Big Brothers Big Sisters in Canada Youth Engagement Toolkit

Prepared for: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada

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Prepared by:

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Lead Researcher – The Lead Researcher on this project, Kristen, is a youth. She volunteers at a the BBBS of Eastern Newfoundland local agency, she is a National Mentoring Advisory Council (NYMAC) member, and a Masters student in applied research and evaluation. The Lead Researcher was the primary person responsible for planning and conducting the background research and toolkit development process.

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Glossary

Honorarium - A monetary payment provided as compensation for involvement or contributions towards an initiative or project.

Resources – "Resources" in this toolkit refers to both tangible resources (i.e., funding, staff time and compensation) and conceptual resources (e.g., understanding youth's needs, ensuring staff have the knowledge to implement effective engagement practice, implementation strategies).

Stakeholders – individuals or groups invested in the welfare or success of the agency, organization, service area, or the population it serves (i.e., youth).

Strengths-based approach - Focusing on positive attributes and contributions, rather than the negative ones.

Youth Engagement – the empowerment of all young people as valuable partners in addressing and making decisions about issues that affect them personally and/or that they believe to be important.

Introduction

Welcome to the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Canada's Youth Engagement Toolkit. This toolkit includes an overview of youth engagement theory and approaches and provides actionable recommendations that agencies can take to implement engagement initiatives locally.

How Was This Toolkit Created?

A young member of the BBBS of Canada's national youth council, Kristen, herein referred to as the Lead Youth Researcher, led the toolkit development process (see Acknowledgements page for more information about the Lead Researcher and other stakeholders involved in the toolkit creation). The Lead Youth Researcher was given decision making power, developmental opportunities, and authorship. For this reason, the process of developing this toolkit provides its own case study of a youth engagement initiative within the BBBS context. The Lead Youth Researcher was supported by staff at BBBS of Canada and Taylor Newberry Consulting who were contracted to provide guidance and coaching support to the Lead Youth Researcher by reviewing project documents, providing training, and meeting with the Lead Youth Researcher to help guide the development of this toolkit.

This toolkit was predominantly informed by a research project conducted by the Lead Youth Researcher that explored youth engagement initiatives happening at BBBS agencies across Canada. The idea for a research project to explore BBBS youth engagement practices was first suggested by the Lead Youth Researcher and was supported by BBBS of Canada staff who helped design and oversee the project, and the Boston Pizza Foundation who provided funding to make the project possible. The research project included a review of youth engagement literature and a survey completed by 44 BBBS agencies from across Canada (representing all 10 provinces). A set of key informant interviews were also completed with selected BBBS agencies that had experience doing youth engagement work. The data was compiled, analyzed, and translated into recommendations that are shared in this toolkit. As such, this toolkit reflects the unique experiences and challenges of doing youth engaged work within the context of BBBS agencies in Canada. The Lead Youth Researcher's personal experiences as a youth (within and outside of BBBS of Canada) also helped inform the toolkit.

What is Youth Engagement?

Youth engagement is the empowerment of all young people as valuable partners in addressing and making decisions about issues that affect them personally and/or that they believe to be important (The New Mentality, 2016). People often organize their ideas about youth engagement using three main approaches– **For Youth, With Youth, and By Youth**.

For Youth engagement involves youth as consulting bodies, where youth are consulted or asked for their feedback and opinions. Those thoughts and ideas are then incorporated into agency operations or programs. Example initiatives where For Youth approaches are typically used include routine check-ins, providing program feedback, and inviting youth to complete surveys or focus groups. It is often seen as the simplest but also least impactful approach.

With Youth engagement provides youth with some opportunities to co-create and help make decisions. With Youth approaches do not involve youth as the leaders of the initiative. Instead, youth are provided with roles that allow them to co-create aspects of the initiative in collaboration with staff. During 'With' Youth and 'For'

Youth approaches, it is important that staff provide assistance and guidance to help youth accomplish project tasks. Some examples of engagement initiatives where With Youth approaches are typically used include inviting youth to present at board meetings, including youth in training sessions with staff members, or asking youth to speak at donor engagement events.

By Youth engagement is the most multifaceted and ambitious approach to youth engagement where opportunities are created for youth to be highly involved in co-creation, decision making, leading others, and self-governance within or outside the engagement initiative. This type of engagement approach requires significant time and effort on the part of staff and the youth involved to nurture youth leadership and involvement. Example engagement initiatives that typically take a By Youth approach include youth advisory councils, youth as researchers, and youth as steering committee members.

Each level of engagement is not mutually exclusive. There may be aspects of an engagement initiative that are conducted using a For Youth approach (e.g. project planning) and other aspects of the initiative that follow a With Youth or By Youth approach (e.g. youth designing and delivering a presentation). Typically, youth engagement initiatives follow one approach primarily and include other approaches as needed.

While not every agency will have the capacity to carry out a 'By' youth initiative from start to finish due to the amount of staff and youth time and effort required, there are opportunities to include ideas from all three approaches in simple ways during every day work. The engagement process is successful if it produces meaningful benefits for the youth being engaged. Staff will know youth engagement is working when:

- staff and youth have mutually respectful relationships

- youths' ideas and feedback are meaningfully incorporated into agency work

- youth grow and develop personal and professional skills

- youth feel empowered, supported, and appreciated by the agency

- agency's programs and processes reflect youths' input

The theory of how the youth engagement practice leads to desired benefits for the youth involved and the agency is summarized in the Youth Engagement Model (see Appendix A).

Resources Needed to do Youth Engagement

To be successful, engagement initiatives require a set of key resources that enable agencies to effectively plan, implement, and evaluate the process. Before diving into any youth engagement initiative, it is important to consider those resources. When BBBS agencies were asked what the key drivers of effective youth engagement practices are, five key resources emerged: **funds, staff time, knowledge, space and relationships**. "Resources" in this toolkit refers to both tangible resources (i.e., funding, staff time and compensation) and conceptual resources (e.g., understanding youth's needs, ensuring staff have the knowledge to implement effective engagement practice, implementation strategies, etc., see Glossary for more detailed definitions).

