



**Redwood City 2020
Community Youth Development Initiative
2011 Partner Survey Findings**

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INITIATIVE BACKGROUND:

The Community Youth Development Initiative (CYDI) is a partnership between the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University (JGC), Redwood City 2020 (RWC 2020), a community collaborative focusing on children, youth, and family success, and over 35 youth-serving organizations in Redwood City and North Fair Oaks. CYDI was launched in 2008 as a long-term community initiative with the goal of building safe and vibrant neighborhoods in which young people can thrive. With community collaboration at the heart of its approach, the initiative advances its work through a set of core strategies that include: building opportunities for youth leadership; fostering positive youth-adult relationships; engaging youth in partnership with adults; and building the capacity of the community to provide quality youth development programs through professional development and collaborative learning communities.

STUDY OVERVIEW:

The CYDI Partner Survey was designed in 2010 to track progress toward the initiative's goals over time. It collects data exclusively from current CYDI partners, soliciting their personal experiences and perceptions about the youth development work they and their organizations are engaged with in the community. The survey is intended to provide the initiative with information about net changes over time at an aggregate level.

This report summarizes key findings from the second annual survey administered in spring 2011. *The main areas of focus this year include partner practices and opportunities related to youth development, youth leadership, and youth-adult partnership.* Partner experiences with youth development professional development and collaboration – important strategies of the initiative -- are integrated throughout.

Each section of this report begins with the primary research question that was investigated followed by a set of related findings from the survey data. The findings are intended to serve as a snapshot of areas where partner organizations are excelling and areas that present opportunities for growth in the future. Each section concludes with considerations for the future that emerged from the findings and which may support the work and planning of the initiative. The attached appendix includes a summary describing data collection and analysis methods.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

Successful youth development programs provide young people with a positive environment that includes physical and emotional safety, high expectations for behavior, opportunities to build new skills, and positive relationships with adults and peers (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Also critical is taking into account the current cultural trends affecting youth in the community.

CYDI cultivates a collaborative learning community intended to foster effective youth development practices and build a shared vision of *community youth development*. This includes supporting professional development activities for partners, hosting community dialogues, and providing coaching and training for adult allies of youth.

Primary question for investigation:

- In what ways do CYDI partner organizations support the positive development of young people in the community?

KEY FINDINGS:

CYDI partners continue to implement positive youth development practices.

Nearly all survey respondents agreed that their programs provide emotionally (100%) and physically (98%) safe environments for youth and strive to support young people in reaching their potential (96%). They also reported that their programs support youth in building positive peer relationships (98%) and incorporate team-building activities (94%) to foster these relationships. Positive youth development practices were reported by partners to be firmly in place in 2010 and remained so in 2011.

Partners value and participate in youth development training.

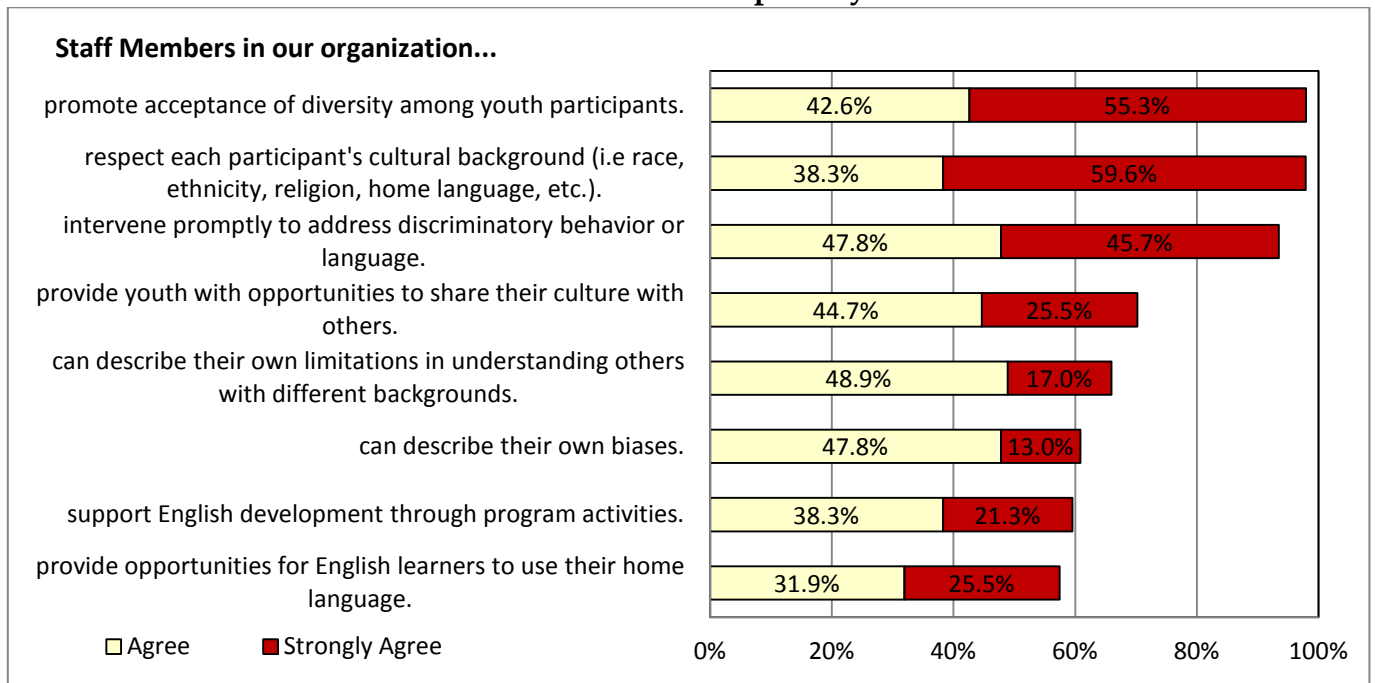
In 2011, 70% of respondents reported that it was an expectation for staff in their organizations to be trained in positive youth development practices. This was an increase from 59% in 2010, suggesting growth in understanding and commitment to youth development training at the organizational level. Nearly 90% of survey respondents said that they had received professional development in the last 12 months. Of these, 72% said that they routinely engage in learning with colleagues as a group, an increase from 58% in 2010. A little over half (53%) also reported that they have returned from education in the community and trained their colleagues based on new learning. Most people (85%) also suggested that engaging in community professional development activities had led to increased opportunities for collaboration with other programs and organizations.

