ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Based on Youth on Board’s publication
14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making

This checklist is to be used as a guide to help give direction, uncover hidden issues, help understand tasks, and guide commitment to this initiative. Use this checklist as a tool with your board, your staff, young people, or other concerned parties.

YES = We do this already, and don't need assistance
NO = We don't do this yet, and want to develop next steps to move forward in this area
N/A = This is not applicable to us / We don't plan to do this

Please note that we are not suggesting that every organization meet all of these criteria

1) Know Why You Want to Involve Young People

Has your group thought about why you are involving young people in decision making?

Have you articulated these thoughts to others verbally, or in writing (such as in a mission statement)?

Next steps_________________________________________
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2) Assess Your Readiness

Have you talked to and assessed the commitment of:

1) The Board
2) Staff members
3) Young people
4) Other parties involved

Next steps:_________________________________________
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3) Determine Your Model for Youth Involvement

Have you considered involving young people directly in an existing adult governing body, such as a board or directors or community task force?

Have you considered creating an all-youth body such as a youth advisory board, youth planning committee, or peer mediation group?

Have you considered putting young people on your staff (e.g. peer leaders or program staff)?

Next steps:_______________________________________________________________________________________
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4) Identify Organizational Barriers

Have you created policies or amended bylaws stating that young people will be a permanent part of governing your organization, advising on curriculum, or developing programs?

Has your organization taken the time to address the budget and staff considerations involving young people?

Are young people's terms of office and voting rights similar or equal to those of adults?

Is there a replacement system if a young person's term ends early (e.g. due to relocation or other life changes?)

Do young people have access to the resources needed to participate in your group's work, and are expenses paid for in advance as opposed to reimbursed?

Is there some leeway for a young person's participation in school activities? (Work meetings are often acceptable reasons for adults to miss meetings--is a big basketball game given the same consideration?)
Have you developed a conflict of interest policy if young people are advising in a program in which they are involved?

Next steps:

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5a) Overcome Attitudinal Barriers - Adults

Are young people involved in **all** issues, not just those affecting youth?

Yes | No | N/A

Does the group understand that youth members do not represent the voice of all young people?

Yes | No | N/A

Do you continually ask young people how you can assist them better, and do you take their recommendations seriously?

Yes | No | N/A

Have you considered your own negative assumptions and stereotypes about young people in order to learn about sharing real authority with them?

Yes | No | N/A

Have you considered adjusting your professional "adult" language to ideas that young people can better understand?

Yes | No | N/A

Next steps:

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5b) Overcome Attitudinal Barriers - Young People

Have you recognized the value of having your voice heard?

Yes | No | N/A

Do you take leadership roles whenever possible (e.g. asking to be on committees?)

Yes | No | N/A

Do you share your thoughts even when you are not comfortable?

Yes | No | N/A
Do you push for policies that promote young people's power (e.g. youth on committees?)

Next steps: ___________________________________________________________

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6) **Address Legal Issues**

Are board members aware of their obligations, including the duty of care and duty of loyalty?

Next steps: ___________________________________________________________

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7) **Recruit Young People**

Have you thought out your recruitment criteria?

Next steps: ___________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________
8) **Create a Strong Orientation Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is an orientation system in place?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an adult of authority available to explain commitments to concerned parents?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a letter of agreement or contract that describes the responsibilities of the program and the role you are asking the young person to take in the organization?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Next steps:_______________________________________________________________________________________

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9) **Train Young People for Their Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a system for youth members to train new youth members?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there training for young people on presenting to groups (noting that giving a presentation to all-adult groups may be especially difficult)?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there skill-training for young people on topics such as team building, presentation skills, facilitating meetings, and reading budgets?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Next steps:_______________________________________________________________________________________

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10) **Conduct Intergenerational Trainings**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there training for adults on understanding young people and being strong allies?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you innovative in your trainings? Are they experimental and fun?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there room for everyone to listen to each other and laugh at meetings?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Next steps:_______________________________________________________________________________________

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11) **Make Meetings Work**

Do you start meetings with warm-up exercises or frequently split up into small groups?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</table>

Is there time for all members to speak at meetings?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Do you use appreciations during meetings?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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Next steps:__________________________________________

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12) **Develop a Mentoring Plan**

Is a mentor or “buddy” system in place?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</table>

Is there staff to support youth members? (e.g. preparation, transportation for meetings, etc.)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Is there regular contact between youth members and adult leaders?  
(e.g. Executive Directors, Board Chairs, Principals, CEOs, etc.)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</table>

Do mentors make certain that new members attend meetings, have the support they need, and become well-oriented to the organization?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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Next steps:__________________________________________

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13) **Strengthen Youth/Adult Relationships**

Does everyone understand that strong relationships are key to successful programs and social change movements?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</table>
Is there informal time for young people and adults to build close relationships with each other?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Do you keep your commitment to young people consistent, not letting them be overshadowed by "more important" meetings and commitments?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Do you make sure young people are given the opportunity to speak on every issue, not just programmatic issues?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</table>

If young people seem not to have an opinion, do you attempt to elicit an opinion by providing more information or further discussion?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Is equal weight given to the opinions of young people?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</table>

Does the organization involve parents from the start?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</table>

Does the organization let the young person know it will be speaking with their parents but not breaking confidentiality?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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Next steps:_______________________________________________________________________________________
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14) **Create Support Networks**

Do young people keep in touch with their peers about their leadership roles and their program?  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Is there specific time for young people to network with other youth leaders doing similar work?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Is there time set aside for adults to network with other adults doing similar work?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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Next steps:_______________________________________________________________________________________
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