as it has identified key areas of influence on young people that range from family, community, societal and global levels. Research in this area demonstrates that the ongoing interactions between a young person and these multi-directional influences in his or her life affect how he or she grows and develops. Each area of influence overlaps with the others to affect the young person's life<sup>10</sup>.

It is equally important to remember that "youth programming that provides youth engagement is not a fixed approach. It is a spectrum of approaches that are reciprocal, dynamic and interactive. These approaches run the gamut from traditional programs that target young people to programs by youth and for youth"<sup>11</sup>. Further along that spectrum is 'youth organizing', sometimes referred to as youth-led organizing.

*This report examines youth-led work conducted by those who fall into the various age range definitions of "youth" focusing on youth organizing and the social infrastructure needed to sustain youth organizing.*

## **"Social Infrastructure" to Support Youth Organizing**

The term "social infrastructure" in relation to youth organizing has emerged as a result of the need to provide sustained support to self-determined youth-led work, involving mentorship and partnerships. While the term has recently emerged in association to youth organizing, the term "social infrastructure" has a long history, being used in community development work as a means to "increase social cohesion in urban cores" and recognized as contributing to "...the viability of communities...as a determinate in how equitable and inclusive, and economically, environmentally and socially sustainable neighborhoods and cities are."<sup>12</sup> It is also described as "the system of social services, networks and facilities that support people in healthy communities..."<sup>13</sup> and "the range of activities, organizations and facilities supporting the development and maintenance of social relationships in a community"<sup>14</sup>

YOUTH ORGANIZING :  
"... STRATEGIES THAT  
BRING YOUTH TOGETHER  
FOR THE PURPOSE OF YOUTH  
DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL  
JUSTICE.

YOUTH ORGANIZING  
CREATES OPPORTUNITIES  
WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE  
INTEGRAL LEADERS AND  
DECISION-MAKERS IN THEIR  
OWN LIVES AND COMMUNI-  
TIES, AND IN WHICH THE  
SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS  
THAT SERVE THEM AND  
THEIR COMMUNITIES ARE  
HELD ACCOUNTABLE.

THIS LEADERSHIP CAN  
TAKE ON VARIOUS FORMS,  
FROM AUTHENTIC YOUTH  
LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES  
WITHIN PROGRAMMING AND  
ORGANIZATION, TO COMPLETE  
GOVERNANCE BY YOUTH AND  
FOR YOUTH. "

Listen, Inc – An Emerging Model for Working with Youth -  
Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing

<sup>10</sup> Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) The ecology of human development. Harvard University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Ontario Trillium Foundation (2007). Meeting the Needs of Ontario's Youth. Toronto: Ontario Government.

<sup>12</sup> City of Ottawa: Social Infrastructure Project. Accessed at: [http://ottawa.ca/residents/housing/infrastructure/index\\_en.html](http://ottawa.ca/residents/housing/infrastructure/index_en.html)

<sup>13</sup> Baker, N. (2006) (Re) Introducing social infrastructure. Based on a Discussion Paper on Concepts and Practices of Social Infrastructure – An application to Canadian Rural Partnership Dialogues and Status of Women Projects in BC. Submitted to Status of Women Canada and the BC Rural Team.



Established support for such an approach in relation to youth organizing is evident. The work of the Surdna Foundation's Effective Citizenry program and the broader work of the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing have been based upon a premise of "infrastructure development" for youth organizing.

**A social infrastructure refers to various capacity-building elements that develop and maintain resources designed to build skills among youth leaders that they can use to be more effective in their immediate and future work.**

**The fundamental principles that drive the elements of this infrastructure must be grounded in social inclusion, building trust and shifting traditional institutional power dynamics, leading to increased self-determination in communities.**

Capacities have been defined as "the actual knowledge, skill sets, participation, leadership and resources required by community groups to effectively address local issues and concerns."<sup>15</sup>

Capacity building elements of a social infrastructure include **mentoring and networking** (with peers and adult allies through both interactive and electronic means), **advocacy skill building**, access to **training and tools** (e.g. workshops, online resources, common resource spaces) and **consultant support** (e.g. legal, financial advice, etc.). Another term for such a consultant has been "community coach" who is seen as a "guide who supports communities and organizations in identifying and achieving their goals."<sup>16</sup>

Two additional key elements of a solid social infrastructure are:

- **"Intermediaries"** – individuals and organizations who have the means in place to provide the skill-building described above and have a well-established history of working effectively with youth-led organizations and initiatives.
- **Institutional and structural change agents** - organizations or institutions who choose to transform their structures and processes to meaningfully integrate and engage youth leaders in a manner that fosters youth decision-making on priorities, strategies and services as a core element of the work.

<sup>14</sup> Voluntary Works UK. (2007) Accessed at: [www.voluntaryworks.org.uk](http://www.voluntaryworks.org.uk)

<sup>15</sup> Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse. (2002). Capacity building for health promotion: More than Brick and Mortar.

<sup>16</sup> Emery, M., Hubbell, K., Salant, P. (2005) Coaching for Community and Organizational Change. Coaching Roundtable, Boise Idaho.



## The Value of Youth Organizing

As expressed in the Youth on Youth Report, “youth-led organizations know what’s going on with the youth and the youth environment”<sup>17</sup>. In essence, youth organizing is important because grassroots leadership is important.

As evident in the community development literature, leadership from within a community is essential to community empowerment.<sup>18</sup> Community development is typically based in a social inclusion framework, which seeks to address disparities in relation to income, human rights, access, participation, belonging, valued contribution and empowerment.<sup>19</sup>

A social inclusion lens is particularly relevant to youth organizing work. Further, the youth organizing literature stresses the importance of youth leadership in organizing. Youth can relate to their peers in the community; understand the issues that affect them; and consequently engage youth in meaningful ways.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26</sup>

It is also important to ensure social infrastructure provides youth with a critical understanding of how the issues of localities tie into and affect larger historically rooted sociopolitical issues. Many doing on-the-ground work may have a limited awareness of the larger context and as a result the programming can be plentiful but lacking full engagement.

Grassroots leadership is in part important because it ensures that groups that are often left out of decision-making processes are more fairly represented. This is evident in the youth organizing literature that promotes youth leadership as a way to promote youth representation in relevant issues. The literature expresses the diversity within youth organizing and how this must be recognized in order to support fair representation.

“WHETHER YOUTH ARE WORKING TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS SPECIFICALLY FACING YOUTH OR ISSUES AFFECTING THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY, ALL YOUTH INVOLVED IN ORGANIZING MUST CONFRONT AND OVERCOME THE FACT THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE POLITICALLY DISEMPOWERED AND DENIED ACCESS TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.”

Building Youth Movements for Community Change  
James, T. & McGillicuddy, K. (2001). *The Nonprofit Quarterly*, 8(4), 1-3.

“BY EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF AGE WITH RACE, GENDER, CLASS, DISABILITY AND SEXUALITY, MANY ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DEVELOPED A SOPHISTICATED ANALYSIS FOR HOW ISSUES INTERACT TO IMPACT THEIR COMMUNITIES. AS A RESULT, MANY YOUTH GROUPS NOT ONLY WORK TO CREATE POWER FOR YOUTH IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, THEY ALSO HAVE THE BROADER GOAL OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT.”

Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center (2004).  
Making Space, Making Change: Profiles of Youth-led and Youth-driven Organizations.

<sup>17</sup> Warner, R. (2005). Youth on Youth Report. Toronto: Grassroots Youth Collaborative.

<sup>18</sup> Campens, H. (1997). International review of community development. In H. Campens (Ed.) *Community Development Around the World: Practice, Theory, Research, Training* (1st Edition, pp.13-46) Toronto: University of Toronto Press

<sup>19</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada (2002). *An Inclusion Lens: Workbook for Looking at Social and Economic Exclusion and Inclusion*. Accessed at: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca).

<sup>20</sup> Hosang, D. (2003). Youth and community organizing today. *Social Policy*, 34(2), 66-70.

<sup>21</sup> Kim, J. & Sherman, R. F. (2006). Youth as important civic actors: From the margins to the center. *National Civic Review*, Spring 2006, 3-6.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis-Charp, H., Yu, H.C. & Soukamneuth, S. (2006). Civic activist approaches for engaging youth in social justice. In S. Ginwright, P. Noguera & J. Cammarota (Eds.), *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change*. (1st ed., pp. 21-35). New York, NY: Routledge.

<sup>23</sup> Quiroz-Martínez, J., HoSang, D., & Villarosa, L. (2004). *Changing the Rules of the Game: Youth Development & Structural Racism*. Washington, D.C.: Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity.

<sup>24</sup> Quiroz-Martínez, J., Wu, D. Pei, Zimmerman, K. (2005). *ReGeneration: Young People Shaping Environmental Justice*. Oakland, CA: Movement Strategy Center.

<sup>25</sup> Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center (2004). *Making Space, Making Change: Profiles of Youth-led and Youth-driven Organizations*. Oakland, California: Movement Strategy Center.

<sup>26</sup> James, T. (2005). *Bringing it together: Uniting youth organizing, development and services for long-term sustainability*. Oakland, California: Movement Strategy Center.



