ARTS NETWORK *for* CHILDREN & YOUTH   RESEAU *des* ARTS *pour* LA JEUNESSE

Undervoiced Voices: Strategies for Participation

A Research Report

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, we wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by the focus group participants, a complete list of which is included as an appendix to this report. Without their input and feedback, the pages of this research report would be blank.

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The focus group facilitator was Remi Warner and the report writer was Dale Hamilton with project administration and coordination provided by ANCY Executive Director Linda Albright.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this report, **"youth-led"** will refer to organizations, which maintain 51% or more of the decision-making power in the hands of youth and young adults. **"Youth-involved"** will refer to organizations which involve youth and young adults to varying degrees in their decision-making processes. The term **"youth program participants**" will be used to describe youth who participate in these programs and may or may not have take on some form of leadership role within the organization.

"Youth" will refer to persons between the ages of 12 and 24, with people between 24 and 30 years of age being referred to as **"young adults.**

GOALS OF THIS REPORT

The findings of this research project and report will ultimately be used by funders to help them develop strategies to improve and streamline their funding process in the context of Toronto's "undervoiced and racialized" youth. It is also hoped that these same findings will have application and usability beyond this scope. For more details about the original stated goals and anticipated outcomes of this report please see Appendix # 1.

As a parallel project, ANCY has developed a "toolkit", based in part on this same research. It will serve as a practical guide for best practices and governance structures, allowing for meaningful and diverse youth input into decision-making at both a day-to-day operations level and at a board level

METHODOLOGY

Four focus groups, facilitated by researcher and York University lecturer Remi Warner, were held in February of 2006. Please note that Remi Warner was the lead researcher and author of the "Youth On Youth Report", a research report also prepared in 2005 for the Ontario Region of Canadian Heritage (see Bibliography).

The focus group facilitator opened each session with a round of introductions and then asked the group pre-formulated questions, while at the same time allowing for open-ended discussion. The author of this report, Dale Hamilton, took extensive notes and also worked, when possible, from voice recordings. Please note that specific quotes have not been identified with specific individual focus group participants but rather a clear distinction has been made between the three very distinct groups of informants: youth-led, youth-involved and youth program participants.

FOCUS GROUPS

1. Youth-Led: Grassroots Youth Collaborative (GYC)

The **first focus group** was comprised of Grassroots Youth Collaborative member organizations, all of which strongly identify themselves as **youth-led**. It was pointed out by the facilitator that, in the context of Grassroots Youth Collaborative member organizations, "youth-led" does not always preclude adult involvement but is characterized by boards or other decision-making bodies being comprised of at least 50 plus 1 percent youth.

Some gaps in information and participation were identified so member organizations of GYC were given the opportunity to respond to preliminary drafts of the report, which they did, collectively, in writing and verbally. Their comments proved very valuable and were taken into serious consideration.

No Consensus

It is important to note that disagreements became apparent between youth-led and youth-involved organizations. GYC wants to emphasis that "no consensus was reached that both youth-led and youth-involved agencies should receive similar funding. The GYC remains firm in our belief that the most effective way of bridging barriers in service provision for marginalized and racialized youth in the city of Toronto is through effective **grassroots youth-led** programming – we are very weary of 'youth-involved' programming and feel that the youth-led model is the best way in addressing issues of self-determination, self-employment and peer consciousness raising."

It is also notable that a pattern emerged in terms of the reasons why some GYC member organizations were unable to attend the focus group. Participation on their part was difficult because of chronic understaffing and lack of sufficient resources to accomplish their goals. This further emphasizes the need for sustained funding to these organizations. A concrete example of this is found in the RSVP sent from 4UNITY (Appendix # 3).

Timing was also a factor, with GYC and its member organizations working at peak capacity to complete projects by the end of the fiscal year. GYC elaborated on their concerns regarding timing in a letter sent April 7, 2006:

> "We believe that the research phase of this report was overly rushed… for example, while each GYC group was given the opportunity to participate in the round tables – our invitation timeline was so limited (less than one month) – that we were unable to effectively be represented in the meetings."

2. Youth-Involved

The **second focus group** brought together organizations in Toronto who do not clearly fit the description of "youth led" but who nevertheless provide services for undervoiced, racialized youth. In response to the question "do you consider your organization youth-led?" all of the participating organizations identified themselves as **youth-involved**, but not strictly speaking, youth-led. One youth-involved program coordinator commented that they have "great admiration for the approach taken by GYC member organizations and are moving towards a similar model."

In order to illustrate the concept of youth-involved, the following example was offered by a participant in this focus group: "Even though youth did not have input into the initial program design, it has evolved into a structure which engages significant youth input into decision-making…with programming in a constant state of adapting itself to the needs and desires of the youth."

Another informant, who has been working in the filed of youth arts for over 20 years and is presently writing her PhD on youth participation, felt very strongly that "we need a lot of different ages and kinds of people in the same room, a smorgasbord of sorts, so people can learn to relate to different people" and sees the practice of mentorship as a continuum that does not end when one becomes an adult. She prefers an approach which will foster "respect and communication" between the generations.

3. Youth Program Participants

The **third and fourth sessions** sought the input of **youth program participants** or "end users"; in other words, youth who have participated in programs offered by the organizations who attended the first or second focus groups. Not surprisingly, this group had less to say about the nuances of funding structures, but nevertheless their input was critical. It certainly establishes a direct cause and effect relationship, corroborating the importance of solid sustained funding, program continuity and staff/participant relationship building as it effects the very youth it is intended to serve.

In total, seventeen youth program participants attended, in these two sessions combined. We were reasonably successful in ensuring that this focus group included youth from a broad range of geographic locations across Toronto and that they were racially diverse and gender-balanced, including significant input from two First Nations young women.

The participants in these sessions were offered small honourariums to compensate for their travel and their time.

4. YAPNG

An **informal focus group** spontaneously emerged from the content of the agenda at the April meeting of **YAPNG, an ad hoc network of youth arts organizations** organized and facilitated by Syrus Ware, the Program Coordinator of "Youth Behind The Scenes" at the Art Gallery of Ontario. The member organizations in attendance at this meeting identified themselves as youth-involved, although it was noted that two youth-led organizations have attended meetings in the past and are on the circulation/contact list.

PART 2: EXECUTIVE SUMMMARY
OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary goal of "Undervoiced Voices" was to gather details regarding the kinds of changes "front line" organizations would like to see in the youth funding environment. This report presents specific recommendations which we hope funders will be able to "get their teeth into" and seriously consider for implementation.

More specifically, this report offers concrete recommendations on what funding programs should look like, including recommendations and specific strategies in order to increase input, reduce barriers and improve access to public policy decision-making processes and funding mechanisms by Toronto's marginalized and racialized youth.

One of the key research finding resulting from the focus groups was the importance of a more holistic, long-term, community and human development approach to funding for undervoiced, racialized youth and young adults, with much more cross-sectoral collaboration and communication not only amongst the funders themselves but also between funders and fundees.

The following recommendations are offered as concrete strategies for funding agencies and policy makers to improve funding mechanisms and policies to enhance undervoiced, racialized youth participation. They have been organized under general headings around broad-based themes, recognizing that there will inevitably be cross-pollination. Please note that these abbreviated recommendations are elaborated upon in Section 5 of this report.

Funding Bodies/Collaborations:
1. Implementation and expansion of a funding collaborative, involving all levels and sectors of funders, recognizing that chronic under-funding for youth arts programs is a fundamental obstacle.

2. Creation of a single multi-level, cross-sector working committee to facilitate "big picture" visioning and strategizing, including participation from diverse and racialized youth-led and youth-involved organizations.

