

# Youth Networking



# Forum

January 20, 2006  
Toronto City Hall

# Introduction

On January 20, 2006, 33 organizations that have received funding for youth-oriented projects from the Access, Equity and Human Rights Grants - Community Partnership and Investment Program met at Toronto City Hall. At the networking meeting, information was shared and participants provided feedback on three questions:

1. What initiatives are working and should be continued or expanded?
2. What initiatives are not working and should stop or change?
3. What initiatives are not being done and need to be?

Representatives of the organizations included staff and volunteers who deliver/work on the youth programs, and youth users. Youth volunteers assisted during the meeting to categorize and post the feedback and then report back to the larger group. There was a lively and informative discussion and sharing of information.

## **The participants asked City staff to:**

- Circulate the draft report to all participants before finalizing
- Circulate the report of the meeting widely for information and action.
- Indicate that forums like this are fine but participants have all been to many such meetings, and much of the information that was shared has been offered before.

## **Key messages that were derived from the feedback included the need to:**

- Involve youth in all aspects of project decision making;
- Support "by-youth, for-youth" initiatives;
- Provide core and sustainable funding dedicated to the planning and delivery of youth programs;
- Support programs that focus on youth-to-youth mentorship and leadership;
- Provide stable funding for race relations and programs to combat systemic racism and anti-oppression initiatives;
- Repeal the Safe Schools Act - access to education is fundamental;
- Eliminate current Zero Tolerance policies in schools;
- Increase the amount of affordable meeting spaces for youth;
- Increase support to agencies that need organizational capacity building;
- Create meaningful and long-term vocational/ skills training programs for youth.



*"Trying to address racism in the public school system in Toronto in one year is next to impossible."*

## Question 1

### What initiatives are working and should be continued or expanded?

#### Capacity Building

- How-to Handbook - Hispanic Development Council
- Youth-driven Initiatives
- For-youth, by-youth initiatives
- Seniors In Cyberspace -Building Bridges between Youth and Seniors in the Community
- Youth mentors/coaches - teaching seniors how to use the Internet and computers
- Chillin' In Your Brown Skin Collective - Youth-driven network, partnership between Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA), Alliance for South Asian Aids Prevention (ASAAP), South Asian Women's Centre and South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
- Initiatives that focus on youth, by youth
- Youth initiatives related to technology and youth networking such as Taking I.T. Global
- Youth-lead initiatives need to be continued, expanded and supported

#### Youth Programming

- Youth programming in disadvantaged communities
- After school programs
- Venus Program at St. Stephen's House Youth Arcade
- Youth mentorship/youth leadership programs
- Mobilizing youth leadership to help build inclusive, safe communities
- Community youth mentorship programs where young people mentor other young people in their own community
- Youth-to-youth mentoring, including role models from diverse backgrounds
- Training/leadership programs
- Youth leadership programs for "marginalized" youth
- Tropicana Community Services mentorship programs
- Programme d'excellence dans les écoles francophones - leadership and mentorship need expansion
- Focus on the difference between leadership and mentorship
- Ruckus is working - Youth Action Network
- Grassroots Network
- Empowering youth around food issues



## Education

- In-school programs - adding resources to schools from community groups - e.g. Community Builders
- Visions of Science - science clubs
- Toronto Coalition for Equity in Education addressing issues of equity and diversity within the TDSB
- Send copies of the issues raised in this meeting to the boards of education
- Pathways to Education

## Youth Employment Programs

- Youth employment programs in the summer
- Youth International Internship Program - Hispanic Development Council

## Anti-Racism Training

- Anti-racism training and cross-cultural training/awareness
- Ruckus! Critical anti-racism conference for high school and university age youth of colour and mentorship program - Youth Action Network
- Anti-racism and anti-oppression training for frontline staff
- Sensitivity training
- Dialogue
- Talking circles
- Roundtables and Mosaic Listening Tours to continue

*"What are needed  
are sustainable  
programs, but this  
is difficult to do  
without sustainable  
funding."*

## Youth Space

- Space for youth within Settlement Services
- Providing spaces for youth, i.e. community booth during the Pride weekend for outreach and networking
- Expanding the spaces for youth during the Pride celebration
- Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Transexual, Intersexed, Queer and Two-Spirited (GLBTTIQ2S)
- Continue to develop networking, awareness and connection through GLBTTIQ2S community; spaces for youth to gather together and enjoy the social events.