There is no one perfect 'recipe' for youth engagement. The amount of resources needed will vary depending on the complexity of the engagement initiative. For example, not all agencies will need the same amount of staff time for a youth council – some agencies may have youth who have already been involved in a council and can take on responsibilities and leadership within the council (e.g., chair positions, taking minutes). Other agencies may need to find the resources for an additional youth engagement staff position to support a

council. Each agency will need to determine the right resources needed to make their initiative successful. Below are descriptions and considerations for each of the five key resources:

FUNDS

Funding enables agencies to pay staff, compensate youth, and pay for other materials and resources needed to plan and implement the initiative. For example, funding can be used to provide:

- Incentives or compensation for youth (e.g. meeting food)
- Staff pay
- Transportation for youth
- Childcare for youth
- Physical space for youth to meet
- Accommodations for youth
- Other materials and resources need for the initiative

STAFF TIME

Staff time is needed to prepare, implement, and evaluate the engagement initiative. For example, staff time can be used for:

- Planning and delivering engagement activities
- Fostering relationships with youth, other staff, and community partners
- Learning about effective youth engagement practices
- Actioning feedback from engagement initiatives
- Evaluating the engagement initiative

KNOWLEDGE

Staff require knowledge about youth engagement best-practices to be able to foster meaningful engagement experiences. Staff should develop knowledge of:

- Collecting clear, actionable information from youth and children through discussion, focus groups, and surveys
- Communicating respectfully with youth in a way that makes them feel engaged, listened to, heard, and valued
- Advocating on behalf of youth
- Forming Developmental Relationships with youth (see "Relationships" resource area below)
- The benefits of doing youth engaged work (for the agency and the youth)

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships between youth and staff are important for creating the trust and rapport needed to implement an effective engagement project. Partnerships between staff and external partners can also help enrich the engagement process. Key relationships exist among:

- Donors and sponsors
- Staff and youth involved with the agency
- Community partners
- Other BBBS agencies

SPACE

A safe, inclusive, and accessible physical and/or virtual space for youth engagement is needed. Youth engagement spaces can be used for:

- Engagement meetings, discussions, or workshops (virtual or in-person)
- Focus groups or survey data collection
- Training sessions
- Engagement events (e.g. donor events)

The Foundations of Youth Engagement

The purpose of this "Foundations of Youth Engagement" section is to provide agency staff with an understanding of the key components that go into building a strong engagement approach. This section aligns closely with the Youth Engagement Model (see Appendix A) and is intended to help agency staff translate the theory presented in that model into practice. Recommendations presented in this section draw on findings from the research project that was conducted by the Lead Youth Researcher to inform this toolkit. There are three core "Foundations" of youth engagement: **Agency Preparedness, Authentic Relationships,** and **Opportunity and Empowerment.** Each foundation is broken down into a set of core "components" and suggested actions to follow.

While the "Foundations of Youth Engagement" may appear to follow the stages of a project (e.g., agency preparedness coming before building relationships), they overlap a great deal and many of the foundational components should be implemented at the same time. For example, agencies should re-evaluate their resources over the course of a project (a component of "Agency Preparedness"), and take stock of new relationships that can be built between youth and staff early in project development (a component of "Authentic Relationships").

A checklist was created to help agency staff assess the effectiveness of their youth engagement process, based on the recommendations presented in this section (see Appendix B).

Agency Preparedness

The first foundation of youth engagement is agency preparedness. The goal for Agency Preparedness is for agencies to gather essential resources and become equipped with the knowledge and space to facilitate youth engagement.

When preparing for youth engagement, agencies should consider the core components and suggested actions below to help ensure their engagement initiative(s) is informed by youth needs and interests.

Agency Preparedness Component 1: The youth engagement initiative is informed by the youths needs and interests.

- **Suggested Action 1.1:** Ask community stakeholders and partners (e.g., parents, school liaisons, community members, other youth serving organizations) about youths' needs and where there are gaps in the resources and supports available that can be built upon. For example, is there a need for more after school programming? Is there a need for waitlist programs? This can be accomplished using surveys, focus groups, informal calls to stakeholders, and/or group feedback events (e.g. a 'town hall').

- **Suggested Action 1.2:** Ask youth already connected with the agency and youth from the broader community about their needs and interests and how BBBS can facilitate those interests through programming or services.

- **Suggested Action 1.3:** Examine past evaluation data from previous youth engagement efforts, if available, to gain a better understanding of the original initiative needs, its associated challenges and successes.

Agency Preparedness Component 2: There are designated resources or tools to develop, implement, and evaluate youth engagement initiatives.

- **Suggested Action 2.1:** Key resources to implement youth engagement initiatives include funding, staff time, knowledge, relationships, and space for youth (see "Resources Needed to do Youth Engagement Section, for more information). Take inventory of available funds and determine how they align with the engagement plan. From this point, agencies can design the best engagement initiative and consider whether it is necessary to scale back the plan, or pursue other resource options (e.g., write a grant).

- **Suggested Action 2.2:** Create or utilize existing evaluation tools and data collection methods to assess the effectiveness and impact of the youth engagement initiative(s) being implemented. Evaluation might explore whether engagement initiatives are leading to better programming and benefits for the youth directly involved (e.g., youth skills being developed). This information could also be used to help refine and improve the engagement initiative.

Agency Preparedness Component 3: Frontline staff, board members, and leadership staff support youth engagement initiatives and activities.

- **Suggested Action 3.1:** Consider hosting formal or informal discussions with board members and/or agency staff to share information about: 1) the benefits of youth engagement; 2) youth engagement practices currently happening across the organization; and 3) additional engagement activities suitable for the agency. These discussions will help foster buy-in for youth engagement initiatives.

- **Suggested Action 3.2:** Collect feedback from board members, leadership staff, and/or other agency staff about their ideas for youth engagement initiatives that would support other strategic initiatives and programming happening at the agency. It might also be helpful to explore which staff are available and interested and who may be able to support the initiative.

Agency Preparedness Component 4: A clear engagement plan or design is in place.

- **Suggested Action 4.1:** Develop key documents that explain the engagement plan, outline roles, responsibilities, plans, and aims of the initiative so that all individuals involved are clear about their role and how it aligns with broader goals for the organization. These documents may be more or less formal, depending on need. They may include workplans, timelines, logic models, or job descriptions. Without a well-defined process, youth may become overwhelmed and feel less engaged.

