

WORKSHOP 12

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS: ENGAGING WITH ALLIES

Objectives

Following this workshop, the youth will be able to:

- Describe the benefits of working collectively.
- Identify strategies to engage allies and decision makers to help guide their change campaign.
- Apply various interviewing techniques to gather information and discover opportunities related to their policy change goal.

Overview

Change efforts are strengthened and amplified when taken up collectively or as part of a social movement. Knowing how to identify allies and build bridges for collaboration or mentorship are key in advancing a change campaign.

Total time

2 hours.

Facilitator Prep

- Prepare updates for the group about potential allies, information to inform their change campaign, and related opportunities for community engagement compiled from conversations with your network and/or your own research.
- Review and summarize AWE evaluation results to share using a modality of your choice.

Welcome

Ask each youth to share their childhood dream of what they wanted to be when they grew up and why.

Connect & Open

Review AWE survey summary and anonymous compliments from last workshop.

Look Back

Review that during the last workshop, the group reviewed various types of change tactics, applied the SMART Goals Framework and mapped their successes to date.

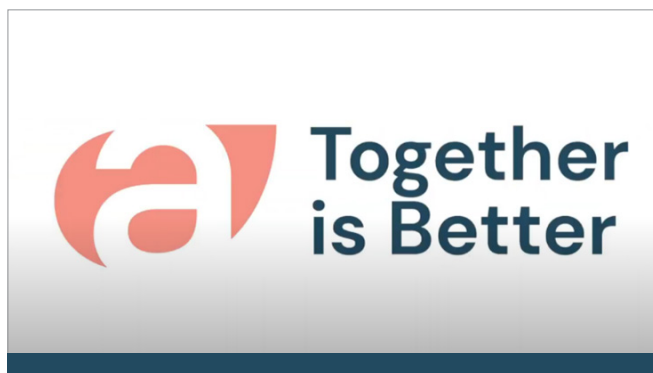
Look Forward

Update the group about potential allies or helpful information for their change campaign that you have gathered from your network.

Tell the group that today they will talk about the importance of allies and identify one that they would like to invite to a forthcoming workshop. The group will develop questions to ask the guest ally to inform their change strategy and draft an agenda for that meeting.

Frame

Play the *Together is Better!* video. Explain that while not everyone has equal power to create change, due to the inequitable distribution of resources and authority, we can build our own power and that of our community through collective organizing.



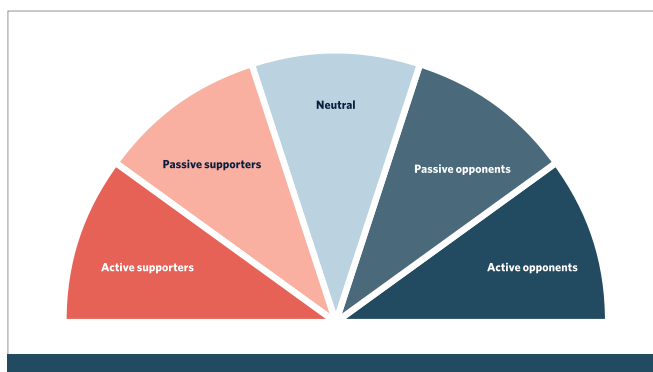
Activity 1: Assessing Pathways to Support (20 minutes)

Aim

In this activity the youth will learn how to identify potential allies using the *Pathways to Support* resource and consider who they might engage as champions of their change campaign.

Steps

1. Show the *Pathways to Support* resource. Ask the youth to think of a moment in their life when they shared information about an issue they were passionate about or attempted to persuade someone to consider their point of view. Encourage them to reflect on who supported them (active participant), who was non-committal or indecisive (neutral), and who challenged them (opponent).



2. Prepare the youth to go into groups for 10 minutes to share their examples and link their experiences to the Pathways to Support graphic. Review the following questions to guide the discussions:
 - a. What role did the person/group you identified in your example play? Where would they land on the graphic?
 - b. Who assisted you with your message and how did they show their support?
 - c. Who was neutral about your message and why?
 - d. Was there ever a time when you chose not to continue to engage with a person/group about an issue? If so, why?
3. Return to Circle and have the group share their discussions.
4. Let the group know that the Pathways to Support graphic helps to identify active supporters who will champion their cause and assist them in moving those who are neutral or indecisive toward actively supporting their goals. It's helpful to get curious about why some people take a neutral position on an issue. By asking them questions, you may discover ways to improve your messaging and help convert these people/groups into supporters. It is also important to remember that some people will not come around to providing support (actively opposed), and it's best to conserve the group's energy and resources, and focus on more productive avenues.
5. Ask the group to identify anyone who is, or could be, an active supporter for their policy change priority and note them on a whiteboard or a shared document.
6. Provide any recommended potential allies you have compiled from your network, if not already noted.
7. Prioritize with the group which potential ally they would prefer to contact first. Guide discussion toward individuals who are knowledgeable about their policy target and amenable to speaking with youth.
8. Enquire whether anyone would like to reach out to the ally to invite them to an upcoming workshop. Explore with the group what supports they might need to feel confident in doing so, if no one steps forward.