3. Identify and fund a third-party organization that could serve a proactive outreach, networking, facilitating and communication role between youth organizations in Toronto.

4. Establish and strengthen collaborations with corporate sponsors, striving to establish direct relationships between the corporations and the projects they support.

Funding Approaches:

5. Develop, in addition to project funding, multi-funder, multi-year staggered core funding, requiring collaboration, long-term planning and milestones viewed within a range of expectations.

6. Increase cross-sector communication and collaboration between all levels of public and private funders in order to develop the same or similar criteria and goals.

7. Strive to maintain and develop closer, more ongoing relationships with funded organizations, staff and programs by offering support beyond dollars, ensuring that funders have a stake in the sustainability and ongoing improvement of the organization.

8. Increase funding for capacity building of administrative structures with qualified administrators "loaned" to organizations in order to increase stability and sustainability.

9. Establish a funding graduation process, recognizing emerging and established organizations. Three specific funding categories are suggested: a) emerging with one primary service, b) established with one primary service and c) established with multiple services.

Funding Process:

10. Create a simplified, flexible, streamlined, less daunting application process for applicants, particularly racialized, youth-led and emerging organizations.

11. Establish an adjudication process which would include decision-making power for funders, youth and young adults.

12. Reduce the amount of detail required in grant application, reporting back and evaluation processes. Youth should be involved in determining these processes and critiquing draft application forms.

13. Allow emerging, particularly youth-led organizations to submit applications and reports on video or DVD or even orally, in the context of a site visit by the potential funder.

14. Improve the grant application process by making deadlines staggered and more flexible, especially for emerging organizations.

15. Include food and public transit tokens as allowable expenses particular to marginalized youth oriented funding.

16. Minimize "end-of-fiscal-year insanity" wherein cash-flow-strapped organizations are too often left waiting for cheques to arrive for weeks and even months after grants have been approved, resulting in a dysfunctional cycle of feast and famine.

Funding Priorities:

17. Funding priority be given to community-based, grassroots organizations which have achieved or are striving for excellence not only in artistic merit but also in the quality of the process for the participants, including an emphasis on significant youth input into decision-making. Such organizations fall under the following categories, *in order of recommended priority*: a)Youth-led   b)Youth-involved c) Individual youth or emerging collectives of youth.

18. Focus on arts projects and programs put forward by racialized and marginalized youth in Toronto neighbourhoods, recognizing that they face more challenges and greater obstacles in accessing youth services that are culturally and demographically appropriate.

19. Funding priority be given to identified risk neighbourhoods but not to the exclusion of other underserviced Toronto neighbourhoods and populations in which a preventative approach is of vital importance.

20. Give strong consideration, in collaboration with corporate partners, to developing and improving infrastructure/creative spaces for youth arts programs.

21. Address the need for funding which supports mentorships and training in order to generate "jobs and cash" for youth and to create a stronger link between economic development and the arts.

22. Identify corporate and education sector funding partners in order to provide educational opportunities such as bursaries and return-to-school grants with a particular focus on those who find themselves at the intersection of youth, racialization and marginalization.

Funding Criteria:

23. Fund projects to a level that will not lead to staff burnout and high turnover. Funding must be sizeable enough to stabilize organizations.

24. Funding criteria should allow for the possibility of projects not involving a "professional" artist, but with the significant involvement of a

"qualified" artist, particularly if the artist has good community and human development skills and/or ties to the particular neighbourhood.

25. Recognize, in the case of First Nations youth projects, that arts endeavours which might be dismissed as "crafts" are actually important cultural expressions which pre-date, in a North America context, European concepts of art.

26. Acknowledge the uniqueness of hip hop culture as an art form but also a cultural way of life. Many of the most respected artists (graffiti, breakdancing, mc's, dj's) in the hip hop community remain underground or "un-professional" but are integral part of the community/artistic fabric.

27. Keep up-to-date on recent trends in youth arts and consider urban arts and initiatives that combine more traditional arts with urban arts.

28. Consider programs that are in their early development stages, accommodating an "ecology of experimentation" wherein expectations for concrete outcomes are temporarily suspended.

29. Establish a program of small grants ($500-$2,000) aimed at individual youth or emerging collectives of youth.

30. Address the need for capital asset funding, which is excluded from most grant criteria.

31. Develop, in conjunction with youth leaders, evaluation tools for measuring success that are ongoing, flexible and participatory.

Diverse Participation

32. Improve the structure and effectiveness of the individual and collective funding bodies by amplifying diverse, racialized youth voices in decision-making contexts such as juries and boards of directors.

33. Solicit input from community leaders, organizations and residents of affected neighbourhoods in terms of programming needs via intergenerational public forums.

34. Support artistic collaborations between youth, young adults and younger children in order to prepare children to become community-minded individuals using an integrated, intergenerational community development approach.

35. Encourage the involvement of young adults as participants, volunteers and/or paid staff, acknowledging their value as formal or informal mentors but also recognizing that some young adults are still struggling and benefit from participation in programs.

PART 3: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Focus Group # 1: Youth-Led, Grassroots Youth Collaborative

Note: For elaboration on the youth-led approach, please see the "Youth On Youth Report" listed in the Bibliography.

Focus group participants voiced their strong support for more holistic, long-term community development approaches to funding for youth-led organizations, with more cross-sectoral collaboration among funders and agencies.

There was also an emphasis on increasing communication between all levels of public and private funders in order to develop the same or similar criteria and goals resulting in a more streamlined application process for applicants.

One participant suggested that various levels and sectors of funders should pool their available youth funding into one umbrella fund. Another participant offered a cautionary note, expressing concern about the possibility that when funding bodies learn more about what each other are doing that some may say "Oh, you're funding that, so we'll withdraw our funding." Together the participants wanted to clarify that the intent and the hope of this recommendation is that each body would combine and even increase their funding, not see it as an opportunity for cutbacks.

It was agreed that the neighbourhood at large, beyond the youth, should have some say in terms of programming needs.

Another stated priority was improvement in the structure and effectiveness of the funding bodies themselves, in the context of undervoiced racialized youth, by amplifying diverse youth voices in decision-making contexts such as juries and boards of directors. Youth should be involved in deciding who gets the grants and funders should not take a "parental role". The Laidlaw Foundation was cited as an example of best practices in this regard.

There was a strong emphasis placed on the detrimental impact of insufficient funding, particularly short-term project-to-project funding. This was seen as posing numerous problems for youth-led organizations. Core funding, where deemed appropriate, was one suggested solution. Another alternative discussed was a "multi-year, multi-funder approach". Specifically, this would involve two-four year funding cycles, with a different funder ready to come on board for a similar period of time and then perhaps a third funder (or the original funder) lined

up for the next cycle. It was recognized that a rotation system of this nature would require long-term planning and collaboration and would result in increased stability, improved continuity and longevity of programs, organizations and staff.

It was also suggested that a concerted effort be made to reduce the numerous spin-off problems created by administrative overload and incapacitation, in no small part due to the current nature and structure of funding arrangements. It was proposed that this be achieved through increased funding for capacity building of administrative structures. It was also suggested that a core fund be established *just* for administrative support and that a collective of qualified administrators be sent out to organizations in order to increase stability and sustainability.