- **Suggested Action 4.2:** If possible, consult youth about the strategies and policies being developed. For example, ask for feedback on language (is the language youth-friendly?), inclusiveness (does the policy address the diversity of youth? Is there a policy on diversity?), and relevancy (does this policy reflect current youth issues and incorporate solutions that make sense to youth?)

**Agency Preparedness Component 5: There is compensation for youths' contributions.**

- **Suggested Action 5.1:** Provide youth with compensation (e.g., honorariums, reference letters, volunteer hours, awards, accommodations, transportation, etc.) that reflects their contributions. For

example, youth participating on advisory councils may receive a semi-annual honorarium, whereas, youth participating in a focus group may only receive a small gift card.

- **Suggested Action 5.2:** If financial compensation is not an available, explore whether donors can provide financial support (e.g. food for meetings). Also consider offering other non-financial incentives such as guidance or assistance with school applications, scholarships, or reference letters.

Agency Preparedness Component 6: Staff are knowledgeable about effective youth engagement approaches and how to promote equity and inclusion for the youth who take part.

- **Suggested Action 6.1:** Provide staff training or professional development opportunities to learn about youth engagement best practices (e.g., High Five training - https://www.highfive.org, Wisdom2Action - https://www.wisdom2action.org).

- **Suggested Action 6.2:** Allot time for agency staff to read up on youth engagement best-practices or network with their peers. They may review toolkits like this one, guidelines, play books, and engagement activities.

- **Suggested Action 6.3:** Dedicate time during agency meetings for staff to share and discuss findings and information learned about youth engagement with other staff. Consider disseminating lessons learned to other stakeholders involved in the youth engagement initiative, such as board members, current and potential donors, and the youth.
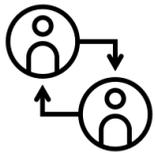
Authentic Relationships

The second Youth Engagement Foundation is Authentic Relationships. The goal for Authentic Relationships is to build and develop mutually beneficial relationships between the staff and youth where youth feel supported by, cared for, and share power with agency staff. It is important that staff take action to build authentic relationships throughout the engagement initiative from planning to reflection. Although youth engagement can be implemented by an individual staff person, it is a collective responsibility among all of those who are involved to support and become invested in the initiative (see the Developmental Relationship section in the BBBS of Canada National Theory of Change in Appendix C for indicators of authentic relationships).

When building or maintaining foundational relationships, agencies should consider the following core components and suggested actions:

Authentic Relationships Component 1: Relationships among youth and adults are mutually beneficial, mutually contributive, and demonstrate mutual respect.

- **Suggested Action 1.1:** Clearly explain how your organization hopes to benefit from this engagement work, and ask youth how they expect to benefit. Make sure these expectations align.

- **Suggested Action 1.2:** Staff and youth should develop and distinguish roles and contributions (this suggested action relates to Agency Preparedness Suggested Action 4.1). Clarity of roles and expectation is especially important when building and maintaining authentic relationships.

- **Suggested Action 1.3:** Boundaries should be established between staff and youth relationships to ensure the experience is respectful of personal space, emotions and thoughts, time and energy, and the culture of those involved.

- **Suggested Action 1.4:** Allot time and space for feedback and input throughout the engagement process so that youth and staff can confidently and respectfully voice their concerns or needs for adjustment. For example, allocate timelines for reflection activities, where youth and staff collaboratively reflect on the engagement process and openly discuss ways to improve.

- **Suggested Action 1.5:** Designate time for informal discussion or check-ins between staff and youth to help foster rapport and trust between youth, staff, and other project stakeholders.

- **Suggested Action 1.6:** Ensure that youth feel their time and contributions are appreciated by expressing care for their wellbeing and providing support within and outside of the initiative.

Authentic Relationships Component 2: There is a youth-friendly space that allows youth to feel comfortable to express their voice and choice.

- All suggested actions for Authentic Relationships Component 1 (1.1-1.6) contribute to a youth-friendly space.

- **Suggested Action 2.2:** Use inclusive communication styles when speaking to and receiving input from youth. Ask youth what communication style and medium they prefer. Some examples include informal rather than formal check-ins, and activity-based methods for feedback rather than question and answer style.

- **Suggested Action 2.3:** Ensure staff involved in the engagement initiative are capable of facilitating inclusive and equitable meetings where youth from diverse backgrounds feel included and welcome. Consider whether anti-oppression or cultural training may be needed.

Authentic Relationships Component 3: Partnerships between the agency and the community are built and maintained to enrich the engagement process.

- **Suggested Action 3.1:** Connect with community partners such as other youth serving organizations or local youth resource centers (e.g., a local kids help line) to help determine youths' needs and ways those needs can be addressed without duplicating existing services.

- **Suggested Action 3.2:** Connect with other organizations in the community to collaborate on youth engagement initiatives. This can also help reduce the resources needed if other organizations are able to contribute resources for the initiative. For example, develop a youth council with another local youth serving agency that will advise about youth needs at both organizations.

Authentic Relationships Component 4: There are opportunities for mentorship and informal and formal relationships between the youth and staff.

- **Suggested Action 4.1:** Provide personal support for the youth being engaged. For example, staff could check-in about youths' lives, activities happening in their community, and their future aspirations.

- **Suggested Action 4.2:** If possible, allocate staff time to connect with youth outside of the physical or virtual agency space. Attend group outings, events, or programming, or visit schools together.

Opportunity and Empowerment

The final foundation is Opportunity and Empowerment. The goal for Opportunity and Empowerment is to provide opportunities for leadership and youth development (both personal and professional) so that youth feel empowered and encouraged to expand their contributions to the agency. Leadership opportunities can also help foster youths' professional and personal skills.

When considering youth leadership opportunity and empowerment, agencies should consider the core components and suggested actions presented below:

Opportunity and Empowerment Component 1: Youth leadership is encouraged and nurtured through opportunities for youth to develop skills and experiences.

- **Suggested Action 1.1:** Create leadership opportunities, such as youth acting as a board member, steering committee or council member, researcher, or community ambassador.

- **Suggested Action 1.2:** Provide youth with formal or informal training opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Trainings may include professional development, critical thinking, and goal-setting.

Opportunity and Empowerment Component 2: There are opportunities for youth to identify and work towards their personal goals.

- **Suggested Action 2.1:** Provide youth with opportunities to reflect on their goals, strengths, and challenges through activities, utilize thought-provoking discussion questions, and role play.