**An important result of this diverse, community-based youth leadership is an environment that supports new and innovative solutions for social change. Across the progressive movement, organizers are recognizing that cross-issue and cross-community strategizing is crucial to increasing collective impact. Youth organizing reflects this larger strategy of connecting issues and embracing broader frameworks.**

Changing the Rules of the Game: Youth Development & Structural Racism

As such, youth organizing is not only about youth representing youth, but is about youth of diverse identities being represented within social movements. Therefore, it is more than just being a “youth”, but about ensuring groups can define themselves on their own terms, that is, identifying with a specific race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, a specific neighbourhood, or a combination of these identities.<sup>27</sup>

This is evident in looking at just a few examples from the youth organizing environment in the Toronto area: Young Diplomats is an organization of youth working to empower fellow Ethiopian youth; Regent Park Focus is a youth-driven organization that uses media production projects to make social change in Regent Park; and Beatz to da Streetz uses music to engage with youth.<sup>28</sup>

Clearly youth organizing in the Toronto area takes on many forms in order to provide space for various youth, and this is further evidenced through the investigation pursued in this project. One of the unique aspects of the Toronto area is the fact that it is a city with growing multi-Diasporic communities. In order to reflect the values of community development in Toronto, it is vital that all of Toronto’s communities are represented, and are active in decision-making processes. This includes the diversity of youth organizing initiatives in Toronto.

As a result of meaningful inclusion, youth organizing helps to nurture informed citizens who are able to think more critically, take ownership in their communities and act as advocates for their communities.<sup>29</sup> The literature asserts that youth organizing is also an important way to engage youth and build capacities such as organizational skills and leadership.<sup>27,29</sup>

“I THINK IT IS REALLY INTERESTING THAT THE INDIVIDUALS EMBARKING ON THIS ROAD OF YOUTH-LED ORGANIZING ARE COMING FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, OFTEN AS FIRST OR SECOND GENERATION IMMIGRANTS.

DISCUSSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY NEED TO ENGAGE HOW SOCIAL CAPITAL IS CONSTRUCTED, ENGAGED AND SUSTAINED BY THESE YOUTH WITH MULTI-LAYERED IDENTITIES”



<sup>27</sup> Warner, R. (2005). Youth on Youth Report. Toronto: Grassroots Youth Collaborative.

<sup>28</sup> Grassroots Youth Collaborative (2007). GYC Members. Retrieved November 14, 2007 from: <http://www.grassrootseyouth.ca/node/2>.

<sup>29</sup> City of Toronto (2006). Involve youth 2: A guide to meaningful youth engagement. Toronto: City of Toronto.



Having youth run their own affairs as staff and participants leads to “self-confidence, outspoken-ness, social minded-ness and, ultimately, civic engagement.”<sup>30</sup>

Further assertions for youth organizing include:

**By taking on authentic responsibility for organizations and campaigns, youth are engaged in a real-life cycle of learning that includes continual analysis, action, and reflection; develop an expanded vision of their potential and deep community with each other; gain powerful organizational and community leadership skills; are supported in their personal development and healing; and learn valuable skills in organizational and program development and management”**

Making Space, Making Change: Profiles of Youth-led and Youth-driven Organizations<sup>31</sup>

The impact of youth-led organizing has multiple reaches. The grassroots approach that is utilized in youth organizing leads to diverse leadership; which results in inclusive youth development and skill-building.

“THE PROMISE OF YOUTH ORGANIZING LIES NOT ONLY IN RESULTS, BUT ALSO IN METHODOLOGY. YOUTH ORGANIZING GROUPS REGULARLY LOOK TO HISTORY FOR INSPIRATION, WHILE INVENTING NEW SPACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE’S PERSONAL EXPRESSION AND POLITICAL ACTION.

THEY ARE LEARNING TO MANAGE HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATIONS, WHILE BUILDING A MOVEMENT THAT SUPERCEDES THAT INFRASTRUCTURE. AND THEY ARE FASHIONING A STRONG POLITICAL IDENTITY AS “YOUTH” THAT COMPLIMENTS THE OTHER DIVERSE DIMENSIONS OF THEIR PERSONHOOD, AS WELL AS A POLITICAL ANALYSIS THAT LINKS POVERTY, VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION TO THEIR EXPERIENCES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT...YOUTH ORGANIZING GROUPS WORK ON ISSUES THAT AFFECT WHOLE COMMUNITIES AND HAVE HAD NUMEROUS POLICY WINS.

AT THE SAME TIME, GROUPS ARE DEVELOPING A CRITICAL PIPELINE OF THOUGHTFUL, INNOVATIVE AND STRATEGIC LEADERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS TO DRAW UPON. THUS, YOUTH ORGANIZING IS A CRITICAL STRATEGY FOR LONG-TERM COMMUNITY IMPACT AND TRANSFORMATION.”

Urban Transformations: Youth Organizing in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington D.C – Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing

<sup>31</sup> Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center (2004). Making Space, Making Change: Profiles of Youth-led and Youth-driven Organizations. Oakland, California: Movement Strategy Center.

## The Importance of Building Social Infrastructure for Youth Organizing

Considering the demonstrated value inherent in youth organizing, and the initial considerations regarding the lack of connected, coordinated, cohesive supports to enhance this work in the Toronto area, the challenge lies in creating models for youth organizing that are meaningful to youth and their communities, which provide positive outcomes for their peers and the communities they serve.

In other words, we must look beyond traditional partnerships and create a place for youth to be more involved in the processes and outcomes that affect their own lives. In Toronto and beyond, youth have been working together with supporting organizations and funding bodies to develop innovative strategies to enhance youth organizing.

## Mentoring and Partnerships – The Basis of Social Infrastructure

Mentorship and partnerships have a fundamental role to play in youth organizing. As funders, industry experts and trustee organizations, adults and young professionals who work with youth and support youth programming are in a critical position to support youth organizing and self-determination.

The Youth on Youth report states that building partnerships with other organizations and agencies often facilitated the transference of skills and expertise to youth. The importance of mentoring relationships is also noted in *Bringing it Together: Uniting Youth Organizing, Development and Services for Long-term Sustainability*. The report found that youth organizations were strengthened when they “...worked hard to redefine the roles of young people in community work and their relationships with adults as part of a strategy to reconnect and heal intergenerational relationships”.

The aim of youth organizing is not to work in isolation, but to provide a space for youth within the broader movement of social justice for all. Adults need to be important allies and partners in the youth-led sector by recognizing the importance of youth-led organizing and the knowledge and expertise that youth bring to their work. Youth and adults need to work in mutually beneficial partnerships involving shared power and decision-making.

## Building Social Infrastructure – Learning from Emergent Models

A variety of emergent models can be identified in the literature with respect to social infrastructure for youth organizing. In 2006, Taking IT Global released a report mapping youth-led and highly engaged youth initiatives across Canada, identifying the following elements among the assets of effective youth-led work :

- Infrastructure and youth-friendly spaces
- Asset-builders and social networks;
- Spaces for collaboration and networking;
- Information and communication technologies; and
- Decision-making platforms for youth.

<sup>32</sup> Warner, R. (2005). *Youth on Youth Report*. Toronto: Grassroots Youth Collaborative.

<sup>33</sup> James, T. & McGillicuddy, K. (2001). *Building Youth Movements for Community Change*. *The Nonprofit Quarterly*, 8(4), 1-3.

<sup>34</sup> Taking IT Global (2006). *Cross-Canada Mapping of Youth-led and/or Highly Youth-engaged Initiatives*. Report prepared for J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.



There is also a growing trend seeking to foster youth organizing through the arts. Evidence demonstrates that the arts are an effective outreach tool to engage youth, build resiliency and self-esteem in young people, contribute to healthy and supportive communities for youth, help in successful transition to adulthood and the development of in-demand job skills, and offer opportunities for youth to affect positive change in their communities.<sup>35</sup>

“...THE WORK WASN'T JUST FOR ARTS SAKE. IT WAS A SPACE FOR YOUTH TO TALK ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE, TALK ABOUT WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON IN OUR LIVES, AND EDUCATE YOUTH ABOUT DIFFERENT STRUGGLES”

Urban Transformations: Youth Organizing in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington D.C.  
Fundors Collaborative on Youth Organizing

Literature has also examined various models for youth organizing involving different types of partnerships.

A particular example explored in one report<sup>36</sup> is *Youth Organizers United*, involving young people of color ages twenty-five and under living in New York City. The theory of change in this organization is rooted in the assertion that young people transform and revitalize their communities when they have opportunities to build real community with each other, develop skills and knowledge, run their own organizations, participate in decisions that impact their well-being, and lead community organizing campaigns.

The Core Leadership Team is made up of youth twenty-five years old and younger and includes an executive director, program coordinators and an administrative coordinator. Twelve Youth Organizers form the core membership. They develop and implement organizing and advocacy campaigns. Seventy-five youth participate in the Youth Leadership and Advocacy Institute, the entry point into the organization.

An Adult Ally Consultant provides ongoing coaching support to the leadership team. The adult ally does not make any decisions. The Board of Directors is made up of young adults ages eighteen to thirty. They have policy and financial oversight.

The Adult Ally Advisory Committee provide advice and make no decisions. The role of adult allies is to provide coaching, training, and advice as consultants and advisory board members.

The identified strengths of this group are that:

- young people involved feel deep ownership, power and family in the group
- there is a structure to support young people to develop while taking on organizational, community, and political leadership roles
- youth policies are shaped by young people
- adult perceptions of youth change

<sup>35</sup>Making the Case for Arts and Culture for Personal and Social Development of Youth, (2005) Creative City Network of Canada.

<sup>36</sup>Making Space Making Change: Profiles of Youth-Led and Youth-Driven Organizations (2004). Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center, with the Youth Speak Out Coalition.



Another report conducted research on youth organizing, indicating that all of the organizations had partnerships with other individuals or organizations, but that the emphasis was different between those who primarily handled work internally, and those who relied on their partners to meet the service and youth development needs of their youth organizers. The study included single organization models, coalitions, strong core programs with a few key partners, formal and informal partnerships that involved both integrated staffing models and access to external support to execute work.

There is an increasing trend toward informal and formal collaborations in regard to youth organizing work.<sup>37</sup>

This report also highlights factors that lead to successful partnerships which include:

- healthy organizations that are independently funded
- adequate human and financial resources to manage partnerships
- overlapping leadership
- political/cultural community

There is also a growing interest in social enterprise as a tool to both facilitate and support youth organizing. This is a rapidly emerging model that needs further consideration.