"We have taken part in professional development supported by CYDI and it has changed how we train our program staff." – CYDI Partner

Professional development increases understanding of culturally competent practice.

Of those who participated in professional development, 70% reported that it increased their understanding of culturally competent practice, compared to 58% in 2010. In 2011, nearly all survey respondents reported that staff in their programs respect and promote acceptance of diversity among youth participants (Exhibit 1). However, fewer believed that staff members have an understanding of their own biases and limitations or provide specific support to English learners through program activities.

Exhibit 1: Staff Practices Related to Cultural Competency in 2011



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Organizational support for professional development appears to be increasing, with more partners engaging in group learning. How can CYDI continue to support collaborative learning and leverage limited resources for training in the current economic climate?
- Professional development has reportedly led to increased understanding of culturally competent practice. In what ways can CYDI support deeper learning in this area and promote more integration of culturally relevant activities into partner programs and activities?

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Research suggests that young people benefit when they have the opportunity to make, and act on, decisions for the common good in youth programs, organizations and their broader community. This process changes youth from being exclusively participants to being partners and resources for their community (American Youth Policy Forum, 1999). CYDI is grounded in evidence showing that youth who contribute to positive change in their communities demonstrate a greater sense of connection and belonging in their neighborhoods and have an increased sense of efficacy (e.g., Flanagan & Faison, 2001). One of CYDI's key strategies is focused on building opportunities and visibility for youth voice and leadership.

Primary question for investigation:

- To what extent is youth voice and leadership valued and utilized among CYDI partner organizations?

KEY FINDINGS:

Partner organizations continue to value youth leadership and voice.

Most survey respondents (85%) reported that leaders in their organizations value youth opinion and just over 70% said that they have policies in place that promote meaningful leadership roles for youth. Most (88%) also believed that staff members are committed to seeking youth input about how to improve services and agreed that their programs strive to incorporate these recommendations. These results are similar to those from 2010 and indicate an ongoing commitment to youth leadership and voice.

"We received feedback that our program didn't provide many opportunities for youth to give direct input into activities or to be in leadership roles last year. Now we include youth at every turn to make sure that they know and feel they have a say in the program."

—CYDI Partner

Youth have an increased influence on decision making in partner organizations.

From 2010 to 2011 there was a substantial increase in the rate of respondents who believed that youth have a real influence on decisions that are made about their programs, increasing from 59% to 70%. Nearly half (48%) of partner organizations worked with youth advisory boards to formally incorporate youth input into their decision-making processes, reflecting an increase from 40% in 2010.