Focus group participants agreed that ways and means must be identified to reduce the quantity of paper work required in the grant application process. One participant went so far as to suggest that emerging, particularly youth-led organizations, be allowed to submit applications on video or DVD or even orally, in the context of a site visit by the funder in order for them to "experience" the program. In this way, the program participants could be drawn into the application (and evaluation) process, rather than 'one staff person spending hours alone in front of a computer.' Otherwise, applicants with 'higher literacy skills and grant-writing experience tend to get the grants, rather than decisions being based on the effectiveness of the programming.' It was stressed that any increase in funding to build administrative structures and capacity should not have a negative impact on program funding. It was agreed that a 15% administration fee for a project is not sufficient.

Another need identified was for capital asset funding, which, it was noted, is excluded from most grant criteria. This can be particularly significant for new and emerging organizations.

Funding which supports mentorships and training with entrepreneurs in order to generate "jobs and cash" for youth was seen as crucial. This would in turn create a stronger link between economic development and the arts. However, it was noted that raining and mentorship funding should not come at the expense of programming capacity.

Improvement could be made, it was felt, in the grant application process by making deadlines more flexible, especially for emerging organizations (an example being an application from an emerging youth organization that was rejected because it was 3 minutes late because the youth delivering it got lost in the building). Participants agreed that funders should work together to stagger deadlines; otherwise there becomes a "grant application season" where staff members are seriously over-taxed while trying to maintain programming and meet multiple almost simultaneous deadlines.

A "graduation" process needs to established, recognizing both emerging and established organizations and that does not "penalize" established organizations, recognizing that funding needs to stay caught up as groups grow and their capacity and needs increase. If a program works and grows, it should not receive gradually decreased funding as is sometimes the case. It was also recognized that there is a strong need for seed funding for small, emerging youth-led initiatives. Three specific funding categories were suggested: 1) emerging with one primary service, 2) established with one primary service and 3) established with multiple services.

A hope was strongly expressed that funders strive to maintain and develop closer, more ongoing relationships with the organizations, staff and programs they help to fund by offering support beyond dollars. This was seen as a way to ensure that funders have a stake in the sustainability and ongoing improvement of the organization. This support could take the form of assistance with long-term planning, grant applications and building awareness of the range of funding opportunities available. The question was asked as to whether funders might also be able to provide references for grant applicants to other funding agencies.

It was also felt that if funders had stronger relationships amongst themselves there would be a freer flow or information between them, rather than an ongoing need for applicants to supply each funder with certain documents; for example audited financial reports which cost time and money to produce.

Laura Metcalfe of Canadian Heritage was named as an example of a ministry staff person offering valuable support and that this could serve as a model for other funders. To quote one focus group participant: "We need to get away from paper relationships and develop real relationships".

It was unanimous that the validity of "qualitative program evaluations and report-back processes" need to be recognized. In some cases, programs that appear to "fail" on paper may actually have inherent value. A more qualitative process could be achieved through site visits by funders and outside professional evaluators, accompanied by shorter less onerous written (or video-taped verbal) reports.

Great importance was placed on funding agencies supporting organizations to a point that will prevent staff burnout and high turnover. A concrete example was given by one participant: "If an organization requests $25,000 and is only granted $15,000, they will likely try to pull it off anyway, but soon discover that there's a high price to pay in terms of the toll it takes on staff and volunteers".

One participant expressed the opinion that arts funding bodies need to overcome a bias in favour of, or against, certain kinds of arts. Although the participant who expressed this opinion did not choose to elaborate, this point was

taken up and explored in some detail by several participants in the next focus group.

A question was raised as to whether it was feasible to identify and fund a third party organization to act as a conduit for funds and also to serve a proactive communication, outreach and networking role for youth-led and youth-led organizations in Toronto, in addition to functioning as a bridge between funders and youth-led initiatives in Toronto. The possibility of expanding the capacity of the GYC so it might serve this role was briefly discussed.

Improving the process for obtaining charitable status was generally viewed as important. This was seen as a crucial step in accessing private sector funding by eliminating prohibitive application costs and ineligibility to apply due to partnerships with existing charitable status organizations. Participants see a need for assistance to emerging organizations in obtaining status because there are "a lot of howevers" and a need to find "wording that is acceptable to those granting charitable status." The opinion was expressed that more "flexibility and relationship-building" needs to be built into the process of acquiring such status.

Likewise, the process of incorporation was seen to be in need of enough flexibility to enable creative alternatives such as collectives, in some cases operating in association with incorporated bodies. Emerging organizations were seen as being in need of legal assistance so "they don't have to wait months for volunteer lawyers to undertake the process." This could include setting aside a certain percentage of seed dollars for pre-incorporated groups to explore their options and initiate the process of incorporation if they decide such a move is in fact in their best interests.

Research Findings: Focus Group # 2: Youth-Involved Organizations

Note: For elaboration on youth-involved structures and approaches, please see Appendix # 2

Grant Structures

It was agreed, within the context of this focus group only, that if funding is to meet the needs of the youth of Toronto it needs to be "more expansive"; more specifically, that it needs to embrace both youth-led and youth-involved organizations and, in the spirit of prevention, must not be limited to "identified neighbourhoods" that have made the news in recent months.

It was pointed out by the facilitator that, in the context of Grassroots Youth Collaborative member organizations, "youth-led" does not always preclude adult involvement but is characterized by boards or other decision-making bodies being comprised of at least 50 plus 1 percent youth.

It was also agreed that it is extremely important that "funders develop relationships with fundees and vice versa and that funders take more initiative in creating these relationships." This was seen as vital in order that both funders and fundees understand each other's processes. "It's important that funders get out to more to meet the people behind the programs" and to understand the context so they have a sense of "what is possible".

Emphasis was placed on funders getting more of a sense of what's happening "on the front lines" and that if they did so, it would become clear to them that "cookie cutter approaches don't work", given the fact that "all at-risk youth are not the same". It was acknowledged that there are certain best practice models that often translate very well from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, but that, ultimately, any model must be adaptable to particular sets of conditions or risk becoming obsolete.

It was the consensus of this focus group that "funders must be willing to see successful programs through for 3-5 years." One participant related her experience that "funders tune out when you mention the phrase 'core funding'" and what is needed instead is "the development of an intelligence that involves trusting relationships leading to continuity of programs." It was noted by several focus group participants that time and again the youth with whom they work will ask: "Where do you get your money and when are you going to disappear?", demonstrating a clear need for continuity of programs. As one focus group participant stated: "The youth need to know that we care and that the funders care. We need to reproduce, with the funders, the same kind of trusting relationships that we're trying to develop with the youth participants."

The phrase "multi-year staggered funding" was used; in other words that willing funders would work collaboratively to fund qualifying organizations in three or four year cycles, so that the organization could make a generalized ten year plan and know that they have committed funding for the duration. If such a collaboration of funders was to emerge, one application and jurying process could be put into effect, thereby minimizing bureaucracy and maximing the money available to actually do the front line work.

It was agreed that there would need to be "milestones" throughout such an extended cycle of funding but that these milestones would need to accommodate a range of expectations, depending on the organization and the circumstances. The example given was numbers of youth attending programs and that sometimes quality programming having a positive impact on fewer end users is a measure of success.

Given such a funding arrangement, trusting supportive relationships between funder and fundee would be pivotal, especially in the case of emerging organizations in the early stages of building their capacity. It was suggested that developing criteria for measuring success be a collaborative effort between the grant giver and the grant recipient, including youth leaders.

Grant application workshops were suggested for emerging organizations and that youth end users be invited to attend in order to develop this valuable skill, rather than grant applications remaining a mysterious process undertaken by someone else. The possibility of writing applications collaboratively was mentioned, so at the end of the workshop, each organization went away with an actual complete application.

It was added that a diverse youth voice must also be a strong component in evaluation, even if funders don't specifically require it and it was reiterated that youth should be compensated for participating in an evaluation processes.