As noted when discussing useful definitions, organizations like the *Surdna Foundation*, through its Effective Citizenry program, have highlighted the importance of youth leadership development and have invested in action that supports infrastructure support for effective youth organizing.

The Surdna Foundation in particular has taken a lead in supporting 'infrastructure organizations' also referred to as 'intermediary organizations'. These intermediary groups offer support to youth-led organizations which are responsible for "direct action" through programming and mobilization.

**Direct action groups train and catalyze young people, while infrastructure groups improve the knowledge, practice, and effectiveness of our direct action grantees through research, documentation, network-building, convening, curriculum development, and management assistance activities.**

– Surdna Foundation

"...WHILE A DECADE AGO, YOUTH ORGANIZING GROUPS WORKED MOSTLY IN ISOLATION FROM ONE ANOTHER, TODAY A REMARKABLE 94% OF ORGANIZATIONS REPORT BEING CONNECTED TO OTHER YOUTH ORGANIZING GROUPS. THESE CONNECTIONS HAVE BEEN BUILT THROUGH CONFERENCES, REGIONAL EXCHANGES, AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXCHANGES SUPPORTED BY FOUNDATIONS.

FURTHER AIDED BY THE INTERNET AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY, INCREASED COMMUNICATION AND NETWORKING HAVE GENERATED AN AVALANCHE OF SHARED RESOURCES AND CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES, AND FACILITATED SHARING, LEARNING AND COLLECTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING."

Urban Transformations: Youth Organizing in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington D.C.  
Fundors Collaborative on Youth Organizing

<sup>37</sup> Bringing it Together: Uniting youth organizing, development and services for long-term sustainability (2005). Movement Strategy Centre

Surdna has funded such groups as the *Urban Youth Collective* in New York, and *Youth United for Change* in Philadelphia which focus on providing advocacy training and networking in relation to the quality and equity of high school education, the creation of safe and respectful learning environments, and supports to ensure student success.

The Surdna Foundation, as part of the *Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing*, is one of a collective of funders demonstrating interest in this area.

The goals of this collaborative are to increase the level of funding directed toward youth organizing and support them in becoming stable and sustainable organizations. It also seeks to increase the awareness and understanding of youth organizing among funders and community organizations.

The collaborative engages in what it calls “strategic resourcing” through grantmaking and capacity-building work. It pools funds that are then re-granted, and engages in collaborative learning processes and knowledge dissemination in relation to this granting so members can more effectively learn from the knowledge gained, rather than conducting this work separately.

**Strategic resourcing focuses on promoting networking and infrastructure development to connect and strengthen youth organizing efforts and strategic partnerships with key youth organizing intermediaries and youth-serving professionals to strengthen and support grassroots groups at all stages of development. The education and outreach work of the group involves consulting and technical assistance for strategizing and supporting youth organizing.**

- Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing

In particular, in 2003 it launched the “Roots Initiative” with Listen Inc., a national capacity-building non-profit organization focused on strengthening social capital and leadership among youth for civic engagement and community problem solving. This three-year capacity-building partnership between philanthropy, grassroots groups and support organizations seeks to build the long-term sustainability and impact of the field.

Ten youth organizing groups from different states were participants in the project. The goals of the initiative included:

- Organizational development of key youth organizing groups to become sustainable and stable in the long term
- Network development to foster strong working relationships across key youth organizing group and enhance collective leadership for the field overall
- Field-building through the development and dissemination of standard practices and tools for a broader audience of youth organizing groups.

This philanthropic collaborative indicates individual, group and community level impacts in relation to youth organizing work:

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Community</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Building individual skills of young people, especially in critical and analytical problem solving, teamwork and collaboration</li><li>→ Developing principled, accountable leadership among young people in the context of collective and community well-being, history and culture</li><li>→ Instilling awareness in young people about the root causes of issues, and the social and political forces that shape their surroundings as well as their identities</li><li>→ Developing young people's sense of self-agency and belief in the potential for positive systemic changes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Building collaboration and cohesion among youth and adults</li><li>→ Building collective purpose among youth and adults</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Changing serious problems facing communities, especially marginalized communities, and work to ensure that systems and policies are accountable, equitable and fair</li><li>→ Confronting racism and discrimination and its role in creating and perpetuating social inequities</li><li>→ Connecting youth issues to broader community issues</li><li>→ Altering the perception of youth held by adults and policymakers and bringing young people and their perspectives into important networks and decision-making bodies</li></ul>

Emergent models are evident within youth organizing work in the Toronto area as well. These are further explored later in the document in relation to the research findings regarding building social infrastructure to support youth organizing in the city.



# RESEARCH: METHODOLOGY & FINDINGS

The conceptual framework, research, analysis, and proposed future directions presented in this document are the result of a collaborative process that engaged youth, organizations run by youth and young professionals, community organizations which serve youth, and funders that support youth initiatives within the urban context of the Toronto area.

It was a purposeful exercise to engage all of these voices as each has a role to play in providing the “foundations” and “pipelines” that can build upon the patchwork of community development and social justice initiatives seeking to foster youth organizing and self-determination.

The findings provide a viewpoint that is relevant to this urban Toronto context, but can be further explored to examine how they might resonate in other communities as well, be they urban, suburban or rural.

## Advisors and Project Team

The Advisory Committee for this work included representatives who could reflect the experiences for each of the groups described above, involving the individuals and groups identified below.

Committee members included:

→ Agora Foundation	Leslie Wright
→ ArtReach Toronto	Shahina Sayani
→ Canadian Heritage and City of Toronto	Laura Metcalfe
→ Grassroots Youth Collaborative	Craig Fortier
→ Laidlaw Foundation	Violetta Ilkiw, Ana Skinner
→ Sage Centre and Tides Canada Foundation	Doug Kerr
→ Schools Without Borders	Chris Kang
→ The REMIX Project	Gavin Sheppard, Kehinde Bah
→ University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work	Jillian Witt
→ University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work	Serena De Souza
→ York University Faculty of Environmental Studies	Sarah Flicker

Committee members worked collectively to inform the design and implementation of the project, engaging in-kind support from **Michelle Brownrigg**, Knowledge Management and Strategic Communications Consultant at the Laidlaw Foundation to write the report. **May El Abdallah**, a youth member of the ArtReach Toronto Grant Review team with experience in conducting research on youth-led initiatives, also supported the research process.

A fundamental principal for the Committee in conducting this work was to engage consulting support from a young professional with experience in youth-led work to play a primary role in the execution of the project. **Munira Ravji** was retained to play this important role and was integral to the design, implementation and write up of the research.

A student at the School of Community and Public Affairs at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, at the time this research was conducted, Munira's direct experience with the opportunities and challenges of youth organizing was a valued asset over the course of the initiative. She understood the dynamics of mobilizing youth peers, adult partners, and the support structures required to make youth organizing a healthy and meaningful experience for all parties involved

## Interview Participants and Analysis

Interviews were conducted with 26 different types of organizations across Toronto. The selection process for interviewees was based on a desire to consult with a cross section of those who have been involved in different ways in supporting youth organizing work in the city. A qualitative methodology involving in-depth interviews was chosen to distill the information in response to these research questions. It was felt that this method would provide the opportunity for deeper examination of the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Participants included funders of this work, youth who have been leading initiatives and organizations, as well as young professionals and adult allies who have been providing capacity-strengthening intermediary support to youth to help them in the execution of their work.

When choosing the interview participants, efforts were made to examine different examples of each of these three types of groups. As such, interviewees included:

- smaller and larger scale funders with varying approaches to the funding process;
- youth-led work that was run by independent, incorporated organizations as well as youth-led initiatives that were situated in a "trustee" relationship, where the youth group was either housed in, or supported by a larger organization; and
- those providing intermediary capacity-strengthening support to youth-led work - including those who were youth themselves, young professionals with recent, relevant experiences of running their own youth-led initiatives, and adult allies who were either trustees or acted as consultants to youth organizing work.

It is important to note that there is considerable overlap across these three areas. For example, some funders will provide a level of intermediary capacity-building support to their grantees. In addition, many youth and young professionals are leading their own initiatives, while also providing some intermediary supports to their peers.

Interview participants included:

- Agora Foundation
- ArtReach Toronto
- Beatz to da Streetz
- Canada's World
- Canadian Heritage
- City Hall, Toronto
- City Wide Young Leaders
- Dream Now
- 4Unity Media Productions
- Friends In Trouble
- Somali Youth Association (SOYAT)
- Grassroots Youth Collaborative
- Sage Centre/Tides Canada Foundation
- Laidlaw Foundation
- REMIX Project
- Literacy Through Hip Hop
- Lost Lyrics
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Positive Youth Outreach
- Regent Park Focus
- Lakeshore Area Multipurpose Project (LAMP)
- Hoodlinc
- Schools Without Borders
- Youthline
- Taking IT Global
- Theatre Revolve
- Toronto Youth Cabinet
- W.O.R.D.
- Youth Challenge Fund
- Youth In Power
- Toronto Community Housing Social Investment Fund

Participant observations in the form of site and program visits were also conducted. This provided an opportunity to see youth organizing in action and to observe the role of various groups and the intersections of these groups.

Examining their work provided a sense of the overall spectrum of youth organizing in the Toronto area, which certainly goes beyond the sub-section of work conducted by these groups.

Each interview was individually transcribed, coded and analyzed to derive the key elements that emerged from the discussion. The entire collection of interviews was then analyzed to determine cross-cutting themes that responded to the research questions.

