

# DEVELOP RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## Session 8

90 minutes

### OBJECTIVE:

Youth will come up with research questions related to their chosen topic.

### MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:

- Sticky notes.
- Butcher paper, tape, and markers.
- Butcher paper labeled with the research topic(s) youth selected in Session 5.
- Copy the *Topics and Questions – Examples from YELL Projects* (Master Copy 3.8) before the session: one copy for each participant.

### I. OPENING: ATTENDANCE, SNACKS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AGENDA OVERVIEW (10 MINUTES)

Opening Circle Statement (Around the World): I wonder... (fill in the blank). It may be useful to give youth several moments to think about or to write down something that they wonder about to increase the variety of answers.

### II. WARM-UP: PUSH ME – PULL ME'S (adapted from National 4-H Council) (10 MINUTES)

The purpose of this activity is to promote trust in the group and to demonstrate how cooperation can be used to achieve a goal. Have the group form a circle and hook elbows. Ask one person at a time to keep his or her feet in the same spot and lean forward. Instruct the people on each side of this person to lower themselves slowly, each with the knee closest to the person on the floor, while they lower the middle person until his or her nose

#### Facilitation Tip:

*This session begins Step 3 of the inquiry process, in which youth will choose a final topic for their project, and transform that topic into a series of questions to investigate and analyze.*

## Decide on Your Research Questions



touches the floor. Next have them raise him or her to a standing position. The whole group will feel the weight and therefore will need to assist at all times. Debrief: Ask participants to identify how the group worked together during this activity.

### III. DECIDING ON VISION AND MISSION (35 MINUTES)

On the board or butcher paper, write the selected research topic or topics. Youth should think of themselves as teaching others in their community about youth experience as related to this topic (refer to *Topics and Questions – Examples from YELL Projects* sheet to assist with the following section). As you move through this exercise, encourage youth to think about how they will get other people excited about their topic.

#### Step 1: What is your guiding vision?

This is what youth would like to see happen in an ideal world if their problem or issue was completely solved. For example: "We envision a community free from violence, where all youth feel safe and supported." The vision needs to be clear and motivating. It does NOT need to be attainable.

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#### Step 2: What is your mission?

The mission is what you will actually attempt to do or make happen. For example: "Our mission is to increase understanding of youth's perspectives on violence and youth's experiences of violence in our school and community, and show adult decision makers that young people can be part of making a positive difference for the whole community."

#### Step 3: What are your specific goals?

Start with a brainstorm: have youth imagine that they have finished collecting all their information and are ready to share what they found. What type of impact do they expect? What type of change do they want their findings to make? What do they want to be able to share? Have youth agree to at least two goals. Make sure the goals are realistic based on the time frame available. For example:

"Our goals are:

- (1) To share research findings and recommendations with decision makers in our school and community.
- (2) To develop action steps for putting our recommendations into practice."

#### IV. DECIDING ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS (25 MINUTES)

Let youth know that now they will come up with questions to help them meet their goals.

**Step 1:** Work through at least one example of research questions on the board by using *Topics and Questions – Examples from YELL Projects* or an example of your own. Ask the youth to add at least one research question to the example.

**Step 2:** Divide youth into groups of two or three. Give each small group three sticky notes. Each group is responsible for coming up with at least three questions they think will help them better understand their topic. Have youth write one question per sticky note. After they have completed their questions, have them number their questions from one to three, with one being the most important, and three being least important.

**Step 3:** Come back together as a group and have each group pass up the question they think is the most important. Post all of these #1 questions on a whiteboard or piece of butcher paper. Once all of the #1 questions are up, ask if anyone has any duplicates, and if so to pass them up for the facilitator to group accordingly. Then, have youth pass up any non-duplicate #2 questions, and repeat the process until all questions are up on the board or paper. As much as possible, group the questions according to common themes. After the questions are grouped, have youth state the key overarching question that covers each grouped set of questions. Write these overarching questions on a separate sheet of butcher paper. If there are more than three question categories, have youth prioritize the three most important by whatever decision-making process is best for your group.

**Step 4:** Write the final topic, vision, mission, goals, and main questions on butcher paper and post in a prominent place.

#### V. CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

Closing Circle Statement (Around the World): If you could know the answer to any question in the world, what would it be?

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## Topics and Questions - Examples from YELL Projects

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### RESEARCH TOPIC: YOUTH VIOLENCE

**Our vision** is of a community free from violence, where all youth feel safe and supported.

**Our mission** is to increase understanding of youth perspectives on violence in our school and community, and show adult decision makers and other youth that young people can be part of making a positive difference for the whole community.

#### GOAL:

- Inform adult decision makers in our school and community (e.g., violence prevention task force, City Council, police chief, school board) of youth's experience of violence in school and community settings, and share youth perspectives and ideas for what works in decreasing violence in our community.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- How big of a problem is violence for the youth at our school?
- Where and how do youth experience violence the most? Where do they feel the most safe and supported?
- What do youth see as the biggest factors that lead to violence? What could help to decrease youth violence?

### RESEARCH TOPIC: RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS FOR TEENS IN OUR COMMUNITY

**Our vision** is a community where all youth have supportive, fun, and engaging activities, and places to hang out on weekends and after school.

**Our mission** is to increase understanding of what youth want and need in out-of-school and after-school activities and resources.

#### GOALS:

- Inform adult decision makers and program leaders of what youth want and need in after-school and out-of-school activities and resources.
- Find out if youth know about and use the activities and resources that already exist – and why or why not.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What do youth think about the programs, activities, and resources that are offered to teens in our community? Are there enough? Are they accessible to all teens?
- What types of activities or resources would teens be interested in having more of or being of better quality?
- Where and how do teens prefer to get information about activities and resources available in the community?