One participant felt strongly that practitioners need to challenge funders' milestones as well as their "corporate language and market driven measures of success". "We need to nudge forward the conversation towards the long term creation of healthy communities, rather than perceived quick fixes." It was noted that sometimes government ministries recognize that there is a need for longer term thinking, but are pushed into the drive for immediate results by well-intentioned politicians and ultimately, by voters.

Several focus group participants suggested that too much detail is required for funding applications and reports. One participant went so far to say that funders should be required to fill out their own application and evaluation forms and then see if they still think so much detail is required. A critique of funders' application forms was recommended, with participation from both sides of the funding process.

Another suggestion for funders was to establish a program of small grants ($500-$2,000) aimed at individual youth or loose, emerging collectives of youth involving a simple one-page on-line application and reporting form that would essentially ask, for example: "If you had $1,000 what would you do with it?" Any perceived lack of accountability was seen as worth the investment, even if only one out of a hundred small projects such as this blossomed into something demonstrably sustainable.

Food For Thought

There was agreement that "food is a key to attracting and keeping kids" and that it's important to keep the quality of the food high and to "use creative cooking as a form of engagement". In terms of funding, it was suggested that all funders be open to budget line items for food, rather than maintaining criteria that does not allow for food, thereby necessitating additional funding applications to different funders.

Infrastructure

All of the focus groups for this research report were deliberately held at Sketch, in order to create an opportunity for other youth organizations and youth to see the facility. After seeing Sketch, several focus group participants expressed the strong opinion that Sketch has what they need – the facilities and the resources to offer all art forms, food and counselling all under one roof. It was agreed that every neighbourhood needs a "Sketch-like" facility.

It was also agreed that if furnishings, materials, equipment, food, clothing and even the space itself (eg: a church basement) is "used" then it sends a clear message that "this is for poor people" and the participants "internalize this" and it becomes part of the way they view themselves and can inhibit personal development. It was added that sometimes a range of choices can initially "shut down" some youth, but if the space is good and the environment supportive, then this can be overcome, with more structure offered at the beginning and then become gradually more "porous".

It was also noted that the programs most frequently requested by youth are "music, theatre and dance" and that all of these require a significant amount of space and that busing the youth to locations outside the neighbourhood doesn't work. "They simply don't show up."

Planning & Outreach Time

It was identified that when new programs are getting under way there is a need for "research & development time". In other words, planning time is needed "before the doors open". This would include the opportunity to get to know a neighbourhood and connect with existing leaders and organizations in order to undertake effective outreach. There also needs to be time to develop the programs in collaboration with local youth. It was noted that all too often this

phase is very difficult to fund and organizations or individuals end up doing it unpaid or underpaid.

It was stressed that the involvement of youth in decision-making requires more time and resources and that if there is going to be a trend towards youth-led organizations, then funders must understand that they will need to back this up with additional funding in order to facilitate the process of inclusion.

As one participant put it: "Funding for programs that are in their early development stages needs to accommodate an ecology of experimentation", wherein "expectations for concrete outcomes are temporarily suspended", allowing for "mistakes", which in turn can become opportunities for growth and improvement. She also pointed out that it needs to be acknowledged that sometimes "failure" has to do with outside forces, rather than with an inherent flaw in the process. This, she reiterated, is another reason why funders need to know the context of a project and develop relationships with the programmers rather than just with the programs.

Community-Minded Children
There was a lively discussion of the need for more funding and programs for younger children, as compared to youth and young adults. Frustration was expressed in situations where "teenagers' personal cultures will not permit them to come in the door…so we need to also work more with young children, preparing them to be community-minded individuals in an "integrated, intergenerational community development cross sector approach."

Role for ANCY?
It was suggested by a focus group participant that a possible role for ANCY would be as an inter-organization arts career message board centre, including a data base of artists, mentors, administrators and facilitators who either are youth themselves or who have experience working with youth. It was suggested that ANCY could also provide references and recommendations to funders.

Another role for ANCY suggested by the group was to hold symposiums similar to the one held at Harbourfront in 2005 at least annually. They hoped that these forums could continue to include performances and exhibitions by youth. It was specifically suggested that these forums move around the city, being hosted by the various member organizations. These same forums were seen as a great opportunity for professional development and networking, both of which were described as all too rare in the field of youth arts.

There was a repeated desire to find the opportunity to "go and see each other's shows". Again, it was suggested that perhaps ANCY could serve as a conduit to make members aware of each other's activities so they could compare and share and perhaps give testimonials on each other's behalf.

Research Findings: Focus Groups # 3 and 4: The Youth Themselves

Fifteen ethnically diverse youth connected to 7 different Toronto youth organizations gathered for two focus groups aimed at youth who participate in and/or help to coordinate youth programs. Because of the size of the group, two separate sessions were held at staggered start times but on the same day (Sunday February 26), The organizations these youth are connected to are as follows: Sketch, Children's Peace Theatre, Beatz to da Streetz, Regent Park Focus, Dixon Hall Youth Programs (Regent Park), Native Earth Youth Troupe and the Somali Youth Association of Toronto (SOYAT).

Likes

In response to the question: "What do you like about the programs you're involved in?" there was agreement on several key qualities, freedom of expression being foremost. As one young woman involved with Sketch put it: "I was surprised to see all the (art) materials and to find that they were free…they give us the raw materials and give us some help, if we want it, and that unleashes the artist and we're free to express ourselves."

Several participants echoed a variation on this thought, such as:
"When you get to be creative it can be a way to discover yourself and improve your self worth."
"It keeps you out of trouble and gives you direction that can be applied beyond the program."
"You can write it out in a poem instead of doing the crime."

Connected to this same sense of freedom was the idea of process over product: "You find out that it's OK to be silly and to make mistakes…some people think it's about the final product, but it's more about the process and learning from people who have a background in what you're interested in."

An analogy to a family was drawn: "In our program we're like one not-always-so-happy family, but if you hang in, you see that people can change their opinions about each other…and can get more open-minded about people who they wouldn't think twice about on the street."

The development of collaboration skills was also viewed as significant. An example given was of a youth "who thought he was ready to perform as soon as he walked in the door, but then he began to realize that it was going to be a group effort and that others weren't ready and so he had to learn to be patient and wait for the group to be ready, not just him."

Other things they listed as liking about their programs are as follows:
- Discovering common interests

- Everyone is equal
- Independent artistic expression but also group activities where you can "mesh" with others
- Preparing and eating food together for "nutrition and fellowship" was also seen as a form of creativity
- Transportation tokens being provided
- "A place to go when the shelters are closed and you're stressed out about being homeless and jobless."
- "Field trips" to events and activities outside the neighbourhood were seen as a good way to help a group of local peers "bond"
- Youth staff who are "part of both the adult and the youth worlds and who can capture your attention and trust and help with contacts in the work force….paying youth to teach other youth is the best way to create a natural comfort level."
- "Making some money at my art."
- "It feels good to have other people from my culture together doing creative things and being led by older youth from our culture."
- "Ethnically diverse" staff that are "not too academic."
- An environment in which there is "peer support, not peer pressure."
- "Being in on decisions – then you can build trust and everybody will want the program to continue and work together to make it happen."
- Follow-up and sustainability were seen as vitally important: "I came into the Sketch photography program from the streets where I was doing drugs. It was a short program and I thought, oh no it's over, but then there was follow-up and they kept in touch with me and asked me what else I wanted to do."
- "It's a chance to get away from the street scene which can suck you in and have a negative impact, but the bonds aren't that tight and you can move on if you've got something to move on to and that's what the arts program did for me – it gave me something to look forward to."
- An informal "rubber" structure that the participants have helped to create, as compared to an inflexible "concrete" structure that can't be adapted.
- Operate within a certain set of agreed-upon guidelines and then leave room for making changes depending on the interests and make-up of the group.
- "Steady regular dates" so that a routine can be established.
- It was acknowledged that creating a "flexible, steady program requires flexible, steady funding."
- Incentives such as a prize for the most improved youth.
- Undertaking outreach into the schools was something they saw as effective.
- Prefers consensus building to voting.
- Staff who are "formerly street involved, positive, friendly and able to accept and respect diversity".
- A space/environment that the youth have helped to create and where they feel "heard and respected."

