



# Recommended Actions

## By We Trust You(th) Problem Solving Community

—

### Background

The [We Trust You\(th\)](#) initiative aims to tackle practical problems that result from systemic inequities that currently thrive within relationships between youth-led organizations and youth-focused donors and iNGOs. To support collective problem solving between youth, iNGOs, and donors, We Trust You(th) issued a public [challenge](#) and established a [practical problem solving community](#).

For iNGOs and donors, who currently often hold the most power and decision-making, We Trust You(th) is co-hosting three practical problem solving workshops. To support workshop follow-up and others who have accepted the challenge or who want to improve their ability to equity partner with young people, We Trust You(th) will be sharing lessons and recommendations publicly.

The following recommendations were compiled and collected based on the discussions held during the first We Trust You(th) Problem Solving Community workshop. This workshop was attended by iNGOs, Donors, and Youth-led Organizations (listed in acknowledgements below) on March 23rd, 2022 ([main recording here](#)). **Recommendations outlined below are intended to help youth focused donors and iNGOs take necessary steps to tackle the following problem:**

### Fundamental Problem

Those viewed as having “valuable skills” and “capacity” are often the least directly connected to young people or their communities. This is often due to power imbalances and prejudice that hurts our collective ability to improve young people’s lives.

### We Trust You(th) Recommended Actions:

- Build donor and iNGO capacity to effectively serve young people and youth-led efforts.
  - Written Summary (see below) Video Summary ([see here](#))
- Implement models of support that actually meet young people’s needs.
  - Written Summary (see below) Video Summary ([see here](#))

**Recommendation: Build donor and iNGO capacity to effectively serve young people and youth-led efforts.**

**Youth Experience Grounding Recommendations:**

It looks and feels different to work with partners that do have strong experience in working collaboratively with young people. For example...

When working with a donor / iNGO who HAS invested in their capacity...		
Contracting between donors/iNGOs and their youth-led organization (YLO) grantees takes place in a fair and timely manner – requiring minimal paperwork and shorter due diligence processes.	The learning experience is mutual - not just one way from donor/iNGO to YLO, but back and forth. As such, this forms a meaningful and productive youth-adult partnership that promotes intergenerational dialogue.	Donors / iNGOs have the humility to be honest with their YLO partners and are open to listening and adopting alternative ways of working.
There is an understanding that YLOs are experts in their work and experiences and are not necessarily fluent in the language and internal mechanism of donors and iNGOs. Because of this, an open exchange of knowledge that values each other's expertise must be established.	Rules and standards of productive communication are established and there is an effort to learn and speak in the same language. Instead of just asking for inquiries in a broad manner, the iNGO / donor builds a safe space in which a YLOs capacity will not be doubted for asking questions.	Communication is transparent, allowing for YLOs to ask pertinent questions and have an exchange to shape the work. This means providing guidance when discussing matters which YLOs may not have encountered before.

When working with a donor / iNGO who HASN'T invested in their capacity...		
Young people are superficially asked to give their input, but without being given any kind of guide, tools, or briefing. Without guidance, the extent to which young peoples' inputs are utilized is limited. This is not a meaningful consultation.	Young people have no freedom for out of the box thinking, because they are constantly trying to fit <b>inside</b> the box, use the "right" language, and follow the script donors and iNGOs create for them. This stifles their ability to innovate and the work is therefore neither productive nor meaningful.	A lot of time and resources are wasted in trying to understand donor / iNGO preferences, requirements, focus areas, etc. Instead, donors and iNGOs should be learning and responding to the goals of youth-led efforts.

---

## Recommended key actions and initial steps and examples and resources to reference

**Key Action:** Ground your work in values and principles that enable practices that are collaborative, equitable, and transparent.

- **Initial Steps:** Review your organizational mission, guiding values, principles, overarching strategy and assess how much of what your organization has already agreed to aligns with equitably partnering with young people, use this to justify greater investment and focus in your practices. If you are struggling to get everyone on board, conduct an internal team building to establish joint organizational values.
- **Example:** [FRIDA Fund](#) values inclusivity as a core value. They apply this value in many practices, including translating their application forms into seven languages.

**Key Action:** Hire and retain staff that have experience and value working collaboratively with young people, especially young people themselves.

- **Initial Steps:** Collaborate with your human resources team to hire and retain staff that already have the capacity (values and experience) to work equitably with young people. Add requirements in job descriptions, performance reviews, interview guides, not just for youth specific roles but for decision making and operational roles.
- **Example:** [YAFP](#), requires all consultants, and partners (youth and non-youth) to demonstrate experience in practicing their values in their previous work. This is demonstrated in all recruitment and assessment materials.

**Key Action:** Measure your impact to support accountability and prevent tokenistic engagement.

- **Initial steps:** Consult your YLO partners on what meaningful indicators might look like. Traditional indicators used by global north, not youth-led organizations typically prioritize measuring what makes them credible and trustworthy to funders (for example reach, scale, cost-effectiveness, replicability), but don't always reflect what it means to be effective according to the communities they serve.
- **Example:** With the support of YLO, [CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality](#), [EngenderHealth](#) developed [specific meaningful youth participation \(MYP\) indicators](#) and are in the process of incorporating them into their planning, monitoring, evaluation, learning (PMEL) systems.

## Still struggling?

- If you don't have leadership or institutional buy-in, there's still a lot you can do as individuals within institutions. Talk to your HR and finance colleagues - they have a huge role to play in this work and can be instrumental in moving money and resources to young people.
- To advocate internally, emphasize that your organization's impact and outcomes will significantly be better if you center and trust young people.

