

# Youth Engagement Leadership Program

## ABSTRACT

The goal of this program is to introduce the importance of students to develop and engage their knowledge base and voice expressing the economic and social needs of themselves, their family and community. Based on research by Cornelia and Jan Flora(2008), they found the communities most successful in supporting healthy sustainable community and economic development paid attention to all seven types of capital: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built. In this YELP program, all capital resources are covered and connections are made between their relationships. Using strategies mapped out in McKenzie-Mohr's Fostering Sustainable Behavior, this program gives students new, effective ways to change behavior. Leaders facilitate by using structured inquiries and activities to help students collaboratively identify and attain the desired learning outcomes. At the end of the program, these lessons show students are able to make a difference within themselves, their family, and their community immediately.

### LEADERSHIP ESSENTIAL & SERVICE LEARNING

Effective communication is important because it allows people to lead more satisfying lives at home and in their community. Developing leadership is a primary way to have a positive effect on community infrastructure, groups and families. This module covers leadership and communication in a variety of methods; case study, brainstorming, behavioral modeling, coaching, and peer exchange. A definition of community and its value is introduced with broad, descriptive ideas. Community Capitals Framework is introduced to identify the correlation in supporting healthy, sustainable students and communities. Local service learning, such as a visit to a food bank or homeless shelter, provides education designed to address community and human needs.

### LOCAL & STATE GOVERNMENT

Students get a first-hand look at the Commonwealth of Kentucky State Buildings, meet with elected officials, and as a previous student participant said "In this opportunity, we get the chance to actually express these ideas....and pass them on to influential people." Students focus on understanding the nature of government, investigate the rights of individuals and the government, and evaluate the impact students have by taking on citizen responsibilities and duties. Concept mapping within the Community Capitals Framework encourages connection between all modules.

### CULTURAL AMENITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

The 2011 President's Committee wrote, "In order to successfully engage students to become prepared for today's workforce, they must have quality education within the arts and humanities." By ensuring students receive access to quality arts curriculum, they will have a significantly greater chance in finishing high school, attending college, and have more employable skills. Learning activities in this module include: Articulate reasoning, dramatization, drawing/art/sculpture and working sessions. Students are asked to determine how the arts and tourism impact themselves and their community in both a historical, cultural aspect, purpose for creating the arts, processes and the interrelationship between the arts and human kind.

## **HEALTH & COMMUNITY**

Selecting behaviors to change is the first step in fulfilling a successful social marketing campaign. Students have had classes on “Just Say No to Drugs” their entire school career. The YELP program adds to these teachings by broadening connections to individual behaviors and how they affect families and the community. Drug use is presented in a larger context throughout all capitals within their community. Health care situations are identified within their community with mapping, charting, and identifying barriers and benefits to a positive relationship between health care and sustainable communities.

## **AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY**

This module is a quick reminder about healthy food and then jumps into the deep end about food security, access, food culture and mapping where your food comes from. Using discussion, debate, drill and practice, journaling and peer exchange as dynamic learning activities, the students move through good intentions to action, building community support and adopting new behaviors. Reinforcement in subsequent meetings encourages the kids to remember to act. Social diffusion states conversations that we have with others, and particularly with those whom we trust and perceive as similar to ourselves, have an inordinate influence (McKenzie-Mohr, 73). Students are able to hear and visualize their community capital conversations and actions taking hold in their society.

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

This part of the program seeks to equip students with the entrepreneurial skills needed for them to engage as agents of change in their community. Working together with the Small Business Administration, they learn how to write a business plan and demonstrate to their community the importance of youth engagement in the community’s development efforts. Learning activities include: cognitive modeling, dialogue, essay, experiment, interview, and on to their final community “Shark Tank” project presentation.

### **References:**

<http://www.soc.iastate.edu/staff/cflora/ncrcrd/capitals.html>

*Community Capitals Framework*

<http://www.cbsm.com/public/world.lasso>

*Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing*, Third Edition, 2011 by Doug McKenzie-Mohr, PhD

***To learn more about the YELP program, contact the program coordinator Marisa Aull at [marisa.aull@uky.edu](mailto:marisa.aull@uky.edu).***