- Programming that meets youth's needs because they have decision-making power over what will be offered.
- Programming that is free and that incorporates volunteers who are training to be staff.
- Programs that lead to a final production or finished piece, rather than creating something that will never be shown.
- Programs that teach other languages (eg: Native languages for First Nations youth.)

Dislikes

When asked to discuss things they didn't like or liked less about their programs they all agreed that the primary challenge they see is lack of funding to sustain programs and to consistently bring more participants into leadership roles within the organization.

Another challenge cited was a lack of networking and collaboration between groups. An example of something they'd like to see on this front is youth organizations from across Toronto "working together to showcase the work of the youth, so the youth voice could be bigger." An example given would be for visual artists at Sketch to do the sets for a play at Children's Peace Theatre.

One participant felt negatively towards "older people who think they know youth issues and who don't seem to get it that times change." Another youth participant saw it differently, describing a need he sees for "more connections to experienced mentors."

Several participants agreed that "art is not taken very seriously in North America as in other parts of the world" and they wished that not the case. As one young woman put it: "People seem to think that artists are suppose to be starving."

Another youth voice around the table added that "other jobs are more respected – like hard physical work – as if pushing a shovel is more important than pushing a pen."

One young Native participant pointed out that this is not generally true in Native communities, where "artists and healers are highly respected members of the community."

Delays in funding were seen as a major dislike; specifically when grants are approved and then it takes weeks or even months to actually get the money.

Other things they don't like about their programs or their situations are:
- "When people create a program and then ask youth what they think."

- "Programs that aren't led by youth or that have an ulterior motive like religion."
- "Cops coming into programs looking for people."
- People who leave things until the last minute and then "put on a big crazy push."
- Too much structure can result in some participants feeling "claustrophobic"; but too little structure can lead to participants to "not take anything that's said seriously and then it starts to fall apart."
- "A justice system that doesn't do more to prevent crime."
- Youth having to travel in order to participate in programs. Most believed that most youth will simply not participate if they have to travel outside their neighbourhood", although it was also acknowledged that "sometimes some young people prefer to perform and get involved outside their immediate neighbourhood" because they feel less intimidated to perform and because they want to meet new people. Generally though, it was agreed that localized programming was best for the majority of people and that it "helps people get to know their own neighbourhood and their own peers"
- Lack of connectivity was seen as a shortcoming. It was suggested that there be one website to make young people aware of programs within the City of Toronto
- Lack of money for higher education. One participant related her own story in which being given "a bit of money to go back to school had made a huge difference to her."
- "Hard to get to locations" and lack of money for transportation.
- Programs that don't allow participation for youth between the ages of 24 and 30. There was some agreement that the term "young adult" be used to refer to this age category. It was acknowledged that some young adults are still wanting and needing access to programs, including placement programs with potential future employers.

Research Findings: Focus Groups # 5: YAPNG Networking Group

In the context of a discussion about funding processes at the April, 2006 meeting of YAPNG, the following points were made:

- Social services organizations don't always understand the arts and they need to be involved on committees and collaborations of funders.
- If you get less than you request for a project, it can have serious repercussions; so there is a need for more stable long term funding.
- Sometimes it's easier to volunteer to do a project than to apply for and report on a small grant, but this is not sustainable.
- However, small seed money should not be eliminated in the face of larger long term funding.
- Any new funding program should involve a jury of peers, with the staff person visiting as many of the projects as possible in order to fill in blanks for jurors.
- Jurors should include some youth (teenagers) in addition to young adults.
- Being able to offer food and transportation is important.
- Funding should be available to allow organizations to improve their marketing and media skills.
- Funders and fundees should collectively look at the big picture in order to identify duplication and gaps.
- Funding partnerships and "twinning" projects should be considered within and outside of Toronto.
- Find creative, "non-boring" ways to engage youth on boards and committees.
- There are many vacant spaces in Toronto – need to partner with corporations with real estate holdings in order to make creative use of some of these spaces.

PART 4: RECOMMENDATIONS
The following provides more detailed recommendations, building on the
Executive Summary provided on page 7.

RECOMMENDATIONS
For Funding Agencies & Policy Makers

Strategies for Improving Funding Mechanisms to Enhance
Undervoiced Racialized Youth Participation
including
Funding Bodies/Collaborations, Approaches, Priorities, Process, Criteria
and Diverse Participation

- Increased cross-sector communication and collaboration between all
  levels of public and private funders in order to develop **the same or
  similar criteria and goals** (eg: resiliency skills, protective factor skills,
  etc) resulting in a simplified, flexible, streamlined, less daunting application
  process for applicants, particularly youth-led and emerging organizations.

- Various levels and sectors of funders should **pool their available youth
  funding** into one **umbrella fund**, establishing an adjudication process
  which would include decision-making power for funders, youth and young
  adults. Several focus group participants added a cautionary note in this
  regard. They were wary of the possibility that when funding bodies learn
  more about each other that some may say "Oh, you're funding that, so
  we'll withdraw our funding." This obviously, is not the intention of this
  recommendation, recognizing that chronic under-funding is a fundamental
  obstacle.

- The creation of a **single cross-sector working committee, perhaps
  called Youth Health,** in order to "keep an eye on the big picture" , thereby
  facilitating cross-sectoral visioning and strategizing, including participation
  from diverse and racialized youth-led and youth-involved organizations, all
  levels of government, the private sector and philanthropic foundations.
  This same cross-sectoral body should look for successful organizational
  characteristics and develop a **framework model** that would outline
  organizational, program and governance structures to serve as an ideal
  for effective youth programming, outreach and inclusively; while at the
  same time recognizing that each neighbourhood and project will have it's
  own set of needs and priorities and that individual youth themselves have
  multiple needs that inevitably overlap. This same committee could
  advocate for applicable **policy changes** and act as a watchdog for
  duplication and inequity. This committee should include **non-arts
  partners** (eg: social services, justice, health, crime prevention) in order to
  identify ways to work together more effectively.

- Identify and fund a third-party **networking organization** that could serve a proactive outreach, facilitating and communication role between youth organizations in Toronto.

- Short-term project-to-project funding, although useful in some situations, poses numerous problems, particularly for youth-led organizations and should be addressed through **core funding involving a staggered multi-year, multi-funder approach**. For example, this could involve three-four year funding cycles, with a different funder ready to come on board for a similar period of time and then perhaps a third funder (or the original funder) lined up for the next cycle. This kind of rotation system would require long-term planning and collaboration and would result in increased stability, improved continuity and longevity of programs, organizations and staff. This would enable organizations to make **ten year plans** with a certain level of confidence. Sustained funding such as this will also to allow organizations the time to build trusting relationships with their participants and to move beyond initial "aha" moments of self discovery, exploring dissemination and even the marketing and retailing of participants' work. Multiyear funding such as this would require certain **milestones**, but these should be viewed within a range of expectations; recognizing the need to challenge funders' milestones as well as their "corporate language and market driven measures of success, moving towards the long term creation of healthy communities, rather than perceived quick fixes. It was noted that sometimes government ministries recognize that there is a need for longer term thinking, but are pushed into the drive for immediate results by often well-intentioned politicians.