## Sports

- Increase interest in sports activity
- More involvement in sports along with studies
- Take care of youth sports needs

## Youth Engagement

- Continued core funding
- Targeting youth of different communities, making them feel like they are part of the system - help them to develop
- Engaging youth in programs that foster community engagement and connections, especially isolated/alienated youth
- Minority youth participation in the community



*"Music, arts and culture  
become an avenue, a  
bridge for youth."*

## Youth Advocacy

- Youth Advisory Councils are working
- Toronto Youth Cabinet - energy and presence
- Need to sustain the good work groups here today are doing, to continue to answer the question of importance and caring for youth issues
- Implement programs that are youth-lead and youth-run
- More legal clinics for youth

## Food Security

- Outdoor initiatives - gardening, food growing, food security, farmers markets
- Food security programs for youth

## Resident-Driven

- Resident-driven initiatives that are supported by local community service organizations
- Jane Finch Concerned Citizens - skills building program should continue

## Programming Issues

- Continue the outreach project to join our services
- Drop-in services combined with programmed times
- Intergenerational - programs for youth and their families together to address the intergenerational issues

## Cross-Cultural Programming

- "Connecting-Cultures" - between Somali and Caribbean youth and parents
- Women and Diversity Group - issues of cultural diversity and gender and building individual and collective capacity of newcomers
- Heritage celebrations

## Arts

- Continue with arts-based programs with South Asian youth as an avenue for self expression
- More funding for youth projects, so that newcomer South Asian girls have a place/space to open up, share issues and learn more about Toronto
- Focus at Regent Park
- Graffiti Transformation Project

## Anti-Violence

- Coalition of African-Canadian Organizations - group of 32 organizations working together to address issues and access and equity within the African-Canadian community in particular how it relates to violence and gun use among youth.
- Breaking the Cycle of Violence programs (2)



# Question 2

## What initiatives are not working and should stop or change?

### Programs

- Way too many sports programs - not making an impact. Isn't the mind a muscle that needs a workout?
- Short-term programs/projects should stop for youth
- Lecture formatted programming (i.e. motivational speakers) where young people do not have opportunities to take part
- Programs facilitated by people who cannot relate to young people are ineffective
- Token "multiculturalism"
- Programs that marginalize youth

### Zero Tolerance Policies - Safer School Act

- Many participants identified the Safer School Act
- Many participants identified Zero Tolerance policies

### Issues Related to Lack of Core Funding

- Many workshops and events will not help youth with their concerns. Training in leadership and key issues such as equity, rights (legal) and activism. More funding is required.
- Innovation projects - change to core funding
- Using volunteers to do the work of a paid staff person due to insufficient funding
- Expand core funding for youth spaces in the GLBTTIQ2S community

### Meeting/Forums

- Having meetings/gatherings only in downtown
- Stop reinventing the wheel - too many forums asking the same thing - collaborate, coordinate, combine?

### Education

- There has been a huge, long term systemic change to the TDSB yet there is almost no transparency to the process or community consultations. The TDSB must be held accountable to the community.
- TDSB is so big, how do you fight it?
- It's your education - demand greater transparency in the community consultations

*"We systemically underestimate the power and potential of youth leadership."*



# Question 3

## What initiatives are not being done and need to be?

*"Real youth-driven initiatives are what are needed."*

### Resources

- Support for ethno-specific agencies for capacity building
- Make longer term funding available - 2-5 years
- Simplify the grant application forms

### Youth and Family

- Programs and services for young fathers
- Violence Prevention Programs delivered locally for youth and families
- Programs that promote family and community "healing" with the African-Canadian community

### Education

- Access to education - meetings with the TDSB
- Working with diverse schools
- Training is provided to take care of very young people and facilitation of adults - where is the training to work with youth?
- Invest in music education - it stimulates the mind more than anything else
- Advocacy for anti-oppression work in school curricula

### Space

- Increase core funding through the community partnership for youth spaces in the GLBTTIQ2S community
- Community health centres just for youth
- More space just for youth

### Inclusion

- Help for small organizations from equity seeking groups
- English media covering ethnic issues
- More French initiatives to reflect the reality of Toronto as a bilingual city
- Increased involvement with ethnic media

### Coalition Building

- Coalition of organizations for each high risk area so that the various organizations know who is in the area, what each one is doing and how to become more involved
- Increased services, programs for those already incarcerated by justice system or "at risk" of becoming incarcerated.
- Opportunities for youth with physical and mental health issues/challenges to build positive coping skills and connections to resources and increase community participation
- There should be more agencies seeking to address the increased incidence of gun violence, providing services to potential perpetrators as well as to victims and families.
- Cultural and gender appropriate health and fitness programs are needed.
- City-funded evaluation and follow-up measuring impact studies
- Research and information sharing on different projects and activities
- Develop some type of newsletter or website so all the different communities and organizations attending this meeting are able to know each others events and activities.
- More youth networking forums where agencies and organizations can share ideas
- Create a website where all groups can post their information, prevent duplication and work together.
- The City should check in with the projects they fund at six months and then at two years to evaluate the success or failure of the project.

## Training

- Vocational training for youth
- Civic education training for youth
- Teacher training program
- Training for speciality coaches
- Training for teachers about youth from different backgrounds
- More arts-based programming to allow young people opportunities for self expression
- Common training/understanding of anti-oppression for agencies
- Training on cultural competency for staff of education and justice system and law enforcement
- Teach training in anti-oppression work and in concrete skills for positive interventions that they can teach students.
- Transition programs aimed at encouraging youth to attend post secondary training
- Youth at risk
- Drop outs
- Youth out of school for an extended period
- Need paid, short term training services for youth. Example: Youth project called Toronto Response for Youth, which was very successful.
- Leadership for youth on their rights is important