## Findings

This research is intended to be a window into the emerging components of social infrastructure that support youth organizing. While it is informed and shaped by the advisors and key informants, the findings should resonate with other stakeholders who can play an integral role in designing and implementing this infrastructure. Further, it seeks to determine how key players can collaborate to build and reinforce a social infrastructure that uses existing knowledge and practice to determine future directions that can effectively sustain youth organizing.

The findings below are organized to identify the *current landscape* of youth organizing in the Toronto area, and then to reflect the various perspectives on the *elements of a social infrastructure* that would provide sustainable support to this work.

### Youth Organizing In Toronto: Current Landscape

The youth organizing landscape is far from homogeneous in nature, and there is a wide array of initiatives and organizations already at play.

The work of these groups included engaging marginalized youth in community issues through arts-based, recreation and life skill development approaches; violence prevention initiatives; targeted organizational leadership development for youth; advocacy for LGBT issues; direct engagement in policy development and implementation; international learning exchanges; literacy initiatives; and social entrepreneurship training, to name just a few.

Groups and initiatives varied in size and allotted resources for their work, as well as in the number and diversity of the partners and financial supporters of that work. The variance in resources, scope, and areas of focus among the small sub section of groups that were interviewed for this project provides an overall sense of the current landscape for youth organizing work in Toronto.

Considering this, there were a number of emergent themes that were consistent across research participants which indicate some key areas needing attention that relate to the sector overall.



## 1. Capacity: Pressures and Assets

Nearly all of the groups spoke about being stretched in various ways with the capacity to manage their initiatives and organizations. It was felt there was generally a lack of time to network and exchange learning internally and externally with those doing similar work and high turnover due to:

- excessive time spent in administrative management and fundraising efforts; and
- high day-to-day demands of implementing initiatives in jobs with limited salaries.

In addition, some groups identified challenges in recruiting staff and board members who had good connections to the communities they were serving along with core skill sets needed to execute the work.

Conversely, the passion for the work is very high which tends to keep many key leaders in place despite the capacity challenges. There is a strong sense of opportunity for community impact. It was also identified that valuable learning can be gleaned from the work currently happening in Toronto, perhaps in direct relation to some of the capacity challenges involved.

In addition, there was a feeling that youth organizing work was becoming stronger in its presence and that there was a more unified perspective on the work.

### PRESSURES

#### *Staffing and Governance – Training and Turnover:*

“THE CHALLENGE IS IT’S A YOUTH AGENCY, YOU ARE LOOKING FOR REALLY CORE SKILL SETS RIGHT NOW, ...WE ALWAYS WANT TO INVEST IN SOMEONE IN THE COMMUNITY. IT’S HARD BECAUSE NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THIS COMMUNITY HAVE EVER BEEN GIVEN THAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITY...”

“ON OUR BOARD, I WOULD SAY IT’S...ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE WILL HAVE PRIOR BOARD EXPERIENCE.”

“...THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR WAS HIGH TURNOVER BECAUSE IT WAS JUST TOO MUCH...”

“IT’S REALLY HARD TO TRAIN STAFF FOR SIX MONTHS AND THEN THEY WOULD LEAVE AND YOU WOULD HAVE TO TRAIN YOUNG PEOPLE AND START ALL OVER AGAIN.”

#### *Fund-Development and Reporting to Funders*

“...THIS ED POSITION, WHEN I WAS HIRED WAS JOKINGLY CALLED FRED: FUND RAISING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...”

“WE NOW HAVE CLOSE TO 20 FUNDERS OF DIFFERENT SIZES WHICH IS GREAT BECAUSE YOU NEED THE RESOURCES BUT NOW ALL I DO IS WRITE SO MANY DIFFERENT GRANTS AND THEN WRITE SO MANY DIFFERENT REPORTS TO ALL THOSE PEOPLE “

### ASSETS

#### *Passion for the Work*

“I FEEL FORTUNATE THAT I HAVE FOUND SOMETHING I LOVE DOING AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE. I’M REALLY LUCKY TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN SO MANY CHANCES TO DO IT.”

“I FEEL USEFUL BECAUSE I CAN BRING RESOURCES FROM THE OUTSIDE.”

“THIS IS ALL VOLUNTEER – I HAVE GIVEN UP LOTS OF JOBS TO DO THIS...:”

#### *Learning, Innovation and Development*

“...WE HAVE CREATED GREAT LEARNING LABS IN THESE YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS. YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS DON’T ALWAYS HAVE THE RESOURCES TO RUN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS THE ‘CONVENTIONAL WAY’ SO THEY WILL CHALLENGE THE EXECUTIVE LEADERS’ OUTLOOK AND PERCEPTION ON HOW THINGS SHOULD BE RUN IN THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR. THE SUCCESS OF YOUTH-LED WORK WILL BE IN DEVELOPING DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP.”

“I THINK THE YOUTH-LED SECTOR IS BECOMING MORE SOPHISTICATED. THERE IS POWER IN NUMBERS AND WORKING TOGETHER IS A BIG THING....THERE APPEARS TO BE MORE OF A MOVEMENT IN TORONTO AMONG YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS, BUT NOT COMPETING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.”

Hence, youth organizing work in Toronto seems characterized by strong potential that is beginning to coalesce, but capacity issues are limiting the growth of this potential at this time. Strategies to address these capacity needs and to enhance this existing potential can be further explored with respect to social infrastructure development for youth organizing work.

## 2. Relationship Management: Funders, Trustees, Intermediaries & Peers

The execution of youth-organizing work requires a variety of intersections between those who fund the work, those who do the work, and others in between. The relationship management involved in association with these intersections involves a variety of complexities identified by interview participants. While some interview participants discussed challenges that can surface in relation to trust and communications among peers, the majority of discussion was focused on relationships with funders, trustees and intermediaries.

### Funders

Youth organizers connect to funders and grant development officers to help them to gain more information regarding program and funding guidelines, guidance regarding program development and implementation as well as administrative advice.

The relationship between funders and those doing youth organizing work can be difficult at times as finding the “fit” between the mandates of funding guidelines and the specific needs of youth and the community needs to be negotiated. This dialogue can be limited by constraints in relation to funders needing to remain objective and accountable to internal processes that vary in relation to allowable risk.

The reporting relationship between funders and grantees was quite variable, some with very structured, quantifiable reporting requirements, while others focused more on qualitative learning that emerged from the initiative.

This spectrum of approach to reporting is an area that needs to be understood and managed in youth organizing work. Many funders are not in a position to grant to groups who do not have incorporation or charitable status – some youth-led organizations hold these credentials but a significant portion do not.

“...THOSE GROUPS THAT HAVE BEEN FUNDED ARE HEAVILY MONITORED AND ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT TO US AND THEN BASED ON THOSE REPORTS THE NEXT ROUND OF DOLLARS WILL BE FLOWED, AND WE KEEP THE REPORTS PROVIDED BY THESE GROUPS...SO WE ARE SEEING WHAT WORK IS BEING DONE... WE GIVE MONEY FOR START UP BUT THERE ARE ROUNDS OF MONEY GIVEN ONLY AFTER REPORTS SHOW WHAT IS BEING DONE. WE DON'T WANT TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME THOUGH, WE WANT IT TO BE REAL.”

“...WE TRY TO GET ACROSS THAT WHEN WE HAVE REPORTS, FOCUS GROUPS AND LEARNING CIRCLES, THAT IT WASN'T ABOUT WHETHER THE PROJECT WAS A 'PASS/FAIL', THAT WE ARE INTERESTED IN THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF THE PROJECT – WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES? WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES OF HAVING YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED? WHAT HAPPENS FOR THE YOUTH? WE TRY TO ESTABLISH TRUST TO SHOW GROUPS THAT IF THE PROJECT WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL IT DOESN'T MEAN THEY WON'T GET FUNDED AGAIN.”





## Trustees

In relation to this funding challenge, the current climate in youth organizing often involves the engagement of a “trustee”, usually an incorporated group with charitable status, and often a larger, traditional community organization. These relationships varied widely, some involving a more direct relationship and interaction with respect to the program while others involved more of a cash flow-through from trustee to the youth-led project.

There were also a variety of scenarios regarding communication, power and trust in the relationship between youth organizers, funders and trustees.

Key themes in relation to the findings include the *need to neutralize as much as possible the inherent power dynamics that can undermine the integrity of youth organizing work*. These include the inherent power that exists with funders as holders of the resources to support the work, and the power a trustee can choose to exert on youth-led work in providing the administrative oversight to those resources and possibly providing space or other infrastructure support to youth organizing work.

It was expressed in particular that many trustee relationships were paternalistic in nature and that in these situations *“there is a big risk – youth-led organizations can fall and become over bureaucratized and won’t have an effect on the ground”*.

The complexity of trustee relationships was articulated with a recognition and understanding of the supports that could be accessed by youth organizers from trustees, coupled with a feeling that the relationship in some ways undermined the core intent of the of the youth organizing work:

**“Our trustee helped with funding proposals, provided space and an opportunity to access more staff so it was less isolated. It gave us a formal connection to the organization. But we lost our autonomy and voice, and we lost the advocacy side of the organization.”**

**“I got lots of admin support but then couldn’t hire the people for my own program as it had to go through the trustee – we got people with good experience but not quite the right fit as they weren’t committed to youth culture and community development.”**

### FUNDERS:

“AS FUNDERS WE HAVE TO BE AWARE OF THE POWER WE HOLD AND BE CONSCIOUS THAT BECAUSE WE ARE GIVING THE MONEY THAT WE ARE HOLDING POWER.”