- **Suggested Action 2.2:** Connect with youth informally during check-ins to discuss personal goals and how the BBBS agency can help achieve those goals.

- **Suggested Action 2.3:** Create opportunities for youth to work towards their goals. For example, if a youth wants experience speaking publicly, create opportunities for the youth to present in front of a group of people, such as at an agency event.

Opportunity and Empowerment Component 3: Youth feel empowered about their contributions and that their contributions make a difference.

- **Suggested Action 3.1:** Inform the youth involved in engagement initiatives about how their feedback was incorporated into agency decisions (particularly important for 'For' and 'With' approaches to engagement). This can include sharing outcomes, reports, quotations, and changes made.

- **Suggested Action 3.3:** Meaningfully consider youth input by discussing their ideas with other staff, conducting additional research on youths' suggestions, and reflecting on ways youths' input can be incorporated into the agency.

- Suggested Action 5.1 for Agency Preparedness about compensating youth will also help them feel empowered about their contributions.

Opportunity and Empowerment Component 4: There are opportunities for youth to become increasingly involved in the agency and expand their contributions.

- **Suggested Action 4.1:** Regularly inform the youth about opportunities to become more involved in the agency (e.g., youth advisory council, youth focus group). Make sure to also provide relevant details on how to be involved.

- **Suggested Action 4.2:** Create opportunities for youth involvement outside of formal engagement initiatives. This can be as simple as asking youth for feedback on the match monitoring process or asking for feedback on a newly developed youth engagement strategy.

Youth Engagement Initiatives and Activities Impact

This section of the toolkit provides information to help agency staff choose which youth engagement initiative(s) to implement based on the resources they have available, and provides considerations for agency staff as they implement engagement initiatives. The section is split into three sub-sections – low, medium, and high resources, which represent the level of resources required to implement different initiatives. Sections are separated by level of resources needed to enable agency staff to choose an engagement approach that aligns with their current capacity.

'Resources,' as discussed above, are the building blocks needed to implement an effective youth engagement initiative. BBBS agencies should determine the resources available early in the process when first preparing to do youth engagement. The suitability of resources to meet project needs should be revisited throughout the initiative (refer to the Glossary for definitions like "resources" relevant to this toolkit).

In some cases, agency staff will need to acquire new resources for an engagement initiative, and other times they can draw on existing resources. For example, some agencies may already have funding for youth compensation and a staff person with enough time to oversee youth engagement activities. Other agencies will need to acquire funding, recruit another staff person, and develop a better understanding of youth engagement practices before they can begin.

It is important to remember that an engagement process is successful if it produces meaningful benefits for the youth being engaged and the children and youth served by the agency. This should be the primary goal of any engagement initiative.

Guide for Low Resource Youth Engagement Initiatives

Resources to consider for engagement:

These resource categories are estimates and will vary depending on the internal resources that agencies have available the way agencies go about implementing their chosen engagement initiative.

Funds:
- Up to $5,000 or equivalent in material supplies for youth compensation (e.g., snacks, volunteer hours, non-monetary certificates or awards, small gift cards, references letters, BBBS swag).

Staff Hours:
- It is estimated that up to 5 staff hours per week may be needed to support youth during each engagement initiative at the 'low resource' level. Note that additional time may be required for certain activities, such as analysis of survey and focus group data and the sharing of findings.

Space:
- Agency space for engagement activities or meetings (e.g., school space, agency space or staff offices, distanced outdoor space)
- Virtual meeting space already available to agencies (e.g., TEAMS), or free virtual platforms (e.g., Google Hangouts, Facetime, Skype, Zoom)

Knowledge:
- Basic staff knowledge of how to work with youth, including how to express care, how to provide support by making youth feel listened to and respected, how to create a youth friendly space that is inclusive and accessible, and how to challenge growth by providing opportunities for responsibility and reflection.
- Basic staff knowledge of youth-adult partnerships, including the types of relationships appropriate for the engagement initiative being delivered (e.g., when conducting a focus group with youth, staff may only need to introduce themselves and the focus group members, and provide contact information for follow up if needed).
- Staff awareness of youth engagement initiatives currently taking place across the agency (e.g., how youth are being engaged in programming, in donor engagement, youth participation in board meetings) so that staff can ensure engagement initiatives are mutually contributive.

Relationships:
- Staff should consider connecting with youth who are already involved with the agency as they will have lived knowledge and experience accessing agency programming and be more likely to understand the needs and interests of those youth.
- Staff who are implementing youth engagement initiatives need to be familiar, and in some cases may need to have built rapport and trust with the youth who will be involved in the engagement initiative.
- Staff may also find it helpful to form partnerships with other community members and organizations (e.g., parents, schools, partnering organizations, local donors and sponsors, other staff) to support the engagement process (e.g. to be able to conduct surveys or focus groups with youth affiliated with the partner agency, or to provide food for youth meetings).

Engagement initiatives to consider (choose from one or more of the following):

1. **Conduct a mini feedback gathering session or focus group** (e.g., during match monitoring) to assess challenges, successes, and to gather feedback from the mentors and/or mentees about the program. Ask questions to help determine areas for improvement to better meet their needs and interests (e.g., staff conducting a focus group with a group from *GoGirls!* to better understand discussion topics youth are interested in).
2. **Ask youth to share about their match journey** through agency newsletter submissions. Match stories can include challenges, impacts, highlight moments, and future aspirations for the match. Note that it is less likely youth will share negative feedback for a public-facing newsletter and additional feedback may need to be gathered to explore areas for improvement.
3. **Involve youth as 'special' volunteers for agency events and outings**. For example, invite youth to participate as an ambassador by giving an opening speech at an event or by attending a booth where they speak about the program(s) they are involved in.
4. **Consult with youth on new agency strategies, structures, or programs** so those structures are informed by youth perspectives. This can be done by hosting a one-time focus group or meeting with a group of youth already involved at the agency.

Engagement approaches to consider:

It is recommended that low resource initiatives follow a '**For' youth** or '**With' youth** approach, rather than a 'By' youth approach, due to the level of staff time required to train and engage youth (see the Introduction – What is Youth Engagement? section for a detailed description of '**For', 'With'**, and '**By'** youth engagement approaches.