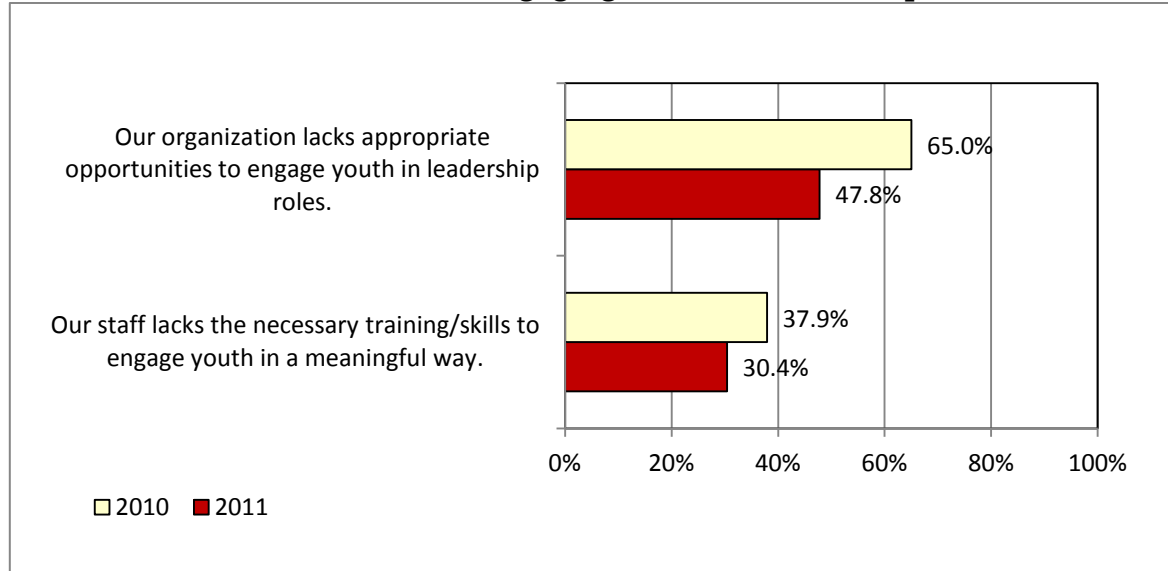
There are fewer barriers to engaging youth in leadership roles.

Fewer survey respondents reported barriers to engaging youth as leaders in their organization, decreasing from 66% in 2010 to 56% in 2011. Progress has been made in two key areas including more leadership opportunities for youth and increased staff capacity to involve youth in meaningful ways (Exhibit 2). In fact, 73% reported that professional

development activities had increased their interest in creating new opportunities for youth voice and leadership, an increase from 62% in 2010.

Barriers that continued to pose a challenge include difficulty recruiting youth with the necessary leadership skills (35%) and interest (22%) in these roles. While there was an increase in perceived effectiveness of training for adult professionals, just 60% of partner programs offered youth leadership training opportunities in 2011, down from 90% in 2010.

Exhibit 2: Decreased Barriers to Engaging Youth in Leadership Roles in 2011



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Although partners are committed to seeking youth input and creating new opportunities for youth leadership, some barriers appear to remain. In what ways can CYDI support partner organizations in continuing to youth skills and creating the conditions necessary for more youth to become meaningfully engaged in community leadership roles?

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP

Existing literature suggests that the relationship among adults, youth, and their communities is interdependent and reciprocal and is necessary for effective community change (Lerner, 2005; Pittman, 2000). Engaging youth in meaningful partnerships with adults is a core CYDI strategy and includes supporting community opportunities for youth and adults to work together on common interests or concerns; skill building for both youth and adults; and promoting community collaboration.

Primary questions for investigation:

- To what extent do CYDI partner organizations value and understand the importance of developing trusting youth-adult relationships?
- Do CYDI partner organizations provide programming that includes meaningful opportunities for youth and adults to work together collaboratively?

KEY FINDINGS:

Partner organizations continue to build positive relationships with youth.

At the heart of effective youth-adult partnerships is the capacity for adults to form positive and meaningful relationships with youth. All survey respondents (100%) reported that staff members in their programs consistently build trusting relationships with youth. This included consistently maintaining high expectations of youth, expressing an interest in their lives, and being responsive to their needs. Staff skills in this area were reportedly very high in 2010 and remained so in 2011.

Partners provide youth with opportunities to be engaged in the community.

Survey respondents reported that their programs provide youth with concrete opportunities to experience success (93%) and learn about (85%) and positively contribute to their community (88%). In 2011, youth most commonly supported partner organizations as volunteers (86%), peer educators (64%), and advocates (57%). Over 70% also said that their programs provide youth with opportunities to interact with community leaders.