“FUNDERS ARE CONCERNED THAT MONEY WON’T BE MANAGED PROPERLY BY YOUTH-LED GROUPS. THEY LIKE BIG ORGANIZATIONS AS TRUSTEES BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE AND ALL THE RISKS LIE WITHIN A LARGE ORGANIZATION. IT’S OFTEN NOT WHAT’S BEST FOR THE YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATION, BUT RATHER IF THE FUNDER FEELS COMFORTABLE THAT THE COMPLIANCE ISSUES ARE BEING MET.”

### TRUSTEES:

“AS A FUNDER WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT TRUSTEES ‘TAKING OVER’ WE MONITOR THIS VERY CLOSELY. WE FOUND THE DIFFICULTIES. WE STEPPED IN AND SAID THIS IS NOT GOING TO WORK IN THIS WAY”

“IT REALLY DEPENDS. IF A TRUSTEE SUPPORTS THE INNOVATIVE IDEAS OF THE ORGANIZATION THAT’S GREAT, BUT IF THE TRUSTEE IS TRYING TO MOLD THE ORGANIZATION IN THE ‘USUAL’ WAY OF DOING THINGS THAT’S WRONG..”



Another key theme that emerged in relation to the trustee scenario was the *importance of role clarity* in the relationship. The importance of a trustee possessing a pre-existing culture with an inherent value for youth-led work was also expressed. In addition, the importance of a champion who could foster institutional change to grow this culture was also identified.

"YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO BE CLEAR ON THE ROLE OF A TRUSTEE. WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS? SOMETIMES EXPECTATIONS TURN OUT TO BE MORE THAN WHAT WAS INITIALLY ARTICULATED."

"TRUSTEES THAT DON'T HAVE A YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CULTURE ALREADY ARE NOT WELL-SUITED TO PROVIDE THE RIGHT KIND OF MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT TO YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS."

"I TRIED TO HELP THE LEADERSHIP INTEGRATE YOUTH CULTURE INTO AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE THAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO FUNDERS AND COMMUNITY."

"IT'S PART OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY TO LEVERAGE OUR CONNECTIONS AND BRING INFORMATION TO COMMUNITIES AND OFFER THE SUPPORT.."



## Intermediaries

In some cases it was felt that the power dynamic that existed between a funder or a trustee and those doing youth organizing work simply required another agent to broker the relationship:

**"...there was a fundamental power difference. We needed another intermediary to turn to that's not the funder..."**

The emerging role of the intermediary identified in this research was not only in relation to issues of power, trust and communication, but also played a role with respect to capacity-building. This role was identified in different forms among the interview participants.

For example, some funders provided intermediary support to provide to grantees. In other cases, a high engagement process during grant development was identified, but it was felt that there was a need to remain somewhat removed based on the inherent dynamics of accountability regarding use of funds. All felt that they had a role to play in helping grantees to make connections to relevant supports in the sector, but some were further engaged in providing intermediary capacity strengthening supports.

The approach to creating a low-barrier, capacity-building process of funding has required a strong degree of rapport and comfort between the funder and grantee, and has involved thoughtful management considering the power dynamic inherent in the funding process described above.

Another intermediary model identified in the current context involved an approach where an individual or organization worked in concert with the organization and the funder.

Sometimes this intermediary role was fulfilled by a trustee and sometimes it was an independent party. In the latter scenario, this intermediary may also be involved in a situation that engaged with an organization, trustee and funder.

Intermediary roles were described as:

**“...an organization or [individual] that’s able to play the ‘middle ground’ and having a foot in both worlds [funders and community or community and institution], being able to speak the language of both and communicate the needs of one to another more clearly”.**

**“...‘the middle place’ where the role is to provide support to organizations and to build capacity....Intermediaries play a brokering or connecting role in linking the work of organizations, networking between different funders and organizations. An intermediary needs to know the funders, agencies, institutional players, because it’s hard to break into this sector...the role of the intermediary is to open doors”**

These intermediaries don’t do the work for youth-led groups, but create a learning environment where the groups learn by doing, with the security of having a mentor to guide the process.

Evidence from the literature supports the positive role intermediaries can play:

**“Intermediaries have also been helpful in providing policy advice about how programs can more effectively work ....By seeing a full range of programs and services, intermediaries can recommend how duplication can be reduced, emerging needs met, and programs aligned”<sup>38</sup>**

It is important to point out that within this group, a degree of informal intermediary support is ongoing. Youth organizers tend to turn first to their peers in the sector through informal networks to gain advice and guidance. The Youth on Youth<sup>39</sup> report has documented the nature of this intermediary support:

**“Given their common experiences and cultural-existential milieu, youth staff at youth run organizations, were deemed better able to communicate and relate to their youth service users than adults, and thus better able to empathize with and identify the kinds of issues, interests and concerns that are facing youth.”**

In the current context then, many youth are managing their own programs and providing intermediary support to their peers. This was raised in the interviews.

Some participants indicated that it was best if intermediaries were not also conducting their own programs to avoid both potential issues of competition as well as the risk of over-extending capacity.

---

<sup>38</sup> Local Intermediary Organizations: Connecting the Dots for Children, Youth and Families (2006) American Youth Policy Forum. Accessed at: <http://www.aypf.org/publications/intermediaries.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Warner, R. (2005). Youth on Youth Report. Toronto: Grassroots Youth Collaborative.

However, the counterpoint was that those who were managing programs as well stayed in touch with the work on the ground and could therefore be more effective in providing intermediary support.

In addition, the role of adult allies in intermediary roles is important to consider:

**“Strong adult allies are necessary to train, mentor and support youth staff and participants. Without adult leadership advocating for youth in the organization, traditional management structures and stereotypes maybe too powerful for youth to overcome”<sup>40</sup>**

Moving forward, the role of intermediaries needs to be further explored to determine how these different intermediary roles play into a larger social infrastructure and how the work on the ground can be best supported.

“INTERMEDIARIES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART, BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT PART IS BEING ABLE TO SUPPORT THE WORK ON THE GROUND. BAD INTERMEDIARIES CREATE DISTANCE, GOOD ONES CREATE PROXIMITY. AN INTERMEDIARY SHOULD HAVE CONNECTIONS OR HAVE BEEN CONNECTED WITH WORKING ON THE GROUND AND CAN TAKE ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT. THE PURPOSE SHOULD BE TO INSTILL AN OWNERSHIP IN INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS – A PROCESS AFFECTING THE MIND-SET THAT THERE IS ROOM FOR CONTROL AND OWNERSHIP OF YOUR PROGRAMMING.”



<sup>40</sup> Involve Youth2: A Guide to Meaningful Youth Engagement, City of Toronto. (2006).



## Collective Advocacy Needs

The final key area discussed in relation to the current context of youth organizing involved the need for a unified voice in advocating for the issues faced by youth-led organizations.

Some groups had done individual advocacy regarding their particular issue area with varying levels of success in terms of impact on funders and policy makers, but several expressed the need for a collective voice on youth and community issues.

Many participants spoke to the need to raise awareness of their issues but did not necessarily use the term advocacy. In addition, those who did use this term frequently did not offer specific ideas as to what activities were entailed in doing advocacy work. This is an interesting area to consider with respect to future skill building and support as it has resonated from the interviews as an area of importance, but is lacking clarity.

**“...we need to create advocacy for youth and facilitate bridges between organizations to address youth issues [such as] self-esteem, violence, aggression, sexual health...”**

**‘...the fact is if you never expose the problem you will never find a solution...’**

**‘...we always had to have struggles and battles within meetings about ‘not doing anything’, and ‘why are we talking and not moving fast enough’...’**

Some comments were made regarding the role of the Grassroots Youth Collaborative (GYC) with respect to collective advocacy. There were also questions raised about the capacity of the Grassroots Youth Collaborative in playing this role as its membership currently involves 11 members, which is stretching its boundaries in terms of the supports it provides.

This group also had an initial focus on collaborative advocacy for core funding for its members, which some have achieved and others have not. This has altered the dynamic of the group somewhat and it is now looking at broader capacity development issues beyond core funding.

It is also important to note that while those currently within the GYC have an affinity for this collective, there are many groups who don't access this network, are not aware of it, or would not necessarily see it as the collective to address their needs.

Moving forward, it will be important to consider how a social infrastructure can build on the work of this collaborative and other established networks, and address gaps, to grow support for youth advocacy.

## COMMENTS ON THE GRASSROOTS YOUTH COLLABORATIVE:

**“GYC WAS CREATED AS A MODEL OF YOUTH COMING TOGETHER AND ADVOCATING.”**

**“THEY CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THEIR MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS IN ADVOCATING..”**

**“THE GYC CAN BE DOING ADVOCACY ON SUPPORTING ISSUES AND POLICY WORK, USING THEIR COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR CHANGE..”**

**“THE GYC IS AN INTERMEDIARY BUT NOT AN ORGANIZATION. ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTION IS ONE OF THE THREE KEY THINGS THE GYC DOES ALONG WITH SUPPORTING YOUTH ON THE GROUND AND BUILDING SUPPORT FOR SELF-DETERMINED YOUTH PROGRAMMING. THESE THINGS CAN FALL AWAY THOUGH AS MEMBERS HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR OWN FUNDING AND CAPACITY.”**

**“I WANT THE GYC TO DO THE ADVOCACY WORK THAT WE CAN'T...HAVING THE OUTLET TO DO THAT SAFELY WITH THE GYC CAN BE A GREAT SUPPORT...”**

## Elements of a Social Infrastructure to Support Youth Organizing

There were a number of consistencies with respect to the key elements and mechanisms required for a social infrastructure that would provide capacity strengthening support to youth organizing work in the city.

These included the need for *stronger core administrative capacities in youth organizing work* such as legal, fiscal, human resources, IT and project management. The suggested approaches to garnering these capacities included both internal organizational development and access to external mentoring and consulting support.

*Training and professional development* to support initiative implementation and advocacy work were also identified, with a particular emphasis on an approach that will foster youth ownership and self-determination.