For example:

If a "For Youth" approach is being followed, staff can begin planning the engagement initiative, including factors such as when it will take place, who will be invited or involved, (in the case of surveys or focus groups) who will be involved in analyzing, synthesizing, and sharing the findings, what materials or other logistical considerations should be considered before beginning. When a "With Youth" approach is being used, staff may choose to wait until youth are involved in the project to begin planning.

TIPS for making youth feel engaged:

Ensure youth that they are heard by informing them of how their feedback was used. This can be done by sharing with participants of an initiative (e.g. youth who completed a survey or focus group) how their feedback resulted in changes at the agency.

Provide youth the opportunity to direct their own narrative. This can mean allowing youth to revise or edit their contributions or providing opportunity for youth to develop narratives that reflects their experiences (e.g., after data analysis, staff could send the youth their transcript to review or edit to ensure the youths' input was interpreted and recorded correctly).

Offer youth the opportunity to become more involved in the agency by signing up for agency monthly newsletters so they can be updated about agency opportunities, or staff might offer to keep their name on record so they can be contacted for future engagement opportunities.

Guide for Medium Resource Youth Engagement Initiatives

Resources to consider for engagement:

*These resource categories are estimates and will vary depending on the internal resources that agencies have available the way agencies go about implementing their chosen engagement initiative.

Funds
- $5,000 - $10,000 or equivalent in material supplies for meals, transportation, honorariums, awards, admission to events, part time staff pay, and/or field trip travel costs (as part of the engagement initiative).
- Where possible, discuss and decide with youth what sorts of compensation should be provided, when, and for what types of involvement in the initiative. Consider having a collaborative discussion where youth and staff discuss what type of compensation is preferred and appropriate within the agency's available resources.

Staff Hours
- It is estimated that up to 15 staff hours per week will be needed to support and supervise youth during each engagement initiative at the 'medium resource' level.

Space
- Agency space for engagement sessions or meetings (e.g., school space, agency space or staff offices, distanced outdoor space)
- Virtual meeting spaces already available to agencies (e.g., TEAMS), free virtual platforms (e.g., Google Hangouts, Facetime, Skype, Zoom), or platforms offered at a low cost (e.g., business Zoom account, Cisco, Webex)
- Connect with youth via social media platforms, or group messengers (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, TEAMS channels, Facebook Groups, LinkedIn groups)
- Consider booking low-cost community space for meetings, discussions, or activities with youth. For examples, book a utility-space in a community recreation centre to host a workshop for youth, book a conference room for a youth advisory council meeting, or book a youth field trip to the local science centre.

Knowledge
- Staff knowledge of youth engagement best practices, including how to provide training to youth who are new to leadership, how to engage youth as equal partners and make them feel their voice is heard, and how to foster mutual youth-adult partnerships.
- Staff awareness of youth engagement initiatives currently taking place across the agency (e.g., how youth are being engaged in programming, in donor engagement, with the board) so that staff can coordinate engagement initiatives that are mutually contributive and represent a diverse range of all youth voices.

Relationships
- Staff should foster a basic connection with all youth affiliated with the agency to enable staff to more easily offer and involve youth in engagement opportunities and to help staff determine which youth

are best suited for engagement initiatives. In some cases, an open call to all youth in the community may be preferable.

- Staff should foster relationships with youth who will be involved in engagement initiatives so that they have a strong working relationship and can support youth learning and goal achievement. Provide mentorship opportunities by offering support or guidance in youth personal or academic life (e.g., job or scholarship applications). These relationships can help agencies better understand the needs and interests of the youth by opening a safe space for the youth to express their ideas and opinions.
- Involve youth in the planning and development of youth engagement initiatives, including the decisions of what engagement initiatives to implement, delegation of responsibilities, roles, and tasks for both youth and staff.
- Staff may also find it helpful to form partnerships with other community members and organizations (e.g., parents, schools, community leaders, community-based organizations, businesses, other youth-serving organizations, and organizations that are knowledgeable about youth engagement)

Engagement initiatives to consider (choose from one or more of the following):

- **Hire or contract youth for practicum or co-op placements or Canada Summer Job students as employees of the agency**. These placements provide agencies with a more consistent source of youth input and feedback and may provide many opportunities for youth to contribute in other engaging ways, such as youth conducting literature reviews and research on various topics needed for the agency.
- **Invite youth to present or speak at agency events**, such as donor engagement, agency fundraisers, agency workshops, award ceremonies, or other events.
- **Invite youth to participate in board meetings or steering committee meetings** where youth can provide relevant input and feedback. To maximize meaningfulness, invite youth to meetings where their voice and ideas can be shared and entertained (e.g., avoid inviting youth to attend board meetings that discuss staff salary or annual budget).

Engagement approaches to consider:

Whenever possible it is preferable to engage youth in a way that involves them as collaborators and co-creators. Thus, it is recommended that medium resource initiatives follow a '**With' youth** or '**By' youth** approach, rather than a 'For' youth approach (see the Introduction – What is Youth Engagement? section for a detailed description of '**For', 'With'**, and **By'** youth engagement approaches.

TIPS for making youth feel engaged:

Start by encouraging youth to take on small-scale leadership tasks within the engagement initiative, especially if they are new to leadership. Support youth by providing templates, training, or discussion before they take on a task for the first time. For example, invite youth to present at an agency meeting by preparing them with a presentation template or outline and training on public speaking and effective presentation styles.

Offer opportunities for youth to expand their involvement and contributions to the agency by providing information about how to become more involved (e.g., how to apply to be a board member). Consider whether the opportunity is a good fit for the youth, whether they would be interested, and offer support to youth in applying and getting started.

Provide opportunities for youth to grow and develop by helping youth identify their personal goals and ways to attain those goals through reflective discussions, vision boards, and by helping youth search for opportunities.

Guide for High Resource Youth Engagement Initiatives

Resources to consider for engagement:

These resource categories are estimates and will vary depending on the internal resources that agencies have available the way agencies go about implementing their chosen engagement initiative.

Funds:
- $10,000 or more in material supplies for youth compensation (e.g., meals, accommodations, transportation, child care, honorariums, gift cards, and scholarships), paid staff time (e.g., staff person dedicated to engagement or addition staff hours), and/or paid space (e.g., physical space dedicated to youth engagement initiatives).
- Consider how youth will be compensated for their contributions and whether the level of compensation is appropriate for the effort youth are dedicating to the project. Higher levels of compensation may be appropriate for greater levels of responsibility.

