



Creating Youth-Informed Boosters 2021

A Quick Guide

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Designing Your Booster

The design phase is critical to a project's success. It is used to define the target audience, develop content, and set the stage for direct action with youth and educators. Very few projects have incorporated youth voice into design and development, beyond traditional forms of information gathering (surveys, focus groups, or pilot testing).^{1,2} However, youth-involved participatory research methods (participatory action research, peer research, and community-based participatory research) are becoming increasingly popular for designing interventions and boosters with youth collaborators². Including youth in the design and implementation of interventions/boosters makes sense, since these individuals are direct representatives of the target audience. Youth should provide feedback on booster format, content, timing, duration, and dosage. Participatory research requires that power be shifted from adults to youth: organizations should aim to create projects consistent with the top three rungs of Hart's (1992) Ladder of Citizen Participation (pictured to the right).³

Hart's (1992) Ladder of Citizen Participation



Planning To Involve Youth

A formalized strategy is necessary to incorporate youth voice. Project managers should carefully consider which program phase(s) youth can feasibly and effectively contribute to. The eight key steps for planning to involve youth:¹

1. Set objectives for youth involvement
2. Identify tasks and roles for youth
3. Determine where youth fit into your organizational structure
4. Define your monetary compensation policy for youth participants
5. Determine selection criteria for youth leaders and develop a recruitment plan
6. Identify financial and staffing resources
7. Provide training for youth and adults
8. Implement long-term project monitoring and evaluation

Youth Recruitment

The placement of youth in leadership positions involves careful selection, effective recruitment, and the implementation of support systems to achieve long-term retention. There is no single 'correct' way to carry out the recruitment process. How your organization chooses to approach recruitment will depend primarily on the project's objectives and goals for youth involvement. The youth recruited should be from diverse backgrounds, with varying skill levels and representative of the booster target audience. Once youth have expressed interest in participating in the project, it is strongly recommended to undertake some form of formal application and screening process.¹ This may include an interview process; however, creativity and adaptability must be used (especially when attempting to recruit marginalized youth).

Creating Your YAB

Youth Advisory Boards have been gaining ground over the past two decades as important tools for amplifying youth voice.^{2,3,4} These youth-led councils provide a platform for young people to carry out a variety of roles traditionally carried out by adults, including administrators, recruiters, trainers, writers, media spokespersons, program developers, receptionists, bookkeepers, and youth-adult liaisons¹. Young people can be directly incorporated into the governing board of your organization, or a YAB can be established. When creating your YAB, remember your project must address youth **R.I.G.H.T.S.** by being⁶:

1) **R**esourced 2) **I**mpactful 3) **G**enuine 4) **H**armless 5) **T**een-friendly 6) **S**kill-building

Booster Purpose

What is the purpose of your booster? What kind of outcomes are you trying to create? These questions should be answered in consultation with your YAB. Keep in mind that the purpose of your booster will change with your project's goals and objectives. Ask yourself these questions to better understand the purpose of your booster:

WHO is your target audience?

Will you target at-risk groups?

Have you assessed risk-levels?

WHAT is the focus of your booster?

HOW will info be delivered?

WHEN will your booster be deployed?

WHY are you using a booster?

Is it a compulsory second intervention?

Is it conditional based on outcomes?

Content & Format

Boosters are usually lower in intensity than their interventions, but you will need to consider how much intensity is enough to maintain program effects. There is no clear solution to finding a balance between repetition and tedium; however, it may be useful to consider the following:

- Boosters are usually a different format than their interventions; mandatory boosters are most effective
- Many formats can be used: magazines, workbooks, media campaigns poetry, art, computer games, documentaries, theatre performances, youth-led presentations, quizzes, role play, videos, games, newsletters, health and safety fairs, etc.

Timing & Dosage

When you are considering the dosage for your booster, it is important to consider the frequency, duration, intensity, threshold, and fidelity needed to produce your desired outcomes:

FREQUENCY: How often will your booster be delivered? Once a month? Every three months?

DURATION: How long will your booster last? Will it be a one-hour session? Several short sessions delivered over multiple weeks or months?

INTENSITY: How strongly will the message be delivered? Will it be repeated several times?

FIDELITY: Is your booster feasible in the selected timeframe? Is there fidelity between the curriculum and the booster?

THRESHOLD: Is there a specific dosage level needed to maintain/improve outcomes? There is no consensus in the literature, so organizations are encouraged to reach their own informed conclusions on how many sessions are required to be effective.

Building Evaluation Into Your Booster

Project evaluation and research are integral components of successful booster programming. Assessment allows for continuous monitoring of efficiency, permitting timely and informed remedial action.

References

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