- Funding priority should be given to **community-based, grassroots organizations** which have **achieved** or are **striving for excellence** not only in **artistic merit** but also in terms of the **quality of the process** for the participants, including an emphasis on **significant and meaningful youth input into decision-making**, recognizing the important role of self-determination, self-employment, peer consciousness raising and bridging barriers in service provision for marginalized and racialized youth in the city of Toronto. Such organizations fall under the following general categories*, in order of priority* : **a)Youth-led   b)Youth-involved c) Individual youth or emerging collectives of youth.**

- Priority funding should be given to **identified risk neighbourhoods** but **not to the exclusion of other underserviced neighbourhoods in which a preventative approach is of vital importance**. Funds should be directed to populations of undervoiced, racialized, marginalized **populations of end-users**, rather than be dependent upon the physical location of the facility. Community leaders, organizations and residents of affected neighbourhoods should have some opportunity for input in terms

of programming needs and should be given the opportunity for dialogue via **intergenerational public forums.**

- Funding criteria should allow for the possibility of projects that do not involve a **"professional" artist**, but who have significant involvement by a **qualified artist** who satisfies the jury as to his or her ability to undertake the project, particularly if the artist has good community and human development skills and/or ties to the community in which the project or program will take place. When professional artists are engaged, there must be recognition that this is their livelihood and that they be paid a **living wage** based on established guidelines.

- Funding agencies need to fund projects to a level that does not lead to **staff burnout and high turnover**. Funding must be **sizeable enough to stabilize organizations**. For example, if an organization requests $25,000 and is only granted $15,000, they will likely try to "pull it off anyway", but soon discover that there is a high price to pay in terms of the toll it takes on both staff and volunteers.

- The **collaborative creation of a specific funding initiative** that would focus on **arts projects and programs put forward by racialized and marginalized youth in Toronto neighbourhoods**, recognizing that racialized, marginalized youth face more challenges and greater obstacles in accessing youth services that are culturally and demographically appropriate. Particular priority should be given to **urban arts/hip hop cultural initiatives.** This would also include initiatives that **may combine more traditional arts with urban arts** (such as some of the programs currently run by the Canadian-Tamil Youth Development Centre – see www.cantyd.org).

- Funders must recognize, in the case of **First Nations** youth projects, that arts endeavours which might be dismissed as "crafts" are actually **important cultural expressions** which pre-date, in North America, European concepts of art. An example would be traditional dance regalia, in that the process of learning not only how to create it but also it's historical and cultural significance, outstrips any preconceived notion of the artistic value of the "finished product".

- Explore the possibility of **artistic collaborations** between youth, young adults and **younger children** in order to prepare children to become community-minded individuals using an **integrated, intergenerational community development approach** rather creating environments in which young people's personal culture will not permit them to come in the door to programs.

- The involvement of **young adults** should be encouraged, as participants and/or as volunteers and/or as paid staff, acknowledging their value as **formal or informal mentors** but also recognizing that some young adults are still struggling and **benefit greatly from participation** in arts and employment preparedness programs.

- Improve the structure and effectiveness of the individual and collective funding bodies themselves **by amplifying diverse, racialized youth voices** in decision-making contexts such as **juries and boards of directors**, with particular care being taken to include marginalized **youth**, as compared to (but not precluding) *less* marginalized **young adult** voices. Funders should not take a "parental, condescending approach". The Laidlaw Foundation was cited as an example of best practices in this regard.

- Reduce the numerous spin-off problems created by **administrative overload and incapacitation**, in no small part due to the current nature and structure of funding arrangements. This could be achieved through **increased funding for capacity building for administrative structures**. It was suggested that a **collective of qualified administrators** be sent out to organizations in order to increase stability and sustainability. It was strongly suggested that ways must identified to **reduce the amount of detail and quantity of paper work** required in the grant application, reporting back and evaluation processes. Youth should be involved in determining these processes when they are developed by funders or collaborations of funders. A critique of funders' draft application forms is recommended, with participation from both sides of the funding process.

- Emerging, particularly youth-led organizations should be allowed to submit **applications on video or DVD or even orally**, in the context of a site visit by the potential funder in order for them to "experience" the program and begin to develop a relationship that is not all on paper. Likewise, built into the reporting back/evaluation process should be the opportunity for funders to see the results of their funding "in action" at the grassroots level. In this way, the program participants could be drawn into the application (and evaluation) process, rather than one staff person spending hours alone in front of a computer. Otherwise, applicants with higher literacy skills and grant-writing experience tend to get the grants, rather than decisions being based on first-hand experience of the effectiveness of the programming. It was stressed that any increase in funding to build administrative structures and capacity should not have a negative impact on program funding. It was agreed that a 15% administration fee for a project is not sufficient.

- Address the need for some **capital asset funding**, which is excluded from **most grant criteria.** It was also noted that providing **food** and **public**

transit tokens are important programming elements and should be allowable expenses that are seen as particular to marginalized youth oriented funding.

- Serious funding consideration must also be given, in collaboration with corporate partners who have appropriate real estate holdings, to **developing and improving infrastructure/creative spaces** for youth arts programs.

- Address the need for funding which supports **mentorships and training** in order to generate "jobs and cash" for youth and to create a stronger link between economic development and the arts. The ultimate goal being self-sustaining job opportunities in the arts for program participants, recognizing the arts as a tool towards employability, even if the job is not directly connected to the arts, building as it does communication and collaboration skills. Any such training and mentorship funding should not come at the expense of direct programming and could take the form of **"honourariums" or "stipends"** in order to minimize the administrative burden. A **significant obstacle** identified by **youth-involved organizations in transforming into a youth-led organization is lack of funding for training** for youth to more effectively lead organizations. As volunteer youth leaders emerge, they need to be trained and then placed in **paid staff positions** in order to attract and retain those most suited to these positions. There must also be sufficient **administrative support** to effectively incorporate youth more fully into decision-making and leadership roles. Funding should include training in the development of web portals, web content and pod casts as an information source for jobs, skills training and other employment opportunities. **New private sector funding partners** should be identified in order to provide educational opportunities such as **bursaries** and **return-to-school grants** with a particular focus on those who find themselves at the intersection of **youth, racialization and marginalization**.

- Partnership with corporate sponsors should also strive to **establish relationships** directly between the corporations and the projects they support; not only site visits but also **hands-on collaborative arts projects** between corporate employees and project participants.

- Improve the grant application process by making **deadlines** more **flexible**, especially for emerging organizations (an example being an application that was rejected because it was 3 minutes late). Funders should also work together to **stagger deadlines**; otherwise there becomes a "grant application season" where staff members are seriously over-taxed while trying to maintain programming and meet multiple almost simultaneous deadlines.

- Funding for programs that are in their early development stages needs to accommodate an "ecology of experimentation", wherein expectations for concrete outcomes are temporarily suspended, allowing for "mistakes", which in turn can become opportunities for growth and improvement, underlining the need for funders to know the context of a project and develop relationships with the programmers rather than just with the programs.