Staff Hours:
- It is estimated that 20 staff hours or more per week may be needed to support or implement youth engagement initiatives at the 'high resource' level. Note, that agencies may choose to hire a part-time or full-time youth engagement staff person, which will utilize considerable funds from the overall budget.
- Staff time should be set aside for communications between stakeholders, including updates to board members, donors, parents and schools. Staff time should also be set aside for check-ins with the youth in a formal and informal capacity, and for meetings with other staff members about the engagement initiative.

Staff Knowledge
- Staff should have considerable knowledge of current youth engagement practices happening within the agency, and areas for opportunity to strengthen that work.
- Staff should have knowledge of youth engagement best-practices from the literature (in addition to this toolkit), including meaningful ways to engage youth of varying ages, and key approaches and activities that have been shown to be effective for the engagement initiative that is chosen.
- Basic knowledge of child and youth development and skills in working with children and youth (e.g., building rapport, trust and empathy).

Space
- Existing space for engagement sessions or meetings (e.g., school space, agency space or staff offices, distanced outdoor space) or low-to-medium cost community space (e.g., community recreation facilities, information centres, or hotel conference rooms).
- Virtual meeting space already available to agencies, (e.g., TEAMS), free virtual platforms (e.g., Google Hangouts, Facetime, Skype, Zoom), or platforms offered at a low cost (e.g., business Zoom account, Cisco, Webex).
- Connect with youth via free social media platforms, or group messengers (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, TEAMS channels, Facebook Groups, LinkedIn groups).

Relationships

- Staff-youth relationships at the 'high resource' level require additional time and effort to foster strong connections and must include effective and ongoing communication. Relationships with youth should be mutually respectful, allow equal contributions from staff and youth, and create benefits for the agency and youth involved. This type of relationship can support youth learning and goal achievement.
- Staff should involve youth in the entire engagement process, from beginning to end. Be mindful to assess and distinguish youth from staff roles within the initiative(s) so that youth are clear when to seek support and what aspects of the initiative are outside of their responsibility.
- Staff should foster connections with other youth in the agency that are not involved in engagement initiatives for potential recruitment onto future engagement activities.
- Staff should have a connection to other community organizations and partners (e.g., other youth-serving organizations) to help support and enrich engagement initiatives.
- Consider connecting board members to the youth engagement initiatives happening at the agency through updates about engagement initiatives. This may help increase their buy-in to future engagement efforts.

Engagement initiatives to consider (choose from one or more of the following):

- **Invite youth to act as agency board members**, as a "youth" member or as a general member. Include youth in the full member on-boarding process, including application to the board, training, and role delegation.
- **Develop a youth advisory council or committee** that helps inform agency strategies, policies, programming, and/or activities. This advisory body can be used in many ways to fulfil the agency's mission and vision.
- **Host a youth conference** for the local community, greater geographic region, or at a provincial or national scale. Youth can be engaged by attending or delivering workshops, presentations, or activities; or by networking with others in attendance.
- **Invite youth to support agency research**, either as a hired staff person, through co-op placements, Summer Jobs, part-time work, or in a volunteer role. Consider research focused on exploring the engagement initiative itself or agency programming.

Engagement approaches to consider:

Whenever possible it is preferable to engage youth in a way that involves them as collaborators and co-creators. It is therefore recommended that high resource initiatives follow a '**By**' youth or **'With'** youth approach, rather a 'For' youth approach (see the Introduction – What is Youth Engagement? section for a detailed description of '**For', 'With'**, and **'By'** youth engagement approaches).

TIPS for making youth feel engaged:

Utilize a strengths-based approach where staff provide leadership opportunities that reflect the youth's strengths. This allows youth to take on a leadership role they feel comfortable with, and can maximize their contributions to the agency. This also provides an opportunity for youth to mentor each other and agency staff may be able to take on a more supportive role.

Provide leadership opportunities outside youths' strength areas. This will allow youth to develop their leadership skills and competencies, and can provide opportunity for youth to attain self-identified goals. In these scenarios, agency staff may need to provide additional time and support to youth to effectively complete tasks with confidence.

Continue to provide youth with opportunities to expand their contributions to the agency in addition to the community at large. This can be accomplished by regularly informing youth about new opportunities for involvement within and outside of the agency.

Evaluating the Impact

Reflection

The purpose of this section is to help guide agencies to intentionally build learning and reflection into the engagement process. For youth engagement to be most effective it should continuously evolve based on learnings gained during the process. This includes reflection about the planning and implementation process to determine whether the right resources are being used, reflection about whether activities are running smoothly and having an impact, and reflection about the meaningful involvement of youth. Agencies should ask themselves these key questions at the beginning, middle, and end of the initiative so that adjustments can be made as needed to help ensure that youth needs are met, their interests are supported, and their voice is heard.

Youth engagement initiatives should result in positive outcomes for the youth involved. Ideally, youth engagement initiatives will also benefit the agency and other youth being served by the agency. Benefits may include staying current and up-to-date with youths changing needs and interests, creating future opportunities for other youth to be involved, and retaining volunteers or mentees in different capacities as they graduate mentoring programs. One way to check whether a youth initiative is successful is by comparing engagement outcomes to BBBS of Canada's National Theory of Change (see Appendix C).

Here are some reflection questions staff can ask themselves to explore whether the engagement is being implemented effectively and to explore whether it is having an impact:

o   How is youth voice present in the initiative? At what points in time are youth voice present? (e.g., planning and project development, execution, and evaluation) In what additional stage(s) could youth voice be present?

o   Are youth perspectives representative of the community in terms of their backgrounds or the agency in terms of the various programs offered and roles that youth serve at the agency (e.g., mentees, mentors, staff)

o   How is the initiative benefiting a) the youth involved in the engagement initiative, and b) youth at the agency? What is the process for youth to provide feedback to ensure their needs are and continue to be met? What is the process to identify opportunities for improvement from the perspective of the youth(s) involved?

o   What engagement approach is primarily being used (by, with, and/or for)? Does this approach meet the interests of the youth involved? Does this approach offer the right level of support for the youth involved?