*Access to resources and tools* related to administrative, advocacy and project work through *online hubs and in physical spaces* was expressed.

*Opportunities to network with peers and mentors* conducting similar or complimentary work that could again be done through *online hubs or physical spaces*, in association with collaboratives, coalitions and partnerships or brokered through mentors and consultants.

*Access to intermediaries – peers, organizations and consultants* - who could support these needs were identified in all areas, as was the need for *strategic funding approaches and a move toward youth-led social enterprise* rather than project-based funding as a means of supporting these infrastructure elements.

## Support for Core Administrative Capacities

With respect to administrative capacities, different viewpoints were expressed. In some cases research participants saw less importance in conducting administrative tasks and felt it took time away from the more pressing task of program development and execution. These participants felt that excessive engagement in administration led to disconnection from their programs as they did not feel they had enough time to work with their staff, volunteers and community members.

**“There are all these amazing, inspirational activist people who are spending so much time on the grant application process, but should instead focus on supporting their staff, the next generation of staff, supporting the community in being innovative in design and delivery”.**

**“Small groups need funding and professional administrative support – we should try to create a platform and flexibility for grassroots environmental and social activism.”**

An intermediary who provides support to a number of the groups who expressed these issues spoke to the role it plays in providing administrative capacity support to various groups:

**“...it takes the pressure off and allows people to do what they love and is easy for them to do, thus we feel it would see more retention in the sector.”**

In other cases, participants felt that individual and organizational skill building in this area was necessary in order to address issues and expectations surrounding financial management, human resources, legal resources, evaluation and reporting.

**“Ideally it would be good to develop a person from the entrance level to be able to be the ED...take the time to strategize, do succession planning.”**

Many times, needs in this area were expressed as a combination of both approaches:

**“As a growing organization we need more policies, HR stuff...risk management. I think financial stuff needs to be developed internally, but that maybe supports for other areas (e.g. anti-oppression) can be accessed through consulting support. The consultants have to be a really good fit with youth though, and this can be hard to find.”**

In all cases, there was concern for effective succession planning. The need for support in tracking and documenting histories is necessary to ensure effective staff transitions and retain knowledge vital to the initiative or organization.

It is likely that youth organizing work needs a combination of internal administrative capacity development for youth organizers and the creation of access to consultant support to execute administrative tasks, depending on the goals and nature of the group. In this regard, the identification of the need for non-paternalistic supports was frequently noted.

### **Training and Professional Development Supports**

Youth organizers, regardless of their level of experience, expressed the need for ongoing training and development, as did funders and intermediaries.

The needs understandably varied for those at different stages, with those in early stages looking for basic introductions to ways to access funding and basic project and administrative management support.

It is worth noting that those who had more experience felt that supports were particularly lacking to help them evolve to the next stage of development.

There is an expressed need to help cultivate existing leaders to extend their capacity in order to deal with the transitions of growing organizations, but also to contribute to their own professional growth and development. Identified training needs at this level included the management of financial resources, programming and staff and understanding of legal issues. It is also important to note, that these leaders are role models to youth and other staff, who look to them for guidance.

### **COMMENTS ON TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

“...THE ONTARIO AIDS NETWORK PROVIDED WORKSHOPS THAT HELPED ME RUN A PROGRAM AS A YOUTH...”

“WE ALSO DO NEW GRANTEE ORIENTATION WORKSHOPS TO HELP DEMYSTIFY THE PROCESS...”

“I DO MEET WITH QUITE A FEW GROUPS THAT CONTACT ME, AND WE HAVE A WORKSHOP WHERE THEY CAN WRITE SOME THINGS DOWN AND WE TALK IT THROUGH WITH THEM...”

“I KNOW THERE ARE COURSES AND WORKSHOPS OUT THERE OFFERING 101 LEVEL INFORMATION ON DIFFERENT PROCESSES FOR YOUTH-LED ORGANIZING, BUT I WISH THERE WAS A 300 LEVEL OR 400 LEVEL COURSE THAT COULD HELP ME TACKLE ISSUES THAT ARE MORE COMPLEX THAN THE ONES I HAD TO DEAL WITH WHEN I FIRST STARTED”.

“THERE IS SO MUCH MORE THAN GRANT WRITING – NEED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, INCORPORATION OR NOT?, BECOME CHARITABLE OR NOT?, ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT...”



## Access to Resources and Tools

Youth-led organizers interested in the start up of projects and organizations explained that it was difficult to find current and relevant information on the sector and what was available was often scattered or limited.

This often resulted in youth-led organizations starting up organizations on their own from scratch. These organizations could have saved much time, energy and resources if they were able to connect to organizations or projects offering similar programming and to compare notes, share templates and gain advice on planning and programming.

**“It would be nice to have a place where you can access information to target a specific situation that is presented.”**

There is a need to document the existence and locations of youth-led organizations and projects being run in the city and collect them into one place to build awareness in regards to their existence and needs, but to also help other organization connect to them and even partner in some cases.

Interest was expressed in gaining further information and resources on program development, fundraising, event management and other administrative tasks that could contribute to organizational planning. Organizers need literature and case studies in order to learn how to become effective leaders, run programs and develop organizational structure, and this information is most effective if put together as a library providing information of relevant topics related to youth-led organizing and running projects and organizations in the Toronto area. Organizers also felt it was more convenient and efficient in terms of time to have one source from which they could draw links on the rules, regulations and standards of the sector. There were ample requests for useful tools and a caution to not “create tools that create more work”.

The use of *web-based approaches* was expressed as a good strategy, but a *strong need for interpersonal connections* to support the use of tools and resources was important. In general, research participants expressed strong support for sharing of knowledge and resources:

**“I think shared resources make a lot of sense – maximize on everyone’s strengths, sharing of expertise and knowledge, allowing people to do what they really love and are good at...”**

---

“LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INVOLVES ‘IN THE MOMENT’ LEARNING, CUSTOMIZING AND TAILORING TOOLS IN A SMALLER CONTEXT – HOW DO WE TAKE THOSE TOOLS AND LOOK AT THEM FROM A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE”.

## Networking Opportunities

Due to location and time constraints, youth organizers felt that opportunities to network with peers and industry professionals could be improved. They also felt there could be more social events geared at building relationships and partnerships with other youth organizations and key players in the sector.

Youth-led organizations saw advantages to investing in *online hubs and technological platforms that communicated community specific issues*, brought awareness to projects and programming, and helped to connect the sector. They also felt this was a more efficient and effective way of communicating with potential funders and the public. There was a need to streamline information regarding these projects and programs in one location, but also create an interactive method of sharing tools and resources. This method would require a considerable amount of outreach to create awareness and traffic, and would need to be appealing to the youth-led demographic and interested parties. Funders felt this was a valuable resource in gaining more information regarding youth initiatives and their surrounding communities. Time and capacity to collect and document this information was noted as a challenge in maintaining a technological infrastructure.

Interpersonal means of networking were also noted. In particular, there was an identified need to more effectively follow up and leverage new found acquaintances and partnerships. Consistent meetings and events geared around productive interactions that were accompanied by dialogue on issues of the sector as well as respective communities, made the most sense in how to establish good networking practices. A regular calendar to access all events was suggested.

Some examples of youth-led networks in place include the *Youth Environmental Network*, created by four leading youth for youth organizations address the need for capacity building in the Canadian youth environmental movement. Using primarily online methods, this group provides tools, resources and support to youth environmental NGOs, promotes youth involvement in policy development, connects groups working on mainstream environmental issues with those working on issues not traditionally considered as environmental such as social justice, human rights and Aboriginal rights.

Other networks that are primarily driven through sharing online resources include *DreamNow*, a charitable organization that helps individuals and groups access tools and resources online that help them set goals and develop plans for social change. It has recently established an incentive program for its members to encourage the sharing of resources and learning.

Emerging from the *"Ignite!" Youth Arts Forum* held in the spring of 2007, the desire to develop an online network – the *Canadian Youth Arts Network* – was expressed. This needs to be further explored in relation to existing networks and the role it can play in supporting social infrastructure for youth organizing in the arts sector.

"...ALWAYS OFFER EVERYTHING YOU CAN FOR FREE. TRY TO REDUCE AND TAKE AWAY BARRIERS, BE VERY PROACTIVE IN SHARING TO HELP PEOPLE ENGAGE..."

The *Sustainability Network*, not youth focused, is also a model that should be looked at more closely as it has an established history of working environmental non-profits to make them more effective and efficient, improving management and leadership skills and fostering organizational development.

## Access to Intermediaries

The role of intermediaries was identified as a key support within these areas and as a connector across them.

With respect to gaining access to tools and resources, it was also felt that it would be helpful to have an intermediary on hand to access, by appointment or on a drop in basis, to link them to the necessary resources and people that could further support their organizing.

Intermediaries were also identified as being best positioned to manage resources such as online infrastructures and interpersonal networking opportunities. It was felt that intermediaries have a sound understanding of information that is relevant to youth organizers and on the ground experience with the needs of these groups.

Different types of intermediaries were identified including peer mentor organizations and consultant-oriented models. The ability to form *collaboratives and collectives to address common advocacy needs and common issues* was also identified as important. Particular needs for institutional change identified included in the education system, as well as the police and justice system.

The *Grassroots Youth Collaborative*, previously noted in the research findings has been one example of a collective that has focused on networking and collective policy advocacy work, but has also served to provide some capacity support for its members. A collaborative of 11 youth-led organizations in Toronto, the group works together on the following objectives:

- Strengthening capacity as youth driven organizations to serve our communities
- Providing a forum for youth driven organizations to strategize about issues and share resources and information
- Conducting, collecting and disseminating research on effective youth engagement strategies
- Promoting and educating decision-makers on the value of youth driven organizations
- Advocating for government policies that empower young people to have a voice and contribute to their communities
- Working with social movements that fight to address issues within our communities

Another national level example of collective policy advocacy work led by youth includes the *Canadian Youth Climate Change Coalition*. A collective of youth from across Canada, the group works locally, provincially, federally, and internationally to organize actions and influence governments regarding climate change. Members include labour unions, indigenous groups, green energy groups, student unions, environmental groups, faith-based groups and others who do this collective advocacy work.