Facilitator Tips

- If the youth are having trouble identifying allies, prompt them to consider what outlets or activities they take part in where supportive adults are involved (e.g., sports teams, artistic venues, volunteer work, or school programming).

Activity 2: Ready for Partnership: Preparing for Ally Engagement (30 minutes)

Aim

This activity prepares the group to host an adult ally guest during an upcoming workshop. It equips them with a positive approach to encourage dialogue across diverse perspectives, a set of interview questions for information gathering and a meeting agenda that will help them feel prepared and confident.

Steps

1. Play the *Finding Common Ground: GROW* video.
Explain that it will provide helpful tips for how to have productive conversations with potential allies to deepen understanding of the issue, guide decisions about change tactics and find common ground with those who may hold different views.
2. Send youth into smaller groups for 10 minutes to generate at least three to five questions to ask guest allies.
3. Return to Circle. Ask each group to share the questions they developed on a whiteboard or shared document.
4. Play *4 Tips for an Effective Interview* video. Explain that planning for an interview can make the process less stressful and more productive.
5. Ask the group if they would like to make any changes to their questions based on what they have learned from the video. Help them identify where questions have overlap and could be combined and rephrase questions to be open-ended, where needed. Group the questions by overarching topic or theme (e.g., personal, role-specific, policy-related).
6. Get the youth to prioritize the questions according to their goals and the prioritized guest speaker.
7. Ask the group to indicate whether they have ever made an agenda for a meeting or event. Note that creating an agenda can help everyone feel more comfortable, knowing what to expect. It will also help with keeping the discussion on track.
8. On a whiteboard or shared paper, create an agenda. Ask the group to identify key items they would like to include in the meeting a plan. For example, past Agenda Gap cohorts have found it helpful to have a brief pre-meeting check in before the ally joins to attend to last minute preparations. Others have found value in beginning the meeting with a land acknowledgement, incorporating a fun icebreaker and sharing their mission statement.



9. Ask for volunteers to lead each agenda item (e.g., introductions, icebreaker, presenting the mission statement, asking interview questions). This will ensure that everyone is aware of their roles. Ask the group to share what strategies they could use as they prepare to host a guest ally.
10. Review the following actions the youth could take to get ready to engage:
 - a. Ensure adequate rest and hydration.
 - b. Review and practice asking the interview questions aloud.
 - c. Think about what would be helpful to get out of asking each interview question.
 - d. Promote a sense of calm by remembering the focus will be on the person being interviewed.
11. Review the following tips for interview set-up:
 - a. If meeting online, position the camera to show each person's head and shoulders.
 - b. Be mindful of the background and test out microphones and cameras before the guest arrives.
 - c. Choose a quiet area for the interview, and, if possible, close windows and doors.
 - d. Allow the guest ally to speak without interruption and keep comments and questions brief.
 - e. Actively listen by nodding and smiling to show comprehension. Keep still, pay attention and make eye contact.

Facilitator Tips

- Pose questions to the group, where needed, to facilitate identification of key interview questions that will help them gather information from the guest ally. Encourage the youth to prioritize questions that will build a relationship with the ally to further their change campaign plans.