In addition to these reflection questions, a checklist was created to help agency staff reflect on the effectiveness of their process for implementing youth engagement at their agency (see Appendix B).

Challenges and Solutions

Every new strategy or initiative is likely to experience challenges during the implementation process. Here are some of the common challenges that BBBS agencies have faced and potential solutions:

Question: How do I explain "youth engagement" in a simple way?
- Defined by the New Mentality, youth engagement is the empowerment of all young people as valuable partners in addressing and making decisions about issues that affect them personally and/or that they believe to be important (2016).

Question: How do I get the leaders and other staff members in my agency on board with youth engagement?
- Sometimes youth leadership and empowerment can be intimidating, especially for agencies that will have to make major changes to implement youth engagement initiatives. For these agencies it may be difficult to gather buy-in from agency staff and stakeholders. One possible approach is to invite youth who will be involved in the initiative to talk to staff and stakeholders. It might be helpful for the youth to share their ideas for the initiative or activity in mind, including the plan for which resources will be needed to support the initiative and other logistics needed. This will demonstrate the agency's capacity to carry out the project and the capacity and motivation of the youth who will be involved.

Question: I really want to do youth engagement, but I don't know where to start.
- There are many ways to start a youth engagement initiative. A few first steps to consider include: 1) ensuring there is agency buy-in and commitment from members (e.g., other staff, board members, the Executive Director, program managers); 2) assess and find the necessary resources; and then 3) determine an approach that leads to the most meaningful and effective youth engagement for your agency and its available resources. Next, consider asking the youth who are currently involved with the agency what their needs and interests are (i.e., what they would like to be a part of, how would they like to be engaged).

Question: What are some considerations for youth engagement in the context of COVID-19 social distancing policies?
- Agencies may have faced or are still experiencing many barriers due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic may have also shed light on some new ways to connect through technology, such as Zoom, TEAMS, Skype and Facetime. To further engagement through these platforms, agencies can a) use interactive activities (e.g., Bingo, Two Truths and Lie), b) limit the number of participants to encourage more discussion and connection, c) keeping meeting times short, and d) use privacy settings like a meeting passwords, and limiting screen sharing and recording capabilities.

Question: The youth involved at my agency want to contribute but have very little time between work and school. How can I work around this?
- A great way to connect with youth without them having to travel to and from the agency is through virtual connection. Virtual meetings also help reduce other challenges to facilitating in-person meetings, including youth having to find parking or day care (for youth with children or younger siblings), and staff providing food. If virtual connection is not possible (or not preferred) consider offering youth incentives such as food, honorariums, or travel reimbursements. This will show youth their contributions are appreciated and encourage youth to continue contributing their time.

Question: We do not currently have any youth that are interested in participating in youth engagement activities in our agency.

o The key to keeping young people interested is by asking them what they want, rather than developing the initiative staff think they want. If the engagement initiative is catered to their interests and needs, they are more likely to stay involved over time. First, consult with youth about their current involvement – what are the challenges they are facing, and where the disinterest stems from, and then ask youth about potential changes that would help address the barriers they shared.

Question: The youth that are engaged in my agency often move away after a few years (e.g., for university, jobs), or are otherwise becoming disengaged over time, how do I maintain engagement?

o Providing opportunities for higher levels of engagement is a great way to promote continued involvement.

o Another approach to consider is implementing engagement initiatives that can be carried out virtually to keep youth engaged if they move away. Councils are a great example of an engagement initiative that youth can still take part in virtually.

o Another way to maintain engagement is to hire youth during the summer or for part-time employment throughout the school year. This can enable youth to stay involved while also bringing in new ideas, knowledge, and perspectives from youth who have gained new experiences and education.

Question: How can I create and implement youth engaged initiatives while continuing to align agency practice with National Standards?

o National Standards are in place to ensure the safety of the agency and the youth, not to stop or prevent youth engagement from happening. Youth engagement in not a linear process and does not have a specific set of guidelines to follow. Youth engagement is fluid and can be adapted to work within the National Standards that are set for agencies. For example, match monitoring has National Standard protocols that involve asking certain questions to support the match relationship. However, agency staff may be able to add additional questions or ask the standard questions in an engaging way (e.g., ask questions in a role-play scenario, include interactive games or activities to ask questions).

o Another example is youth feedback on policies and strategies. There are National Standards that ensure the agency's operations are effective and safe. These are important and we do not suggest removing content. However, youth may be able to provide feedback on the language, the inclusiveness, and comprehensiveness of policy content. For example, an agency may be developing a new policy on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace. Youth members from diverse background can provide feedback on the content of the policy, including pronouns in email signatures, addressing all youth as "they" before assuming gender, etc. Giving youth a voice in agency policies can also help ensure the agency is meeting the shifting needs of youth today.

References

The New Mentality. (2016,). *Youth engagement*. https://www.thenewmentality.ca/what/youth-engagement/

Appendix A: Youth Engagement Model

Resources	Initiatives	Approach	Engagement Outcomes
Start by considering the resources needed to do youth engaged work. The five core resources needed are:		Once initiative(s) are selected, determine the best engagement approach based on the amount of staff and youth time and effort available.	The desired outcome is to create and sustain meaningful youth engagement where:
Funds to pay staff, compensate youth, and pay for other materials and resources need to plan and implement the initiative. **Staff Time** to prepare, implement, and evaluate the engagement initiative. **Staff Knowledge** about youth engagement best-practices to be able to foster meaningful engagement experiences. **Space** for engagement to take place, either in-person or virtually. Engagement spaces should be inclusive, safe, and accessible for youth engagement to take place. **Relationships** between youth and staff are needed where stakeholders have trust and rapport for one another. Partnerships between staff and external partners can also help enrich the engagement process.	Based on available resources, choose an engagement initiative(s) that can be meaningfully actioned.	**"FOR"** YOUTH Staff ask for youth feedback. The engagement initiative is developed and implemented by staff on behalf of youth. **"WITH"** YOUTH Youth are involved in co-creation and help make decisions in collaboration with staff. **"BY"** YOUTH Youth are highly involved in co-creation, decision making, leading others, and self-governance.	• Youth and staff have mutually respectful relationships • The ideas and feedback of youth is meaningfully incorporated into agency work • Youth grow and develop personal and professional skills • Youth feel empowered, supported, and appreciated by the agency • Agency programs are better able to meet the needs of youth

Appendix B: Agency Readiness Self-Assessment Checklist

Agency Preparedness

The youth engagement initiative is informed by youth needs and interests.