## Youth Engagement

- Honorarium for volunteers that would not interfere with welfare and Ontario Disability Support Program payments.
- Government and Elections Canada are not creating a structure that allows youth to participate in electoral process.
- Youth excluded from helping inform government policies that affect youth. Youth need to be at the table.
- More youth-driven arts projects
- Preventative programming at an earlier age group
- More incentives for promoting youth-for-youth initiatives at the local level
- More assistance to families with autistic children and/or adult members

## Employment

- More programs for youth at risk (16/17 to 21), focusing on increasing employment and work skills and access to employment. Provide a training allowance/stipend.
- Youth enterprise investment grant and loan without a co-signer

## Mentoring Programs

- Mentorship programs and co-op placements
- Alternative programs targeting students who are suspended, expelled or otherwise failing, run by community organizations
- Youth mentorships, youth training and youth workshops
- Corporate mentorship and incentive programs for youth. Management can adopt an at-risk youth program - Corporate Educational Challenge program for at risk youth.
- More youth working at youth organizations
- Have leadership program within the French elementary and junior high schools.
- More co-ops, apprentice programs, modeling, job shadowing, job search and research programs
- There need to be more programs that teach life, people and human skills - steeped in value, respect and self-pride.

*"We want to find ways to engage the youth in Toronto in the electoral process..."*

# Additional Comments

*"Under funding is the greatest challenge for... race relations."*

## Diversity

- The City of Toronto needs to be more aware of the issues of francophones in the city.
- Create and use education curriculum that reflects the diversity of Canada and documents the history and contributions of visible minorities ie - Imprint - Council of Agencies Serving South Asians project.

## Youth Engagement

- This group discussion meeting on youth is an excellent initiative taken by the funders. Thank you.
- Integration of youth engagement in all institutional procedures, policies and programs
- Nothing is more frustrating than providing successful youth engagement projects that receive inconsistent and short term funding.

## Funding

- Encourage creative, innovative and out of the box program funding opportunities.
- Create more strategic networking and funding opportunities.
- City should invest in providing more long term and core funding for "youth-lead" and "youth-driven" organizations and initiatives.
- It's clear that everyone here has the same goal: Our Youth. So! In light of what's happening in our city, funding should not be an issue - but why is it an issue?
- It is difficult to reach tangible/realistic results within a one-year, under-funded project. Should have multi-year program funding (2-3 years) and/or core funding.
- Core operational funding is our biggest need to sustain and plan programs.
- Create sustainable funding for 3-5 year periods.
- Sustainable funding for youth and other social programs - We should ask City Council to increase the social services budget. The police budget was increased - both these area are of equal importance.
- Giving core funding for youth spaces in the GLBTTIQ2S community - it will be beneficial for developing youth content workshops, art, entertainment. This will increase sharing at the Pride celebration.
- Strong recommendation that the funding policy should change. Rather than 40 organizations with less money, it would be better to fund fewer organizations with effective funding - then rotate the recipients (some this year, others next year).
- There should be meetings such as this in all neighbourhoods of Toronto to avoid duplication of services.



# Access, Equity and Human Rights Grants (AEHR) Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP)

## Purpose

The purpose of Access and Equity Grants is to increase the capacity of organizations and communities to address racism and discrimination through outcome focused, time limited projects. Through a community capacity/infrastructure building process, organizations can provide public education and develop political advocacy skills and strategies in order to successfully address community issues.

## Objectives

- To achieve a positive race relations and human rights climate in Toronto;
- To maintain a strong community infrastructure to address racism and to act as advocates, to promote civic participation by groups working towards the elimination of barriers faced by human rights protected groups and to focus on human rights issues relating to women and gender, literacy, disability, sexual orientation, and Aboriginal affairs;
- To carry out public awareness and anti-racist education campaigns which respect and value Toronto's diverse communities and which target the elimination of hate activity.

## Contact us

Access, Equity and Human Rights (AEHR) - Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP)

City Manager's Office  
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416-392-8592



# Youth Networking Forum

## List of Attendees

January 20, 2006, 9 a.m. - noon

City Hall, Members' Lounge

Afghan Women's Counselling and  
Integration Community Support  
Organization  
Canadian Arab Federation  
Canadian Tamil Youth Development  
Centre  
Central Neighbourhood House  
Centre des Jeunes Francophone de  
Toronto  
Chinese Canadian National Council  
- Toronto Chapter  
Community Builders  
Conflict Mediation Services of  
Downsview  
Council of Agencies Serving South  
Asians (CASSA)  
Culturelink  
Delta Family Resource Centre  
Flemington Health Centre  
Flemington Neighbourhood Services  
Get Your Vote On

Hispanic Development Council  
Jamaican Canadian Association  
Malvern Family Services  
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving  
Immigrants (OCASI)  
Pride Toronto  
Serve Canada  
Somaliland Women's Association  
Somali Community Centre of Etobicoke  
Somali Youth Association of Toronto  
South Asian Women's Centre  
Toronto Fire - Youth Co-op Program  
Toronto Youth Cabinet  
Urban Alliance  
Visions of Science Learning Network  
York Hispanic Centre  
Youth Action Network  
Youth Assisting Youth  
Whyy Mee  
411 Initiative for Change



**By mail:**

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Diversity Our Strength