- Attempt to minimize **"end-of-fiscal-year insanity"** wherein cash-flow-strapped organizations are too often left waiting for cheques to arrive for weeks and even months after grants have been approved, resulting in a **dysfunctional cycle of feast and famine**. Focus group participants noted that cash flow crunches such as this are not just isolated incidents involving extenuating circumstances, but constitute a far-too-frequently recurring pattern. While it is recognized that to some extent it is the inherent nature of bureaucracies to move slowly, given the requirements for accountability and the realities of understaffing, it is incumbent upon these same bureaucracies to **engage in a measure of lateral thinking and find creative new ways to overcome this obstacle**, so as not to subject organizations to unacceptable levels of stress, sometimes resulting in staff going unpaid and even carrying debt personally in order to sustain the organization or the project. It is circumstances such as this that send too many qualified administrators straight into the arms, so to speak, of the non-arts private sector in which a dysfunctional work environment such as this would rarely be tolerated. One specific suggestion is for funding bodies themselves to **make cash-flow arrangements with banks or credit unions**, rather than leave this up to the awaiting fundee, many of whom do not have the financial track record or background in order to negotiate such arrangements, especially in the case of emerging and/or marginalized groups.

- A **funding graduation process** needs to established, recognizing both **emerging and established organizations** and that does not "penalize" established organizations, recognizing that funding needs to stay caught up as groups grow and their capacity and needs increase. If a program works and grows, it should not receive gradually decreased funding as is sometimes the case. It was also recognized that there is a strong need for **seed funding for small, emerging youth-led initiatives**. Three specific funding categories were suggested: a) emerging with one primary service, b) established with one primary service and c) established with multiple services.

- Establish a program of **small grants** ($500-$2,000) aimed at **individual youth or loose, emerging collectives** of youth involving a simple one-page on-line application and reporting form that would essentially ask, for

example: "If you had $1,000 what would you do with it?" Any perceived lack of accountability would prove worth the investment, even if only one out of a hundred small projects such as this blossoms into something demonstrably sustainable.

- More **effective and qualitative program evaluations and report-back processes** are required. Programs that appear to "fail" on paper may actually have inherent value. More effective evaluations could be achieved through site visits by funders and outside professional evaluators, accompanied by shorter less onerous written (or video-taped verbal) reports. Developing criteria for measuring success should be a collaborative effort between the grant giver and the grant recipient, including undervoiced, racialized youth leaders. Evaluation should be seen as an **ongoing, participatory process** allowing for adjustments to be made throughout the process.

- Arts funding agencies need to **overcome bias** in favour of, or against, certain kinds of arts and **need to keep up-to-date on recent trends** in youth arts through effective integration of youth input into funding criteria and decision-making.

- Last, but certainly not least, funders should strive to maintain and develop **closer, more ongoing relationships** with the organizations, staff and programs they help to fund by offering support beyond dollars. This would ensure that the funders would have a stake in the sustainability and ongoing improvement of the organization. This support could take the form of **assistance with long-term planning, grant applications and building awareness of the range of funding opportunities available.** They could also provide references to other funding agencies. If funders had stronger relationships amongst themselves there would be a freer flow or information between them, rather than insisting that applicants supply each funder with certain documents; for example audited financial reports which cost time and money to produce. Laura Metcalfe of Canadian Heritage was named as an example of a staff person offering valuable support and that this could serve as a model for other funders. To quote one focus group participant: "We need to get away from paper relationships and develop real relationships".

PART 5: APPENDIXES

Appendix # 1: Goals and Outcomes For This Report

At the outset, our primary stated goal was to "undertake a participatory research project, including consultative youth focus groups resulting in a written report."

As a "companion" to this report we are also producing a toolkit that will serve as a practical guide for governance structures allowing for meaningful and diverse youth input into decision-making at a board level and day-to-day organizational operations.

Our other goals were as follows:

- Develop strategies to facilitate full and active participation of ethnic, religious and cultural communities in Canadian society.
- Through solid research and recommendations, develop strategies to expand opportunities for marginalized and racialized youth's involvement in decision-making structures and issues-based advocacy, with the ultimate goal of affecting public policy, particularly in the area of innovative, inclusive funding mechanisms.
- Encourage the participation of these same youth through at least three consultative youth focus groups with diverse racialized youth who are most affected by exclusionary systems and structures.
- Help to address the issue of racialized youth being systematically excluded from public policy decisions.
- Explore the potential for youth-led arts initiatives in an attempt to reduce isolation and disengagement and, in the long run, to build healthier communities.
- Consult with the youth and their service providers in developing strategies for ethno-racial minority youth to gain access to decision-making structures and build on their capacity to act as their own best advocates and as youth leaders.
- Attempt to bridge some gaps between various government ministries, funders such as the IRAF, service providers and the actual end-users of these services.
- Building on the findings of previous research reports, propose specific structures for funding programs to meet the needs identified in these same reports and in our proposed focus groups.
- Provide specific recommendations that will be helpful in developing appropriate funding programs to address the needs of diverse youth-led projects.
- Arrive at a greater understanding of what racialized youth need in terms of funding programs, building on the findings of the "Youth On Youth" Report;

- Take a first step in opening up a dialogue between diverse youth and funders; a dialogue that will serve to inform these youth about funding opportunities and structures and to inform funders and program developers about specific needs, challenges and participation barriers.
- Supply solid recommendations with the expectation that funders will implement some or all of these, which in turn will lead to new and improved resources for diverse youth-led arts initiatives inToronto.

Our stated outcomes were as follows:

- Under-voiced, racialized youth will have direct input into the development of innovative funding mechanisms and other decision-making processes.
- Funders will gain new insight into the world of these youth and the affected communities where they live, enabling them to respond with more appropriate and effective funding programs, thereby improving access, participation and inclusion of these diverse youth.
- ANCY will become better informed and better equipped to address the issues of diverse youth in our ongoing advocacy work.
- The resources developed through this project will be useful to all organization and communities wishing to ensure that diverse youth are fully included in governance and decision-making processes.
- Diverse youth will gain greater access to decision-making structures and develop the skills necessary to participate productively in community life, moving from disengagement to engagement.
- Youth-led organizations, community leaders and front line staff will make adjustments to neighbourhood programming which will lead to increased and improved youth involvement in program development and activities.
- Grant makers and policy makers will become more aware of marginalized diverse youth issues and will achieve increased input into new funding mechanisms.
- Community leaders in the affected neighbourhoods will become more aware of youth-led initiatives and their potential to help build healthier neighbourhoods.
- New, less structured youth-led initiatives will be given the opportunity to connect with more established youth-led programs (specifically members of the GYC), leading to possible mentoring, collaborations and inspiration to make use of best use practices in their own less structured initiatives.
- Organizations serving and representing diverse racialized youth will feel comfortable that their voices have been heard.
- The recommendations in the report will serve as a springboard for policy and structural changes at the funding level.
- ANCY will have made additional contact and strengthen existing contact amongst youth-led organizations in Toronto.

Appendix # 2: What Does "Youth-Involved" Look Like? (from focus group # 2, held February 17, 2006)

One youth-involved program coordinator commented that they have great admiration for the approach taken by GYC member organizations and are moving towards a similar model. At present they have a team of "juniors" (self-named) who work with a team of "seniors" (as named by the juniors). The juniors have come through the program and have now been hired by the seniors as youth staff in order to coordinate workshops and performances and to undertake program development. She sees it as important to have senior support behind the juniors and that the juniors do in fact looked to the seniors for support.

Another program coordinator described a similar structure, adding that even though youth did not have input into the initial program design, it has evolved into a structure which engages significant youth input into decision-making and that their programming is "constantly in a state of adapting itself to the needs and desires of the youth it serves." This includes a roster of professional non-youth (often young adult) artists who mentor youth, as well as hands-on workshops for youth and young adults in facilitation skills and program development.