My agency has gathered input and feedback from youth about their needs and interests.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has gathered input and feedback from agency partners and other members of the community about youth needs and where there are gaps in the services available.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

There are designated resources or tools to develop, implement, and evaluate youth engagement initiatives.

My agency has assessed the resources needed for an engagement initiatives (e.g., funding, food, staff time). Based on the resources available my agency has determined which engagement initiatives and approaches are possible.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has assessed how the engagement initiative will be evaluated to determine successes, challenges, areas for improvement, and whether the initiative has contributed to benefits for the youth involved and for the agency.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Frontline staff, board members, and leadership staff support youth engagement initiatives and activities.

My agency has fostered buy-in for youth engagement from agency staff and board members. For example, buy-in can be fostered by presenting information about youth engagement and through discussions about the benefits of youth engagement.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has aligned the engagement initiative(s) planned with other strategic initiatives and programming taking place at the agency.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

A clear engagement plan or design is in place.

My agency has developed one or more guiding documents that explain the engagement plan, including youth roles and responsibilities, along with the aims and goals of the initiative(s). This document(s) has been shared with youth and they agree to the terms of their involvement. Note that it is recommended youth are involved in the process of creating guiding documents if possible.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has come up with a plan for compensating youth for their contributions. The compensation chosen is appropriate for their level of involvement and responsibility on the engagement initiative(s). Compensation may include financial (e.g. honorarium, salary, gift cards) and non-financial compensation (e.g. reference letters).

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Staff are knowledgeable about effective youth engagement approaches and how to promote equity and inclusion for the youth who take part.

My agency has assessed the level of staff knowledge about youth engagement practices required for the initiative chosen (see Low, Medium, and High Resource sections of the toolkit for more information about levels of staff knowledge required). This also includes knowledge about and ability to facilitate inclusive and accessible meetings where youth from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and included. My agency has also assessed whether staff who will be involved in the engagement initiative have the knowledge and ability required in these areas.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If required, my agency has a plan to increase staff knowledge about youth engagement practice, along with anti-oppression and inclusive models of practice. For example, this might include staff training or staff learning through the process of conducting practice reviews.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has created a plan to share information about youth engagement with other staff and stakeholders at the agency (e.g. during staff meetings).

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments on Agency Preparedness Actions:

Authentic Relationships

Relationships among youth and adults are mutually beneficial, mutually contributive, and demonstrate mutual respect.

My agency has reflected on and named how they hope to benefit as an organization from the engagement work that is planned.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has asked youth how they expect to benefit from taking part in the engagement initiative and ensured that these benefits align with the benefits that the agency hopes to achieve.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has considered what boundaries should be established between youth and staff to ensure the experience is respectful of each stakeholder involved.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has considered at what points during the initiative and how best to gather feedback from youth about the engagement process. This includes informal check-ins and discussion with youth.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has made youth feel their time and contributions are appreciated by expressing care for their wellbeing and by providing support to youth during their involvement on the initiative.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

There is a youth-friendly space that allows youth to feel comfortable to express their voice and choice.

My agency has asked the youth involved in the initiative about their communication preferences. Efforts have been made to provide ongoing communication and updates using an inclusive communication style that is mindful of the age and preferences of the youth involved.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Partnerships between the agency and the community are built and maintained to enrich the engagement process.

If it would be beneficial to do so, my agency has connected with community partners (e.g., other youth serving organizations) to collaborate on youth engagement initiatives.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

There are opportunities for mentorship and informal and formal relationships between the youth and staff.

My agency has fostered meaningful relationships with the youth being engaged that make sense for the level of engagement taking place (i.e. Low, Medium, or High Resource initiatives). For example, this can be achieved by providing personal support for the youth being engaged that aligns with the Developmental Relationships approach outlined in the BBBS of Canada national Theory of Change (see Appendix C).

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments about Authentic Relationship Actions:

Opportunity and Empowerment

Youth leadership is encouraged and nurtured through opportunities for youth to develop skills and experiences.

My agency has provided opportunities for the youth involved in the engagement initiative(s) to reflect on and identify their personal goals, strengths, and challenges.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has provided opportunities for the youth involved in the engagement initiative to develop their leadership skills and work towards their identified goals. For example, this could include providing training related to professional development, critical thinking, and goal-setting.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has created opportunities for youth to lead during the engagement initiative.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Youth feel empowered about their contributions and that their contributions make a difference.

My agency has informed youth about how their contributions were incorporated into agency practices.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has meaningfully considered youth input by discussing their ideas with other staff, conducting additional research on their suggestions, and/or by reflecting on ways their input can be incorporated into agency practices.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

There are opportunities for youth to become increasingly involved in the agency and expand their contributions.

My agency has informed the youth involved in engagement initiatives about opportunities to become more involved in the agency.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My agency has created opportunities for more youth involvement outside of formal engagement initiatives.

1 - No action has been taken	2	3	4	5 – Extensive action has been taken
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments about Opportunity and Empowerment Actions:
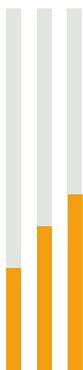

Appendix C: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada's National Theory of Change

WHO DO WE SERVE?

Young people who face adversity AND
are **in need of** an additional consistent and supportive **Developmental Relationship**[1]

HOW DO WE IGNITE POTENTIAL?

» By intentionally **recruiting** based on the needs of a community's young people

» By **matching** young people with a **professionally screened** volunteer mentor

» By **monitoring and supporting** that match with a professional caseworker

» By **training and supporting** the mentor, the mentee and the family

» By **building a Developmental Relationship** between the mentor and the mentee that: Expresses Care; Challenges Growth; Provides Support; Shares Power; and Expands Possibilities

» By **graduating** the match relationship towards natural support

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

Young people graduate our programs with **measurable outcomes**:

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

» Relationship skills
» Social awareness
» Responsible decision-making
» Self-management
» Self-awareness

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

» Positive identity
» Mental wellness
» Social inclusion & empowerment

EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT READINESS

» School connectedness
» Commitment to learning
» Enhanced constructive use of time