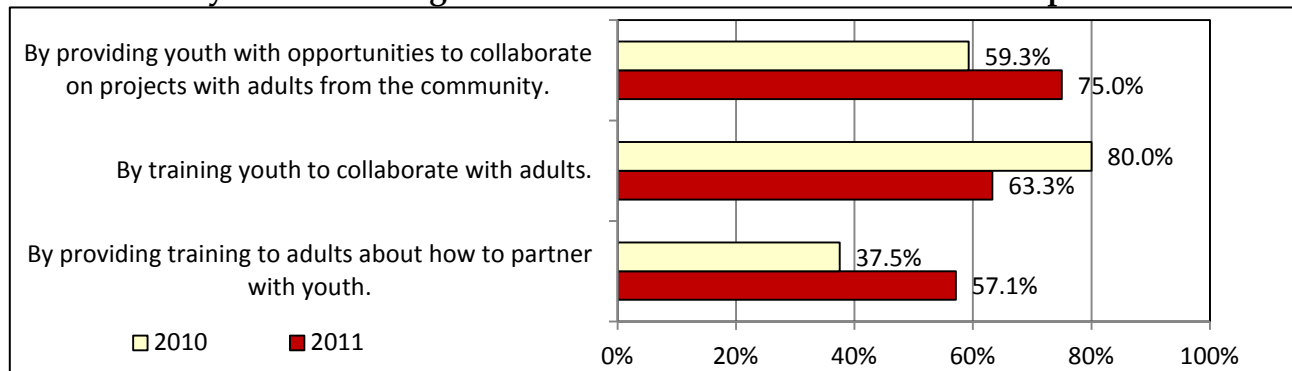
"Youth have led meetings with their peers to determine what young people prefer in terms of programs and activities. They have helped fund programs and events through various fundraisers. When we have parent education workshops or family nights, youth help lead activities with parents. – CYDI Partner

Partners are creating opportunities to foster youth-adult partnerships.

The majority of survey respondents (85%) agreed that their programs strive to model positive youth-adult partnerships. In 2011, partner programs continued to employ a host of strategies to facilitate this type of collaboration, including facilitating youth-adult dialogues and engaging adults from the community as mentors and volunteers. In 2011, substantially more programs also provided specific opportunities for youth to partner

with adults on community projects, increasing from 59% in 2010 to 75% in 2011 (Exhibit 3). And, although far fewer programs trained youth in effective strategies to collaborate with adults, more programs reported training adults on how to partner with youth in 2011 than 2010, increasing from 38% to 57%.

Exhibit 3: Ways in Which Organizations Foster Youth-Adult Partnerships



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Partner organizations continue to develop strong relationships with youth and support their ability to contribute to the community. In 2011, more opportunities emerged for youth to collaborate with adults on meaningful projects, as evidenced by the current CYDI initiated Actions Teams that have taken root as well as the work groups of Redwood City 2020's Prevention Partnership of which several CYDI partners are also a part. Moving forward, how will the initiative support and encourage partner organizations to incubate and sustain more youth-adult partnerships aimed at affecting meaningful community change?

CONCLUSION

CYDI partner organizations continue to implement strong youth development practices and are developing a greater commitment to youth development professional development. As in 2010, partners identified deeper training in culturally competent practice as an ongoing need and findings suggest that there is room to integrate more culturally relevant and supportive activities into programming. Partners indicated that youth leadership continues to be valued and more programs are creating opportunities to integrate youth perspectives into their decision-making processes. Finally, partners continue to develop and maintain positive relationships with youth and are increasingly engaged in youth-adult partnerships. As these emerging partnerships grow and mature, it will be important to consider how they can be supported and sustained, as well as how they affect the community.

APPENDIX

Purpose of the 2011 CYDI Partner Survey:

- To collect annual CYDI partner data to track progress of the initiative over time
- To help inform the work as it moves forward

Response Rate:

- 42% of individuals completed the survey (57 of 135)
- 70% of partner organizations were represented with complete surveys (33 of 47).
Twelve of the completed surveys did not identify the organization it represented, which may have resulted in an artificially lower participation rate.

Respondents:

- 24% of respondents identified themselves as executive leaders in their organizations.
- 55% of respondents reported that they provide direct services to youth.
- 90% of organizations represented in the survey provide direct services to youth.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods:

The survey was administered via the internet. Emails soliciting participation were sent to 135 individuals at 47 CYDI partner organizations or unique programs within organizations. Additionally, the survey was discussed at various CYDI meetings and events. Multiple attempts were made to gather as many responses as possible with a goal to secure participation from one to two key individuals from each partner organization.

Survey Limitations:

This survey was focused exclusively on data collected from service providers about how their organizations are engaged in work supporting CYDI outcomes, their perceptions about youth development, and their personal experience and opinions about the work they are doing. The survey was not intended to count or map youth services in a comprehensive manner and it does not capture youth, parent, family, or non-provider adult ally perspectives.

Additionally, this analysis is meant to track net change over time at an aggregate level. The initiative's partnership is dynamic, with new organizations periodically signing up and others leaving. Within partner organizations, staff members change as a natural course of events. This survey is in no way intended to measure change at an organization or individual level.