Some Toronto-based examples of capacity-building intermediary work currently happening in the city that can be considered when looking at the role of intermediaries include the *“Emerge” City-Wide Young Leaders Program* managed through *Schools Without Borders*.

Emerge is an action and experience based leadership program that seeks to encourage, develop and support young leaders by promoting collaboration, expanding skills, facilitating experiences, exploring opportunities and leveraging support in order to help them better their communities on their own terms. The program aims to give young people with both well defined and undefined leadership ability and potential focus, purpose, self-awareness and support in being powerful, organized and effective leaders in their communities.

Emerge aims to support young people in becoming community activators who make decisions based on their knowledge of their own communities however they may define those communities. The program wants to build up people who have a personal investment in their community by supporting the development of their ideas into tangible, effective, innovative and independent programs, organizations, groups and movements.

The *REMIX Project* is comparable to Emerge, and is a program that engages young people aspiring to start careers in the urban arts sector, helping them to develop personal plans for success over six months. It also involves workshops, networking opportunities, internships, mentorship and is developing micro-credit social enterprise strategies.

A consultant-based intermediary model that is currently supporting youth organizing work is evidenced in the work of the *Agora Foundation*.

The Agora Foundation Board of Directors focused its efforts over the last four years on providing pro-bono organizational capacity building consulting and mentoring to small and emerging community-based initiatives. This work led to supporting youth-led projects like REMIX and HOODLINC.

As Agora’s work was a time limited initiative that is now finished (4 year pilot project), it joined with *Sage Centre* (at Tides Canada Foundation) to develop and model an integrated offering of capacity building and back office supports with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Sage is a comprehensive model of infrastructure support, providing a shared platform of governance, administration and financial “back office” support to various charitable activities, largely involving environmental and social justice issues. This model is often termed “fiscal sponsorship” and is a practice that is emerging as a tool to support small and developing grassroots organizing. This shared platform creates efficiencies of scale and allows projects to tap into experienced administrative support that they would not otherwise be able to access. This reduces administrative burden and supports sustainability. Such a model has particular applicability to the development of a social infrastructure due to the ability to support time-limited initiatives within an established charitable platform.

Approaches such as this may help to answer the question raised by one interview participant:

**“HOW DO WE RE-THINK ORGANIZATIONS SO THAT WE ARE NOT ASKING EVERY GROUP THAT HAS A GOOD IDEA TO CREATE A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION AND ALL THE ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR THAT?”**

*For Youth Initiative (FYI)*, a by-youth, for-youth, community organization has recently established a mentoring program as a form of intermediary support. The project involves working with a group of youth-led organizations and projects in Toronto, linking those organizations to emerging youth groups and individuals to provide mentoring and support. It also involves developing an accessible resource guide that includes templates and materials in the following areas:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| → Models of Youth Work                             | → Social Enterprise                       |
| → Grant Writing                                    | → Funding Sources for Youth Projects      |
| → Fundraising                                      | → Media & Communications                  |
| → Partnership/Trusteeship                          | → Non-profit Incorporation                |
| → Charitable Status                                | → Board Development                       |
| → Governance                                       | → Non-profit Financial Management         |
| → Organizational Practices (e.g. finance, by-laws) | → Human Resources (e.g. hiring practices) |

Other examples were also noted by research participants:

**“There are some interesting models in the arts. An organization called ‘Creative Trust’, an intermediary organization, provides funding, and works with mid-size performing arts groups/theatres to increase capacity. They brought in a model with smaller theatres with younger leadership – they have a network between the older directors and staff with these younger groups.”**

Many participants noted the importance of involving various mentors and partners in intermediary work at a variety of stages of experience, yet ensuring shared power and respect for youth leadership in social change work:

**“Does the intermediary need to be youth-led to work? I don’t think so, but I think it needs young people and adults in partnership, adults who have experience in working with youth.”**

With regard to the role intermediaries can play in working with funders and youth organizers, the following was expressed:

**“The intermediary role is vital to ensure the youth organization is not set up to fail. The intermediary role is intimate, there needs to be communication between all three groups (funder, intermediary, and the actual grant recipient), but between the funder and the group being funded there still needs to be a separation [for objectivity]. The intermediary can fill that gap and communicate between the two”.**

Comments of this nature from funders were made in a manner that does not remove a direct relationship between funder and the grassroots work, as this was felt to not be ideal, but to rather work in a three-way partnership to more effectively realize common goals.

**“I don’t think funders should be let off the hook...I think we need to look at our role as facilitators to help the program work...”**

**“It’s part of our responsibility to work with the community to leverage our connections to bring information to communities and offer the support...”**

**“We need to recognize our limitations as a funder. We need to maximize on where we can be more flexible and creative than we may be now, but at some point that flexibility will end, because of who we are as a funder. The whole idea of the intermediary organization is that there is another body that has the mentorship role.”**

It was also felt that the role of the intermediary should be well connected to the ground and dynamic over the course of relationship:

**“You need someone who understands what youth are doing on the ground, and how you enable them to do it, what support do they need?”**

**“The context of the relationship is changing...by the end of a project a group should not need an intermediary for the same things they did at the beginning. In some areas they should provide support to help the group learn the skills to become independent over time.”**

## Physical Spaces

In addition, groups expressed an array of perspectives in relation to physical hubs and spaces where the various activities associated with the elements of social infrastructure described above could be conducted.

There was an expressed need for more youth space in the city allocated to supporting youth organizing. This space would offer key administrative tools such as access to meeting rooms, literature resources, internet, phone and printing materials. There was also a need to provide space for youth to drop in and socialize as a method of networking and relationship building. Having a location that was equipped with various intermediary supports that could lend advice on the various aspects of youth organizing, program development and supporting the initiation and growth of organizations was requested.

**“Somewhere where there was a library of templates for grant writing and other things, a place that had a bunch of little offices that people can use...it would be great since you could use the space to run workshops.”**

Some organizations expressed concerns surrounding the location of such spaces, especially those considered to be on the outside of ‘priority areas’ designated by the city. These youth organizations feel that they are excluded from much needed resources and attention and felt that multiple hubs around the city were more appropriate or having a staff person to do on site visits was helpful.

**“Part of me thinks it sounds great, but a part of me would be afraid...if you had so many dynamics happening, would youth be reluctant to go?”**



**“Do I want to sit with someone in an isolated downtown space who doesn’t have a feel for what actually happens in the community?”**

Other participants interviewed felt that a central location was needed to bridge divides caused by locality in order to get youth out of their immediate surroundings and be exposed to youth from other parts of the city. This contributed to a more cohesive sector and to bring awareness to the issues and challenges of everyone in the sector. It was essential that these locations were accessible by public transit.

**“We talk a lot about going to their communities as being important, but also bringing them out of their communities, taking them out of the environment – which can be inspiring. But at the same time we need to support...with people that can come to them, or have a web site, or being able to phone someone.”**

Similar to the findings in relation to core administrative capacity support, it seems evident that a combination of approaches should be considered. One participant spoke of “store fronts” in various communities, but also a central location as well, building on existing organizations and available spaces to create this element of infrastructure.

Another participant identified the opportunity to take a social entrepreneurship approach to the creation of a physical space:

**“I think about the whole social enterprise piece – having a physical space could be a great income-making opportunity – rent out space that then funds the grassroots youth work”.**

Consideration of a strategic capital investment in such a space was expressed by various interview participants, including funders, youth organizers and intermediaries. Several ideas were expressed in relation to investing in physical space and social entrepreneurship, ranging from the use of land for local agriculture to a building that supports capacity building work and also houses income generating ventures led by youth. The role of physical meeting spaces that most effectively support youth organizing is an area that needs further consideration in relation to all of the other identified elements of a proposed social infrastructure.

While organic relationships have emerged among some youth organizers and intermediaries who try to support one another in using their limited spaces, there are no established physical spaces at present that consistently serve as resource hubs and areas to access support. The Centre for Social Innovation in downtown Toronto is a model to consider. It currently provides work spaces, meeting spaces and learning spaces that connect people to new ideas and to each other as a social enterprise with a mission to catalyze social change. A closer examination of this model should be conducted to see how it can be built upon or adapted regarding youth organizing work.

### Strategic Funding Approaches

Funders interviewed expressed the need to examine the nature of their work to be more strategic from the perspective of investing, reporting and learning, as well as the relationships between themselves and grantees. There is a feeling that more could be done to support capacity-building that would support a social infrastructure:

**“As part of organizational capacity building – that thinking and reflecting is critical – absolutely we should fund it.”**

Another funder spoke to the need to support intermediaries, collaboratives and collectives to provide both the interpersonal and online capacity strengthening supports.

**“Funding the intermediary is a need...funders need to look strategically at how to support both the intermediaries and the groups...Nothing is really being invested into intermediaries right now”.**

While this is an area that needs to be developed, there are some existing models of strategic funding approaches in place in the city, including some individual funders who have created capacity-building grants as well as availability of funds for some physical infrastructure development. A notable example of a strategic funder alliance has been [ArtReach Toronto](#), a program designed to support arts initiatives that engage youth who have experienced exclusion in under-served areas of Toronto.

It is made up of partners from all three levels of government and many funding organizations. A guiding principle for [ArtReach Toronto](#) has been to reduce barriers and make funding accessible to youth directly, empowering them by placing ownership of projects in their hands.