A director of youth-involved programs for over twenty years, who is presently undertaking her PhD thesis on the topic of youth participation, felt very strongly that "mentoring is key in order for young people to be able to imagine how they could be, to grow up towards adults they admire." She expressed the opinion that "we need a lot of different ages and kinds of people in the same room, a smorgasbord of sorts, so people can learn to relate to different people." This she felt, would reflect a true commitment to diversity in the biggest the sense of the word. Rather than youth "going off in isolation" she prefers an approach which will foster "respect and communication" between the generations. She noted that she began her career in youth arts when she herself was a youth and that several decades later she is still committed to this field and that even she, as an adult, has mentors who are older and more experienced than her. She sees the practice of mentorship as a continuum that does not end when one becomes an "adult".

She also raised the question of the integrity of the art and the importance of including senior established artists who have spent decades developing their skills. She also acknowledged the importance of some of the front-line artists "reflecting the community of youth" and saw it as a matter of "equity" to adjust for historical imbalances. She understands why youth-led initiatives must be the focus for "privilege" at this point in time but foresees a day when "the divisions will disappear and the pendulum will have swung somewhere near the centre."

Appendix # 3: Email Response from 4UNITY

Dear Dale: Sorry for the delayed response but unfortunately as I am only at 4UNITY part time and have another job I am unable to attend the focus group. I would be more than happy to answer questions that you may have but I have a grant application due Friday and the following week I will be attending a conference.
Sorry again for the delay.
Sarah,
Program Director,
4UNITY Productions Youth Media Association.

Appendix # 4: Letter from Craig Kirby, Youth Program Coordinator, Dixon Hall, Regent Park, dated February 16, 2006, reprinted with permission

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

A colleague forwarded your invitation to the focus group addressing Youth Programs and Decision Making. I had hoped to attend, but realize that I am unable to. I recognize that it may be too late to contribute to the forum, but I want to take the opportunity to pass along some thoughts.

I am a Youth Program Coordinator for Dixon Hall working in Regent Park. My job allows me to work with many of the other youth-serving agencies in the community.
Over the past several years, Regent Park has sought to adopt a community wide approach to dealing with youth issues, which has led to much greater collaboration, sharing of resources, deeper understanding of the community as a whole, and of the roles of particular agencies and workers, and of the youth we commonly serve.

It became clear over the last couple of years that one concern shared by virtually all agencies is that youth tend to drop out of programming at about age fourteen. One way we sought to reverse this is by supporting youth leadership. At an event about a year ago, attended by about twenty-five interested youth, and by staff from six agencies, we addressed this concern. Our feedback from youth on this point can be summarized as follows:
- youth want to be treated as adults; they want to be more self-directed
- youth would like more programming that is physically removed from programs for younger children
- there is peer pressure that works against program participation by older youth

One way we chose to respond was to offer youth a chance to create and run their own programs. Two youth responded by proposing the creation of a youth lounge. The lounge has been running once weekly for 10 months now. I act as advisor and facilitator to the lounge, but am careful to leave decisions to the youth themselves. The early emphasis was simply on preparing and sharing a meal and social time, and there were generally about 15-20 youth in attendance each week.

Since the fall, however, attendance has dropped, and the emphasis has shifted to the group becoming more of a leadership/service program. I applied for money to TCHC's Social Investment Fund on the program's behalf, which we received. The program leaders (3 core, and 3 others who are less regular) are currently wrestling with devising a more formal structure and decision-making process, setting priorities for the next year, and deciding on such matters as whether and whom to recruit, and whether or not to collaborate with an ad hoc Youth Council in the community.

The growth process of the program has been slow. The youth have only gradually come to terms with the fact that they are in fact running their own program. They have learned to defer to me less, and to initiate more. They are beginning to see their potential to be a force in the community. The first project they have taken on reflects their tentative steps toward full leadership. They have volunteered to support Dixon Hall's March Break Camp, involving five days with 30-40 younger youth, at a camp. They are tentatively planning a summer basketball program, and possibly some activity to address tensions between police and community youth.

This has been a good experience of "learning by doing". It's been important to me that this not be 'pretend' leadership in any way. In other words, the youth are making decisions themselves about every aspect of the program, and they're playing with real money. I make sure that any suggestions I make are only that. In fact, it's clear to me that if I were making the decisions, we'd be doing some very different things. I've had to learn to be very patient. I often feel that things aren't moving at the pace they should. I've been tempted to direct things more. But their leadership is developing in direct proportion to my willingness to step back and leave things to them.

I've suggested to the three most active leaders that they attend your forum next week, and they've expressed interest. In keeping with the process, it's left entirely to them to follow through or not.

I hope that today's forum is a success, and that perhaps these thoughts are useful. I'd love to know what comes out of the session. Please feel free to follow up with me.

Sincerely,

Craig Kirby
Youth Program Coordinator
Dixon Hall
416-876-5210
craig.kirby@dixonhall.org

Appendix # 5: List of Focus Group Participants

Group 1: Youth-Led: Grassroots Youth Collaborative
4UNITY Productions Youth Media Association
Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre (CANTYD)
For Youth Initiative (FYI)
Inner City Visions (I. C. Visions)
Rathburn Area Youth (RAY)
Regent Park Focus
Somali Youth Association of Toronto (SOYAT)
Craig Fortier, GYC Coordinator

Group 2: Youth-Involved Organizations
Gywn Wansbrough, Beatz to'da Streetz
Professor Scootz, Beatz to'da Streetz
Mark Wallace, Children's Peace Theatre
Craig Kirby, Youth Program Coordinator,Dixon Hall, Regent Park (by email)
Jennifer Orpana, Youth Program, Soulpepper Theatre
Julian Diego, Sketch
Julie Frost, Arts for Children of Toronto (ACT)
Julie Jarvis, Villaways Arts Studio
Loree Lawrence, Associate Artistic Director, Jumblies Theatre

Groups 3 & 4: **Youth Program Participants**
Ali Mohammed, Sketch
Amal, Somali Youth Association of Toronto (SOYAT)
Amber, Sketch
Amanda Halls, Eve's Phoenix
Beverley Halls, Eve's Phoenix
Brian Stonehouse, Beatz to'da Streetz
Byron Montoya, Regent Park Focus
Calvin Johnson
Elle Alconel
Halima, SOYAT
Hamid, Sketch
Hendu, SOYAT
Lena Recollect, Native Earth Youth Troupe
Mandy Arsenault, Children's Peace Theatre
Matthew Brown, Dixon Hall, Regent Park
Rob Martin
Sabbath Teed, Children's Peace Theatre
Samantha Stewart, Beatz to 'da Streetz
Samantha S.

Group 5: **YAPNG Youth Arts Networking Group**
Syrus Ware, Program Coordinator, Youth Behind The Scenes, Art Gallery of Ont.
Ayden Scheim, Youth Arts Project, Griffin Centre, North York
Evelyn Sice, Youth Programs, Harbourfront Centre
Mona Kamal, Artcity in St. Jamestown
Sonya Reynolds, Sketch
Kaspar J.Saxena, Eva's & artist at large
Evalyn Parry, Buddies In Bad Times Youth Program
Sarah Chodos, Bridging The Gap, New Hamburg, Ont.
Marilyn Field, Darearts, Toronto
Maria Hupfield, 7th Generation Image Makers, Native Family & Children Services
Linda Albright, Arts Network for Children & Youth
Dale Hamilton, Arts Network for Children & Youth

Appendix # 6: Bibliography

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Community Safety & Crime Prevention Council, Region of Waterloo, 2006 (www.preventingcrime.net)

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