## Resources to reference

- **Reflections on developing EngenderHealth MYP Indicators:**  
<https://www.choiceforyouth.org/news-page/choice-eh-partnership-and-our-myp-journey/>
- **HIPs4FP Strategic Planning Guide on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement and Partnership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Programming:**  
<https://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/guides/meaningful-adolescent-and-youth-engagement/>

**Recommendation: Implement models of support that actually meet young people’s needs.**

## Youth Experience Grounding Recommendations

Models of support that are designed to really meet young people’s needs really look and feel different. For example...

When working with a donor / iNGO who HAVE good models of support		
Their funding mechanisms are flexible, there is trust and simple due diligence processes.	They provide core support and an additional grant for resilience and well being of the YLOs.	YLOs are compensated fairly for their time and effort.
Young people are part of a community that supports their work and one they can lean on during a crisis. They are able to connect and share experiences during and after the funding cycles.	The donors and iNGOs have youth advisors/staff members who follow the work of young people and can be reached out to whenever there are challenges without fear or hesitation.	Young people are consulted on their capacity building needs and work together with the donor or iNGO to determine how their needs can be met.
YLOs work is shared and recommended by the donor or iNGO so they have access to more resources.		

Working with donors and iNGOs that do not have models of support			
The relationship is not trust based, donors and iNGOs have lengthy due diligence that ends up wasting time, even for small scale projects and grants.	Donors/iNGOs focus on the process of capacity building rather than the outcome and oftentimes create capacity building packages that do not cater to the immediate needs of the YLO.	There is no provision for core or unrestricted funding that can help cover institutional costs, remuneration and care and wellbeing of YLOs.	There is very little contact between the donor and the YLO and no intermediaries like youth advisors/staff either to help bridge the learning gap between the two groups.

---

## Recommended key actions and initial steps and examples and resources to reference

**Key Action:** Ground your models of support in learnings from young people

- **Initial Steps:** Ask young people what they need, using a needs assessment survey or any other tools that will ensure their maximum participation. Set up open-door policies where young people can freely interact with you and express what they need to be supported. Co-create your support models with young people, this will make them feel invested and happy to implement the models. Offer opt-in capacity building where young people can freely choose the capacity they need and mentors they need.
- **Example:** [FRIDA Fund](#) hosts convenings with their grantee partners and uses this as an opportunity to learn from them as well as encourage collaboration amongst them.

**Key Action:** Set up funding mechanisms that are flexible and easily accessible to young people

- **Initial Steps:** Enabling proposal submissions in multiple languages, not just English. Have eligibility criteria that are attainable for young people unlike conditions that limit them like; being registered, previously being funded, or being in existence for at least 3 years, including having audited accounts. These push away young people that are working in grassroots organizations and require funding more. Trust young people by changing the lengthy due diligence process to something simple so that young people can easily prove their worth.
- **Example:** The [With and For Girls Collective](#) funds grassroots organizations that have not been previously funded and have a simple due diligence process that works for young people.

**Key Action:** Support young people to collaborate, network and connect.

- **Initial Steps:** Set up spaces where young people can freely interact, this will encourage peer to peer sharing, building connections, and capacity building through knowledge and skills sharing. Share your youth partners work on your social media platforms and website to help the visibility of their work. Recommend young people to other donors or INGOs so they have access to more funding for their work.
- **Example:** [WomenStrong International](#) has created learning labs for all its grantees. These labs bring together women-led organizations whom they fund, such as Copper Rose Zambia, working in areas to strengthen their work related to the wellbeing and empowerment of women and girls - and develop, test, share and amplify their solutions more broadly. Partners can engage in these learning labs online and in person through webinars, roundtables, workshops and retreats.

**Key Action:** Invest in resources that offer care and support the resilience and well being of young people

- **Initial Steps:** Provide additional funding for care and resilience. Recognize that there is no one size fits all for care as young people are working in different contexts and communities and they are in the best positions to determine the care they need. Create spaces where young people can share experiences, recharge their energy and celebrate each other's work

- 
- **Example:** [The Global Resilience Fund](#) Accompaniment model has a collective care component. They set up community circles for all regions, these circles make young people feel that they are part of a community and less isolated with the Covid-19 pandemic. [Mama Cash](#) has a similar accompaniment model.

## Resources to reference

- [FRIDA fund](#) developed this model that is designed to strengthen mutual connections, shared learning, experimentation, innovation and leverage knowledge and resources between young feminists.
- [WomenStrong International](#)'s learning labs.

## Acknowledgments

Recommendations made are primarily developed by We Trust You(th) co-leads and youth partners. However, they are strengthened by our ally partners and the wider We Trust You(th) problem solving community.

**Youth Partners:** We Trust You(th) is co-led by five youth-led organizations: [International Youth Alliance for Family Planning](#), [CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality](#), [Copper Rose Zambia](#), [Green Girls Platform](#), and [¿Y Yo Por Qué No? \(YYPN\)](#). In addition, the co-leads have established formal youth partnerships with [Concealed Narratives](#), [Youth to Youth Cameroon](#), and UP Babaylan – three additional youth-led efforts who provide strategic guidance and input.

**Ally Partners:** We Trust You(th) proudly collaborates with [Elevate Children Funders Group](#), [EngenderHealth](#), [Children Rights Innovation Fund](#), [Participatory Grantmakers Community of Practice](#), and [We Are Purposeful](#). Critical kick-start funds have been provided by [Family Planning 2030](#), [UN Foundation](#).

**We Trust You(th) Problem Solving Community:** Inputs provided by iNGOs and donors who attend the first workshop have been integrated into these recommendations. Those who attended included: [Workshop 1 – Attendees](#)