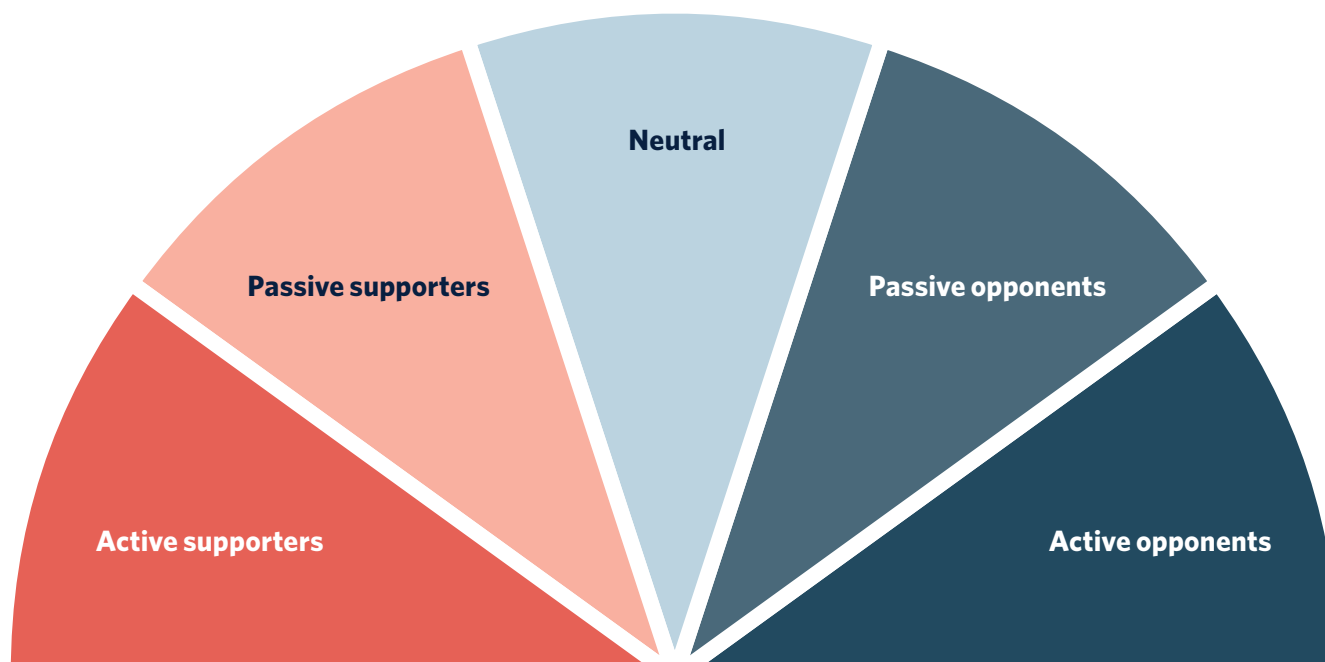


Connect & Close (10 minutes)

1. Explain that the goal of this Connect & Close is for the youth to generate a list of positive attributes about themselves, such as skills or personality traits, that they can reflect on and have on hand when in need of a confidence boost.
2. Provide some prompts to get the group thinking about the attributes they would like to include on their list.
 - a. What does the best version of yourself look like?
 - b. What are some activities you are good at?
 - c. What do others who know and care about you say are your best qualities?
 - d. What attributes or skills would you like to grow?
3. Provide the group with five minutes of quiet writing time to make their list.
4. Remind the youth to keep their list somewhere accessible (e.g., in their phone case, as a bookmark) so they can refer to it when they need a reminder of the various ways they shine. Ask the group to share how the activity made them feel.
5. Circulate the AWE survey and allow a few minutes to complete.
6. After workshop closes, send a link to the AWE survey by email for those who did not complete it during the session.
7. Send a simplified agenda, including the priority questions, directly to the guest ally or, alternately, to a youth volunteer who will reach out to the guest with an invitation.
8. Check-in with the invited ally prior to the meeting to orient them to Agenda Gap's youth-led approach and provide the [Cultivating Connections: A Resource for Adult Allies](#) resource.



Workshop 12 Resource: Pathways to Support



Workshop 12 Resource: Cultivating Connections: A Resource for Adult Allies

This resource is for adult allies engaged with Agenda Gap youth. The Agenda Gap program engages youth in a co-discovery process to identify upstream factors impacting their wellbeing through building peer and adult relationships. With the support of adult allies, youth lead policy change to strengthen positive mental health for themselves, their peers and broader communities.

What is an Adult Ally?

An adult ally is any adult interested in supporting youth to have their voice heard. The Agenda Gap program centres meaningful youth engagement which depends on healthy developmental relationships between youth and adult allies. Healthy relationships are collaborative and reciprocal, where both youth and adults learn from one another other, and act together while establishing personal connections and emphasizing youth strengths.

Characteristics of an Effective Adult Ally

Challenge adultism

Adultism stems from social norms that position adults as better than young people. Unchecked, adultism negatively impacts adult-youth relationships by reinforcing an unequal relationship that stifles youth growth and adult learning from youth.

Treat youth as equals

Show knowledge of and respect for youths' expertise, creativity and capacity to create positive change. Articulate respect for youths' rights to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect them.

Use a trauma- and violence-informed approach

Assume a strengths-based and capacity building approach when supporting youth. Actively listen, validate without judgement, and provide encouragement and connection. This creates a supportive safe space, so that all participants feel comfortable to express themselves.

Share power

Support and encourage youth to take ownership of decision-making to enhance their experience of engagement and build their sense of agency. Help them navigate systems and language, and advocate for them, where needed.

Expand the possibilities

Connect youth to others with similar interests who could help inform, energize and support them. Expose the youth to new ideas and opportunities.

This resource is adapted from the following resources:

Akinnawonu T., Bidoyan S., Mancuso R., Martens H., Mooney S., Quickstad J., Scarrett S., McGuinness L., Shaffer B., Kruz T., Wandolo J., Jenkins E. (2023). *How to Engage Youth in Policy Decision Making: A Synopsis of the Evidence and Key Recommendations*. Vancouver: Wellstream: The Canadian Centre for Innovation in Child & Youth Mental Health & Substance Use.

Houlteberg, B. J., Scales, P. C., & Williams, J. (2023). *Developmental Relationships: The Roots of Positive Youth Development - 10 Years of Youth Voice, Practitioner Wisdom, and Research Insights—A Search Institute Position Paper*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (March 2021). *Quality standard for youth engagement*. Ottawa, ON. Available online: www.cymh.ca/ye_standard