This collaborative approach has created an opportunity for funders to be innovative in meeting the needs of youth by reducing barriers to accessing funds. It has also enabled funders to learn from one another, share risk, and contribute to a larger pool of funds with the potential to have a greater impact.

As one funder notes:

**“...the ArtReach model is good to look at – we could build on that because all the funders said that we want to take what we learn from ArtReach and integrate it into our organizations.”**

Another funder speaks of the importance of working together in supporting youth organizing work:

**“I think funders have to work better in partnership with one another...to pick up all the pieces”.**

**ArtReach Toronto** has also played an intermediary role in its work with youth who are organizing through arts-based initiatives by providing ongoing consulting and a capacity-building workshop series.

Strategic, coordinated funding approaches also need to consider streamlining reporting as the findings express the considerable challenges many are having with excessive reporting demands.

Some suggestions were offered by interview participants with respect to working with currently existing process to improve them:

**“...maybe collaborating with a funder for a better reporting mechanism...that works for the funder but also the youth, fix the language barrier...or for a funder to even come down and actually see the programming for a day or two – not popping in as a surprise, but actually talking to staff and young people about what they are doing...”**

This is certainly not a trend that is limited to youth-led work and is something that must be considered in community development work overall as evident in Lynn Eakin’s recent report.

**“The administrative burden placed by funders on community nonprofit organizations is so heavy and so unrelenting, and places so many constraints on their ability to operate that it is a wonder they can deliver any services effectively.**

**The executive directors of these agencies describe an environment in which their key responsibility is to manage the demands of funders and the many constraints and problems funders impose on the organization so that the staff can actually get some work done and meet community needs.**

**In sum, the overload of information requests and filings, the lack of delegation of decision-making to the agencies, the problems caused by the granting processes, and the failure of funders to consult with grantees were all identified by participating organizations as contributing to the difficult administrative burden.**

**The data are clear: we can’t afford to do business this way. It is in everyone’s interest to reform the funding process by minimizing the administrative burden and maximizing the flexibility of agencies to adapt, respond, and innovate, with a focus on results, not controls. It is urgent that funders, nonprofit organizations, and local communities come together to create new administrative systems that can most effectively support the objectives of improving community well-being.”<sup>41</sup>**

In addition to considering strategic work across funders, approaches to develop social entrepreneurship that are youth-led, as noted in previous discussion regarding physical spaces, have increasingly been raised among those in youth organizing work. One example in Toronto is the Royalz clothing company, a youth owned and operated independent venture that received mentorship and business plan development support through the REMIX Art of Business program, winning the Up In Your Business business plan competition.

---

<sup>41</sup> Eakin, L. (2007) We Can’t Afford to Business this Way: A Study of Administrative Burden Resulting from Funder Accountability and Compliance Practices. Wellesley Institute



The company regularly holds sell-out community events showcasing young talent in entertainment and fashion that are delivered with a positive message of stopping violence in the community. Social entrepreneurship examples such as this need to be further explored as a key element to support social infrastructure.

✕ **Generating and Sharing Knowledge: Learning from this Approach**

Many interview participants noted the importance of ensuring that the learning gleaned from youth organizing work is gathered and widely shared.

**“We need to do a better job of learning what our investments are doing in the [youth] sector...”**

In an effective social infrastructure, the learning that occurs as a result of varied youth organizing work will be captured and shared through common resource spaces, coalitions and networks. A notable method for capturing this learning that should be considered is community-based research.

Community-based research is a process of gathering learning that is conducted by, for and/or with the participation of the community members themselves, and in this case would involve youth leadership in this regard. It aims not merely to increase understanding, but also to ensure that knowledge contributes to making a concrete difference.

Such research is well-suited to gathering learning from youth organizing work. It would have a mandate of not only providing information, creating awareness and building a case for supporting youth-led initiatives and organizing, but would also play a vital role in serving to increase the capacities of youth that are directly involved in facilitating the research. As noted above, all parties would have access to research and information to inform planning and implementation. This should be further explored as deliberations on developing and learning from supporting social infrastructure are explored.

# SUMMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Emerging youth-led work is looking to shift institutional power dynamics and build resiliency without reliance on traditional sociopolitical, institutionalized approaches.

A growing sector of youth-led organizing in Toronto demonstrates potential to play a key role in influencing societal shifts through grassroots advocacy, programming and community development work.

**Currently there is not a strong mechanism for youth involved in initiatives to connect with one another, or with mentors and partners to access the training, resources and networks that can enhance their work.**

Sustained support is needed to support ongoing development at the individual, group and community level in youth organizing work. A flexible and dynamic social infrastructure that encompasses a variety of different elements working collectively to build capacity and sustainable support, and placing power in the hands of young people, can address this need.

**This social infrastructure should be based in fostering mentorship and partnerships that provide key capacity strengthening supports. It can be managed by coordinated work involving intermediaries, coalitions and collaboratives, delivered through both physical and online resource hubs. It can be supported by strategic funder alliances and social entrepreneurship strategies that provide the resources for various services.**

Funders, policy makers, youth organizers and champions within social institutions and service organizations must meet together, with a commitment to shared power and decision-making, and develop an action plan that moves forward on building a social infrastructure.

**This plan should identify and build upon existing initiatives and effective working relationships. Communication processes must be put in place to ensure mutually trusting relationships are nurtured and maintained among these groups.**

**The action plan should include research and evaluation strategies to gather learning and inform the development of the infrastructure over time.**

The identification and support of intermediaries to facilitate the actions above will be important to catalyzing and maintaining a social infrastructure.

And while there is a need for immediate action, there is also a need for long-term commitment as one interview participant notes:

**"I'M A BRIDGE – MAKE THIS BRIDGE GREAT AND KNOW THAT IT WILL TAKE AWHILE TO GET ANOTHER BRIDGE GOOD ENOUGH TO REPLACE IT."**



# REFERENCE LIST

- Baker, N. (2006) (Re) Introducing social infrastructure. Based on a Discussion Paper on Concepts and Practices of Social Infrastructure – An application to Canadian Rural Partnership Dialogues and Status of Women Projects in BC. Submitted to Status of Women Canada and the BC Rural Team.
- Bringing it Together: Uniting youth organizing, development and services for long-term sustainability (2005). Movement Strategy Centre.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) The ecology of human development. Harvard University Press.
- Campens, H. (1997). International review of community development. In H. Campens (Ed.) Community Development Around the World: Practice, Theory, Research, Training (1st Edition, pp.13-46) Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- City of Ottawa: Social Infrastructure Project. Accessed at:[http://ottawa.ca/residents/housing/infrastructure/index\\_en.html](http://ottawa.ca/residents/housing/infrastructure/index_en.html)
- City of Toronto (2006). Involve youth 2: A guide to meaningful youth engagement. Toronto: City of Toronto.
- Eakin, L. (2007) We Can't Afford to Business this Way: A Study of Administrative Burden Resulting from Funder Accountability and Compliance Practices. Wellesley Institute
- Erickson, E.H. (1994) Identity, youth and crisis. W.W. Norton and Company.
- Fortier, C. (2006). From the roots up! A report back from the Youth-Led Forum On Building Safe Communities. Toronto: Grassroots Youth Collaborative.
- Hosang, D. (2003). Youth and community organizing today. Social Policy, 34(2), 66-70.
- James, T. & McGillicuddy, K. (2001). Building Youth Movements for Community Change. The Nonprofit Quarterly, 8(4), 1-3.
- James, T. (2005). Bringing it together: Uniting youth organizing, development and services for long-term sustainability. Oakland, California: Movement Strategy Center.
- Kim, J. & Sherman, R. F. (2006). Youth as important civic actors: From the margins to the center. National Civic Review, Spring 2006, 3-6.
- Lewis-Charp, H., Yu, H.C. & Soukamneuth, S. (2006). Civic activist approaches for engaging youth in social justice. In S. Ginwright, P. Noguera & J. Cammarota (Eds.), Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change. (1st ed., pp. 21-35). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Listen, Inc – An Emerging Model for Working with Youth. (2003). Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing. Occasional Paper Series No.1.
- Local Intermediary Organizations: Connecting the Dots for Children, Youth and Families (2006). American Youth Policy Forum. Accessed at: <http://www.aypf.org/publications/intermediaries.pdf>
- Making Space Making Change: Profiles of Youth-Led and Youth-Driven Organizations (2004). Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center, with the Youth Speak Out Coalition.
- Making the Case for Arts and Culture for Personal and Social Development of Youth, (2005). Creative City Network of Canada.
- Ontario Trillium Foundation (2007). Meeting the Needs of Ontario's Youth. Toronto: Ontario Government.
- Public Health Agency of Canada (2002). An Inclusion Lens: Workbook for Looking at Social and Economic Exclusion and Inclusion. Accessed at: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca).
- Quiroz-Martínez, J., HoSang, D., & Villarosa, L. (2004). Changing the Rules of the Game: Youth Development & Structural Racism. Washington, D.C.: Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity.
- Quiroz-Martinez, J., Wu, D. Pei, Zimmerman, K. (2005). ReGeneration: Young People Shaping Environmental Justice. Oakland, CA: Movement Strategy Center.
- Taking IT Global (2006). Cross-Canada Mapping of Youth-led and/or Highly Youth-engaged Initiatives. Report prepared for J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.
- Changing the Rules of the Game: Youth Development & Structural Racism. Washington, D.C.: Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity.
- Ishihara, K. (2007) Urban Transformations: Youth Organizing in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing.
- Warner, R. (2005). Youth on Youth Report. Toronto: Grassroots Youth Collaborative.
- Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center (2004). Making Space, Making Change: Profiles of Youth-led and Youth-driven Organizations. Oakland, California: Movement Strategy Center.





